

# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

## SPECIAL SESSION

### Executive Committee Meeting

March 13, 2025  
3:00 p.m.

**KERN** EMPLOYERS'  
COUNTY TRAINING  
RESOURCE  
*A proud partner of America's Job Center*

1600 E. Belle Terrace  
Bakersfield, CA 93307





Kern, Inyo & Mono Counties  
Executive Committee  
Special Session Meeting  
Agenda

March 13, 2025

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**Location:** 1600 E. Belle Terrace, Bakersfield, CA – 2nd Floor Large Conference Room  
**Time:** 3:00 p.m.  
**Dial-in:** (831) 296-3421  
**Access Code:** 501 374 254#  
**Page No.**

- I. Introductions**
- II. Public Comments**

This portion of the meeting is reserved for persons to address the Committee on any matter not on this agenda but under the jurisdiction of the Committee. Committee members may respond briefly to statements made or questions posed. They may ask a question for clarification, make a referral to staff for factual information, or request staff to report back to the Committee at a later meeting. Also, the Committee may take action to direct the staff to place a matter of business on a future agenda. **SPEAKERS ARE LIMITED TO THREE MINUTES.**
- 1-122 III. New Business**
  - A. Approval of the Local and Regional Plans PY 25-28 (Plans) and Authorize the Chair to Sign and Submit the Plans to the CWDB – Action Item**
- IV. Committee Member Comments**
- V. Adjournment**

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All agenda item supporting documentation is available for public review at Employers' Training Resource, 1600 East Belle Terrace, Bakersfield, 93307 during regular business hours, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, following the posting of the agenda. Any supporting documentation that relates to an agenda item for an open session of any regular meeting that is distributed after the agenda is posted and before the meeting will also be available for review at the same location.

Please remember to turn off all cell phones, pagers, or electronic devices during the meeting.





March 13, 2025

Executive Committee  
Kern, Inyo and Mono  
Workforce Development Board  
1600 East Belle Terrace  
Bakersfield, CA 93307

**APPROVAL OF THE LOCAL AND REGIONAL PLANS PY 25-28 (PLANS) AND  
AUTHORIZE THE CHAIR TO SIGN AND SUBMIT THE PLANS TO THE CWDB**

Dear Executive Committee:

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires the Local Workforce Development Area, being the Kern, Inyo and Mono Counties Consortium and the Regional Planning Unit which is the San Joaquin Valley and Associated Counties, to prepare the Local and Regional Plans. The San Joaquin Valley and Associated Counties include the counties of Kern, Inyo, Mono, Fresno, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Tulare. Each plan serves four years during Program Years 2025-2028 (July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2029), and must be submitted to the California Workforce Development Board (CWDB) on or before April 27, 2025. The due date has been extended by the CWDB.

The Draft Local and Regional Plans are available for review online at [www.employerstrainingresource.com](http://www.employerstrainingresource.com) and [www.americasjobcenterofkern.com](http://www.americasjobcenterofkern.com). Furthermore, paper copies of the plans are available at Kern County Employers' Training Resource (ETR) and the America's Job Center of California of Inyo County and Mono County. Individuals who do not own computers are able to gain access to the plans by using public computers through an appointment at any of the twenty-two public libraries located in Kern County, six in Inyo County and seven in Mono County. The websites are easily usable by the public and the public has been provided identifiable public comment links to both the Local and Regional Plans.

The public comment period started at 8:00 a.m. on March 10, 2025, and will end at 5:00 p.m. on April 10, 2025. Persons who wish to comment on the Local and/or Regional Plan(s) is/are able to do so during the public comment period by any of the following methods:



- Via email at: [WIOALocalPlan@kerncounty.com](mailto:WIOALocalPlan@kerncounty.com) and [WIOARegionalPlan@kerncounty.com](mailto:WIOARegionalPlan@kerncounty.com).
- In writing to: Jeremy Shumaker, Assistant Director, ETR, 1600 East Belle Terrace, Bakersfield, CA 93307.
- By telephone to: Jeremy Shumaker at (661) 325-4473.
- In person by attending today's public forum. American Sign Language and Spanish interpreters have been made available at today's meeting.

Therefore, IT IS RECOMMENDED that your Executive Committee approve on behalf of the Workforce Development Board the Local and Regional Plans for Program Years 2025 - 2029 and further recommend the Chair of the Kern, Inyo and Mono Workforce Development Board sign the Local and Regional Plans for Program Years 2025 – 2028 for submittal to the CWDB on or before April 27, 2025.

Sincerely,



Brandon J. Evans  
Chief Workforce Development Officer

BJE:ms  
Attachments



# Kern, Inyo and Mono Counties Workforce Development Board

## Local Plan Program Years 2025 – 2028



Contact:	Brandon J. Evans, Chief Workforce Development Officer
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**I. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act includes requirements for Local Boards to establish a framework for collaboration among state and local programs that are financially supported by nineteen distinct federal fund sources. Six of these programs constitute the four “core partners:” the WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs; the WIOA Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program; the WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser Act Program; and the WIOA Title IV State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program. The core partners, together with thirteen other federally supported programs, make-up the WIOA-mandated one-stop partners. The Kern, Inyo and Mono Counties Workforce Development Board (KIM WDB) has entered into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the organizations managing each federal program at the local level. The narrative that follows describes coordination with the WIOA core and other required program partners as prescribed by the Act.

**Overview of Local One-Stop System Partners**

KIM WDB has built strong and effective relationships with state and local agencies that represent the one-stop partner programs. Over the next four years, the WDB looks forward to further enhancing coordination with each of the workforce system partners.

Following is a summary of the local/regional organizations representing the federal one-stop partner programs with which the KIM WDB has developed an MOU.

Partner Programs	MOU Partner
WIOA Title I Adult WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker WIOA Title I Youth	Kern County Employers’ Training Resource
WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy	Delano Joint High School District Farmworker Institute for Education @ Leadership Development Kern High School District McFarland Unified School District Wasco Union High School District Tehachapi Unified School District
WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser	Employment Development Department (EDD)
WIOA Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation	California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR)
Carl Perkins Career Technical Education	Bakersfield College Cerro Coso Community College Taft College Kern Community College District Taft Community College District
Older Americans Act Title V Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)	SER – Jobs for Progress, Inc.
Job Corps	Inland Empire Job Corps Center
Native American Programs (WIOA Section 166)	California Indian Manpower Consortium
Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers (MSF) (WIOA Section 167)	<i>Not applicable. There is no MSF program in the county.</i>
Jobs for Veterans State Grants	Employment Development Department

Youth Build	<i>Not applicable. There is no Youth Build program in the county.</i>
Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)	Employment Development Department
Community Services Block Grant	Community Action Partnership of Kern
Housing and Urban Development E&T	Housing Authority of Kern County
Unemployment Insurance (UI)	Employment Development Department
Second Chance Act	Latino Coalition for Community Leadership
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)/CalWORKs	Kern County Department of Human Services

**MOU with WIOA Colocated and Non-Colocated Partners**

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Kern County Employers’ Training Resource (ETR), the fiscal and administrative agent of the KIM WDB and the WIOA-mandated partners contains the following key provisions.

Responsibility of AJCC Partners: AJCC/One-Stop Partners agree that the following reflect foundational tenets. The AJCC partners agree to:

- Participate in joint planning, plan development, and modification of activities offered by the partner to facilitate continuous partnership building; continuous planning in response to state and federal requirements; responsiveness to local and regional economic conditions, including employer needs; and participation in and adherence to common data collection and reporting needs, as required by law.
- Make agreed upon services available to customers through the one-stop delivery system.
- Participate in the design and operation of the one-stop system, consistent with the terms of the MOU and requirements of applicable law.
- Participate in capacity building and staff development activities to ensure all partners and staff are adequately cross trained on system services.

Funding of Services and Operating Costs: The partners agree to participate in the development of a cost-sharing agreement through Infrastructure Funding Agreements that identifies shared AJCC system costs. Such shared costs can be provided either in cash or through in-kind services. Actual costs of the system will be driven by the system designed by the partners. These costs could range from items such as rent and utilities for agencies with a physical presence at the AJCC, to a proportionate cost of developing and maintaining common informational portals for job seekers and employers.

***AJCC Partner Programs***

The following information summarizes the ways in which KIM WDB and the local workforce system collaborate with organizations managing the federally mandated one-stop partner programs.

WIOA Title I – Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs: The three formula-funded programs are administered by Kern County Employers’ Training Resource, the fiscal and

administrative agent of the KIM WDB. Services are delivered at one comprehensive AJCC, located in Bakersfield, and at several affiliate and specialized sites.

WIOA Title II – Adult Education and Literacy: Kern Community College District, on behalf of Bakersfield College and Cerro Coso Community College, and Taft Community College District, on behalf of Taft College, are WIOA Title II adult education and literacy grant recipients. Referrals are regularly made between the Title I and Title II programs, and many participants are co-enrolled. When the California Department of Education requests applications for Adult Education Title II Education and Literacy Activities, ETR staff reviews applications to determine how they complement the Local Workforce Development Plan.

WIOA Title III – Wagner-Peyser: Wagner-Peyser staff are co-located in the AJCC. Staff at ETR works with EDD to coordinate marketing and outreach to UI claimants, ensuring full access to all available WIOA services, and ETR participates in EDD's RESEA workshops. EDD collaborates with ETR through its representatives, participation in Job Fairs and by referring businesses to EDD to post their job orders. EDD and ETR staff also collaborate on Rapid Response orientations for laid off workers.

WIOA Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation: WIOA and DOR staff are cross-trained in the eligibility requirements for services that each offers in order to ensure appropriate referrals. Regular meetings are held to discuss and enhance the referral process and co-enrollments. DOR staff is available to provide technical assistance and training to AJCC and partner staff in disability awareness and use of competitive integrated employment. DOR and ETR have collaborated on the expansion of competitive integrated employment opportunities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. DOR staff are co-located at the comprehensive AJCC in Bakersfield.

Carl Perkins Career Technical Education: The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV) is a principal source of federal funding to states and discretionary grantees for the improvement of secondary and postsecondary career and technical education programs across the nation. The purpose of the Act is to develop more fully the academic, career, and technical skills of secondary and postsecondary students who elect to enroll in career and technical education programs. The community colleges through the Kern Community College District and Taft Community College District are recipients of Perkins funding in Kern County.

Title V Older Americans Act: SER – Jobs for Progress, Inc. operates the Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP) that serves Kern, Inyo and Mono Counties residents. The program offers short-term pre-vocational services to eligible seniors who are 55+, low income, and have barriers to employment; and provides part-time, temporary on-the-job training through community service assignments at local nonprofits and government agencies. SER – Jobs for Progress, Inc. representatives participate in the AJCC partner meetings led by the One-Stop Operator and have provided training on its program to ETR and partner staff. SER – Jobs for Progress, Inc. has an office located in the comprehensive AJCC in Bakersfield.

Job Corps: Programs representatives conduct eligibility determination for Job Corps services. Their principal activity at the comprehensive AJCC in Bakersfield is to promote the Job Corps program to potential applicants, who are young adults ages 16 to 24.

Native American Programs (WIOA Section 166): KIM WDB collaborates with California Indian Manpower Consortium (CIMC) to provide referrals and co-enrollment opportunities for Indian and Native American job seekers, along with access to all WIOA and partner services available through the AJCC.

Migrant Seasonal Farmworker Program (WIOA Section 167): There is no entity that administers and operates the Migrant Seasonal Farmworker (MSFW) program in KIM Workforce Development Area. ETR refers clients to other partner programs for services.

Jobs for Veterans State Grants: EDD administers this program and designated Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER) Specialists support the AJCC by providing assistance to veterans seeking employment.

Trade Adjustment Assistance Act: TAA, which is operated by EDD, is a federal program that provides aid to workers who lose their jobs or whose hours of work and wages are reduced as a result of increased imports. The TAA program offers a variety of benefits and reemployment services to help unemployed workers prepare for and obtain suitable employment. Workers may be eligible for training, job search, and other reemployment services. Coordination with TAA generally includes co-enrollment into WIOA, which provides multiple benefits, including TAA funds being used to cover all training costs.

Community Services Block Grant: Community Action Partnership of Kern is a key partner in providing a wide range of support services to workforce system customers. The organization provides early childhood education programs, food and nutrition services, utilities assistance, housing support and more. ETR and the community action agency regularly refer customers to each other.

Housing and Urban Development Employment and Training Program: Housing Authority of Kern County is a critical partner in providing both work experience and leveraged opportunities.

Unemployment Compensation: The Unemployment Insurance program is accessible to ETR customers by phone or via EDD's website. AJCC staff works with EDD to coordinate marketing and outreach to UI claimants, ensuring full access to all available WIOA services.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families/CalWORKs: Kern County Department of Human Services assists individuals and families with welfare services. These services

include but are not limited to Cash Assistance, Diversion Assistance, Medi-Cal Coverage, CalFresh, and Employment Services.

### **Partners' Collaboration on Co-Enrollment and Case Management**

WIOA's emphasis on system partnerships, leveraging of resources, and customer-centered design have all contributed to an environment in which workforce development stakeholders are focused on identifying a broad range of resources to assist job seekers in meeting their education, training, employment, and career goals.

For many years, ETR and other local system partners has been co-enrolling participants. Most frequently, the event driving co-enrollment across two or more programs is the identification of a participant having multiple barriers to employment and, therefore, demonstrating needs for multiple interventions. Some of the most common partners for co-enrollment across systems include local providers of TANF, Wagner-Peyser, Probation, and Child Support Services. DOR and local education agencies programs are also strong candidates for having participants co-enrolled in WIOA or other programs. Due to the lack of a shared case management system among all workforce partners, communication between organizations serving common customers relies, after client approval, on verbal and written communication between staff from two or more organizations. Co-case management is most often seen among the workforce system partner programs that utilize the state CalJOBS system. These include the WIOA Title I programs, Wagner-Peyser, veterans' employment services, and the TAA program. The AJCC Partner Referral Form will continue to be used for all customer referrals, until an alternative referral process is agreed to by the partners. All completed forms are sent to the designated email address that each partner provides. Partners are responsible for tracking the referrals they send and receive through the AJCC Partner Referral process.

### **Use of Technology to Support for Co-Enrollment**

WIOA and various other fund sources strongly encourage co-enrollment of customers to provide as many partner services as possible without duplication. As customers are co-enrolled, frequent communication and case management occur between partners. The local system partners have strong relationships, and referrals and co-enrollments between the partners is documented in each agency's case management system. For WIOA, this occurs in CalJOBS and updates regarding cases are commonly shared, with an Authorization of Exchange of Information consent completed by the participant. As situations arise regarding a common customer, partners ensure all details are communicated and questions are addressed on a timely basis. When participants are co-enrolled in programs for which the partners use CalJOBS (e.g., TAA), co-case management is much easier, and information sharing is facilitated by the system.

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### **Co-Enrollment Improvement Strategies**

Co-enrollment and co-case management strategies are facilitated when staff from various programs are informed about the content and requirements of other workforce system programs. ETR has sponsored various cross-training sessions for AJCC partner staff to increase their understanding about all partner programs and to share expertise about the needs of various populations. ETR is committed to coordination of additional cross-training among the AJCC partners, to promote learning for new AJCC staff and to reinforce information among all organizations within the local workforce development delivery system. The more frontline staff know about partner programs, the greater the likelihood that they can make appropriate referrals that will lead to co-enrollment. For frontline staff that are unable to attend the trainings on partner programs, the trainings are available on YouTube.

### **AJCC One-Stop System's Use of Technology and Other Remote Strategies**

With its 21,522 square miles and population of just under 940,000 residents, Kern, Inyo and Mono Counties are the largest of the local workforce areas and the second largest in population in the Central Valley. While more than 410,000 residents reside in Bakersfield, a large portion reside in rural areas. Ensuring access for all of the residents in Kern, Inyo and Mono Counties, there are a total of ten (10) AJCCs, consisting of one (1) comprehensive, seven (7) affiliated and two (2) specialized AJCCs. Both brick and mortar, and virtual operations are key to meeting this objective.

### **Comprehensive, Affiliated and Specialized AJCCs and Other Physical Locations**

The public transit system in Kern, Inyo and Mono Counties are effective in moving people in and out of the locations where comprehensive, affiliated and specialized one-stop AJCCs are located. The AJCCs are well equipped, offering a fully outfitted resource room with computers, internet access, and a wide range of resources that job seekers need to support their career planning and employment goals. For job seekers in remote communities, other options for in-person services are available. On a scheduled basis, ETR staff travel to designated locations to conduct orientations or meet with prospective customers. In addition, other partner locations throughout the tri-county area can serve as onramps to workforce programs. Applicants may be able to use computers, internet, phones, and other equipment at these sites to make contact with ETR and begin their process of learning about and receiving workforce services. In addition, ETR is partnering with the Kern County Public Library (KCPL) system to help expand AJCC services for customers that are unable to visit the centers during regular hours of operation. The KCPL system has 22 branches some of which are located in remote areas of the county.

### **Delivering Services through Virtual Platforms and Web-Based Information**

As stated above, KIM WDB has made significant developments in recent years in launching its virtual intake system and utilizing CareerHubUS.com, which enables remote communications, exchange of information, and participation in services. Effects of the

pandemic on the ability to provide in-person services accelerated further development of this system and the migration of many services (e.g., job readiness workshops and skills training) to web-based platforms. A byproduct of services being available on the web is that they are, at least in theory, more readily accessible to individuals living in remote corners of the counties of Kern, Inyo and Mono or blocks away from the one comprehensive, six affiliated and two specialized AJCCs. The KIM WDB recognizes, however, that there is a profound digital divide in Kern, Inyo and Mono Counties with many individuals lacking internet access, hardware, and technology skills to gain access to and effectively utilize virtual services.

Practices and procedures have been put in place so that customers can be provided all WIOA services remotely. These include career and training services, orientation, eligibility, assessment, enrollment, and case management. Services are provided through email, phone and text through CareerHubUS.com, and video communications with no in-person appointments. However, in-person appointments are available upon request. In addition to these services, necessary forms can be provided, discussed, and signed by customers and staff remotely by utilizing CareerHubUS.com or DocuSign on a customer's personal cell phone. Staff utilize CalJOBS for customers to upload their eligibility documents and have customers sign documents by PDF.

### **Improving Service Delivery to Remote Communities**

Addressing technology gaps experienced by many residents of Kern, Inyo and Mono Counties will be a top priority for KIM WDB over the four-year period of this Local Plan. Improving access to web-based services is critical to every organization that is part of the local workforce system and many more agencies and programs that provide a host of services to county residents. The KIM WDB will engage with state officials and work with county government to identify strategies to increase access.

### **Coordination of Workforce Activities and Support Services**

The KIM WDB provides supportive services to customers enrolled in WIOA training to enable their participation in services, training activities, and employment. Supportive services are coordinated for individuals with demonstrated financial need. The provision of supportive services is based on an individual's assessment results, budget, and the availability of funds. Supportive services are identified to address barriers to employment such as limited English proficiency, limited exposure to work, insufficient skills development, lack of credentialing, and other employer-valued skills, experience and educational attainment. During the intake process, customers complete a career profile assessment, inquiring as to the need for training and supportive services required to successfully achieve employment goals. This assessment is discussed in detail with case management staff to ensure need and, subsequently, referrals to appropriate agencies. Prior to accessing WIOA funds for supportive services, staff ensures that there is no duplication of services with other programs or benefits that an individual may be receiving. As indicated, WIOA supportive services are only provided if need and is determined if

funds are available. In all cases, WIOA funds are expended only after it is determined other services and sources of support are not available.

### **Types of WIOA Supportive Services**

Support services provided to WIOA-enrolled customers include items to meet a variety of needs, including transportation allowance while in training, bus passes, tools and equipment required for training, tools and clothing required for work, and other services, as appropriate and allowed through local policies. Such additional services may include funds for licensing fees; drug screening and background clearance applications; health and vision needs; and moving expenses for dislocated workers with a bona fide job offer. Long-term and costly forms of support, including childcare, are typically identified through referrals to local partner agencies.

### **Support Services Partners and Resources**

ETR staff has established working relationships with the Housing Authority of Kern County, Community Action Partnership of Kern, the Kern County Department of Human Services, Garden Pathways, Bakersfield Homeless Shelter, Independent Living Center of Kern County, Center for the Blind & Visually Impaired, California Department of Rehabilitation, and many other organizations that support persons in need of services to overcome barriers to employment and training. There is an electronic community resource listing by phone at 211 and 211Inteliful, online. These resources are updated by the Community Action Partnership of Kern. Workforce system partners are cross-trained on various forms and sources of supportive services that are available throughout the community, including services from government and non-profit, faith-based, and other community providers. ETR developed an English and Spanish Community resource directory that is regularly updated with local resources to assist job seekers with employment related barriers.

### **Physical and Programmatic Accessibility for Individuals with Disabilities**

KIM WDB has implemented various strategies to ensure compliance with WIOA Section 188 and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In addition, KIM WDB makes available technology, programs, and services that support job seekers with disabilities' effective use in all of the nine comprehensive, affiliate and specialized one-stop AJCCs throughout Kern, Inyo and Mono Counties.

### **Compliance with WIOA Section 188 and ADA**

All partners within the workforce development delivery system, including the One-Stop Operator (OSO) and partners co-located at the comprehensive AJCC, fully comply with WIOA Section 188 (non-discrimination and equal opportunity) and applicable provisions of the American with Disabilities Act of 1990. References to this requirement are included in all contracts and the MOU with all local workforce system partners. All enrolled participants sign a Grievance and Complaint Procedures form that informs them of steps

they can take in the event they wish to file a complaint. Notices regarding non-discrimination and equal opportunity are also prominently displayed in all of the AJCC lobbies for non-enrolled customers. Training on WIOA Section 188 is provided to all AJCC staff, include prohibiting discrimination against people who apply to, participate in, work for, or come into contact with programs and activities of the workforce development system. Training on the Americans with Disabilities Act includes the definition of an individual with a disability, reasonable accommodations, undue hardship, retaliation against an individual, and medical inquiries.

ETR is aware of the difficulties individuals with disabilities may encounter when accessing one-stop services and staff is committed to ensuring individuals with disabilities have physical and programmatic access to all one-stop systems and services. DOR, which administers California’s Vocational Rehabilitation program, is represented on the KIM WDB and is a significant resource for all of the AJCCs and the local workforce system in developing strategies to effectively serve individuals with disabilities. DOR staff also maintains scheduled office hours at the comprehensive one-stop AJCC located in Bakersfield and Delano and assists in training AJCC staff regarding accessibility and accommodations needed for job seekers with disabilities. AJCC facilities are certified compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act and offer Sorenson and other adaptive equipment. The one-stop AJCCs are located near major bus transportation routes, which allow for easy access. Staff are bilingual in English and Spanish and can translate as needed, while services in other languages are available when requested.

**Resources for Job Seekers with Disabilities**

As indicated, the one-stop AJCC complies with all mandates and notifications with regard to providing services and materials to individuals with disabilities. Technology which has been obtained and is available to individuals with disabilities includes, Sorenson, ZOOM screen enhancement software (assists individuals who are visually impaired); Ubi Duo (deaf/hearing impaired communication device); and Dragon Natural Speaking Software (speech recognition technology). In addition, one-on-one assistance is provided to customers to support the use of the one-stop AJCCs located throughout Kern, Inyo and Mono Counties. Reasonable accommodations are available upon request.

**Training to Increase System Effectiveness in Serving Individuals with Disabilities**

As indicated, training on WIOA Section 188 is provided to all AJCC staff. Training occurs annually, documentation is provided, and signatures/verification are obtained to ensure validation of training provided for county employees. This information is housed with ETR’s Equal Opportunity Officer. ETR also plans to continue to arrange for more training on topics such as best practices for serving individuals with disabilities. ETR will collaborate with DOR to identify and secure such training.

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**WIOA – Local Plan for Program Years 2025 – 2028**

In accordance with the requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 and guidance published by California Workforce Development Board and Employment Development Department, the KIM WDB has developed a four-year Local Plan covering Program Years (PY) 2025-28. Upon its approval by state officials representing the Governor, this Local Plan will become the official, active and effective version of the plan beginning on July 1, 2025 and remaining in effect through June 30, 2029.

**II. WIOA CORE AND REQUIRED PARTNERSHIP COORDINATION****A. *How the Local Board and AJCC partners will coordinate the services and resources identified in its MOU, as outlined in WIOA Memorandums of Understanding (WSD18-12).***

The WIOA MOU addresses service coordination and collaboration amongst the eighteen WIOA partners (AJCC Partners). The purpose of the WIOA MOU is to establish a cooperative working relationship between the KIM WDB and the required AJCC Partners as well as defining their respective roles and responsibilities in achieving a seamless one-stop delivery system that is quality-focused, employer-driven, customer-centered, and tailored to meet the needs of the local economy. This WIOA MOU also serves to establish the framework for providing a unified one-stop delivery system to employers, employees, job seekers, and others needing workforce services. The WIOA MOU serves as a functional tool as well as a visionary plan for how KIM WDB and the AJCC Partners work together to serve the needs of their shared customers. The AJCC one-stop delivery system is driven by local needs and will evolve over time as employers and individual's customers' needs change. The AJCC Partners manage referrals through cross-training of appropriate staff. The AJCC Partners also provide access to each required AJCC Partner's program through cross-referrals, such as: physically co-locating at the AJCC center, being available for appointments to job seekers, and having appropriate technologies at the AJCC.

The WIOA MOU addressed how the WIOA Partners functionally and fiscally will sustain the AJCC One-Stop delivery system in KIM Counties through the use of resource sharing and joint operating and infrastructure costs. Each of the AJCC Partners that carries out a program or activities within the comprehensive AJCC must use a portion of the funds available for their program and activities to help maintain the One-Stop delivery system, including proportional payment of the infrastructure costs of the locally operated comprehensive AJCC. Staff have received training from the California WDB which has assisted the KIM WDB and AJCC Partners with the continued development of cost sharing agreements for both infrastructure budgets and other shared cost budgets. The WIOA MOU

allows for the co-located AJCC Partners to meet on a regular basis to develop a mutually agreeable budget for the comprehensive AJCC. In addition, the co-located AJCC Partners have negotiated the cost sharing methodology based upon their proportionate use and relative benefit to each co-located AJCC partner while complying with federal cost principles.

**B. *How the Local Board and AJCC partners will work towards co-enrollment and/or common case management as a service delivery strategy, as outlined in Strategic Co-Enrollment – Unified Plan Partners (WSD19-09).***

The Better Bakersfield & Boundless Kern Regional Action for Economic Prosperity (B3K Report) provided the KIM WDB with the foundation to continue work on career pathways working in partnership with WIOA partners. The B3K Report highlighted those occupations within the industry clusters that show growth and present an individual with a sustainable wage. The B3K Report focuses on achieving dual economic objectives of (i) enduring growth and competitiveness for the Kern region, and (ii) jobs that enable self-sufficiency and upward mobility of its residents. These outcomes require workforce and economic development strategies that focus not just on job counts, but the quality of jobs created and providing access to them. In particular, “middle skill, middle income” jobs for workers with less than a bachelor's degree are central to determining workforce and economic development priorities, responding to the impact of macroeconomic trends that hollowed out job creation in that category and reduced pathways to employment opportunities. The "Opportunity Industries" analysis used in the B3K Report identifies the sectoral concentrations of “good” and “promising” jobs that enable workers to achieve self-sufficiency for themselves and their families. Furthermore, Opportunity Industries affords a granular understanding of progressions in job quality by sector, by occupation and worker demographics. With this information, KIM WDB will prioritize workforce development interventions by focusing on sectors that concentrate on good jobs, enhance job quality in other prominent clusters, align workforce outreach, and training activities to ensure residents are better connected to those jobs. The term “Good jobs” must meet four criteria, including (i) pays a sufficient annual wage that enables workers to meet their family’s market basket of expenses and savings, and be ineligible for California benefit transfers; (ii) provides employer sponsored health insurance which is a proxy for other employment benefits; and (iii) affords career pathways that lead to the same or another good job in the future; (iv) upward mobility toward better quality jobs. This analysis also accounts for differences in the quality of a job and the likelihood of upward mobility depending on the attributes of the person who holds the job.

In order to help residents in the local workforce development area obtain jobs that ensure both long-term economic self-sufficiency and economic security, KIM WDB continues to work with industry, education, labor, and economic development leaders. KIM WDB collaborates with its WIOA partners to identify and solve employment challenges, support system alignment, partnership building, employer

engagement, sector strategies, and development of service strategies focusing on serving individuals with barriers to employment. KIM WDB relies upon its nine (9) America's Job Centers of California (AJCC) spanning three counties as the cornerstone of its workforce system. The AJCC serves as an all-inclusive access point to education and employment programs that provide demand-driven skills attainment, especially for those with barriers to employment, including English Language Learners, Homeless and Housing Insecure, Immigrants, Justice-Involved Individuals, People with Disabilities, Veterans, Youth, Low-income households and Dislocated Workers. To ensure maximum participant access to WIOA programs and services, including training, KIM WDB leverages resources through strategic co-enrollment. Through the Memorandum of Understanding, WIOA partners within the AJCC system collaborate to streamline administrative processes in order to co-enroll participants and direct resources to meet the needs of participants within the local workforce development area. KIM WDB collaborates with WIOA partners to increase service integration, as appropriate. KIM WDB continually improves service delivery to meet participant needs through co-enrollment into partner programs. KIM WDB assists participants' access to resources across partner programs by having AJCC staff work in cross-functional teams and provide ongoing training and professional development. This training and professional development allows AJCC staff to be knowledgeable in the eligibility requirements of partner programs to allow for an integrated service delivery and co-enrollment which streamlines intensive services, such as case management, job search assistance, and follow-up services.

**C. *How the Local Board and AJCC partners will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system, including remote areas, through the use of technology and other means.***

KIM WDA spans more than 21,400 square miles of fertile farmland on the Central San Joaquin Valley floor, the arid Mojave Desert, and the mountains of the Eastern Sierra Region. The KIM WDA is larger in area than the State's largest county, San Bernardino. Sparsely populated, the residents of Inyo and Mono Counties comprise 3.5% of the Workforce Development Area's population of 938,593 (July 1, 2023) residents. Due to the seasonal nature of employment, sparse population, low number of employers, and other factors, most economic studies do not target individual employers in Inyo or Mono Counties, but rather aggregate data for the Eastern Sierra Region.

Given the breadth of the Workforce Development Area (WDA), KIM plans to utilize technology, such as Skype, Zoom, Teams, Webex, Google Conference and Social Media platforms such as: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube to facilitate access to services and enhance the currently maintained websites [www.americasjobcenterofkern.com](http://www.americasjobcenterofkern.com) and [www.employerstrainingresource.com](http://www.employerstrainingresource.com). These websites provide information regarding current training and employment opportunities, employer recruitments, job fairs, weekly Facebook Live Job Squad employment opportunity announcement forum, industry forums, orientation

information, special grant opportunities, connections to all AJCC partner services and programs, Workforce Development Board agendas and notices, community resources, policy bulletins, request for procurement/refunding, and program performance data. Using websites and YouTube, KIM WDB will offer on-line video links that allow both employers and job seeker customers to review work readiness workshops, partner services presentations, and more information about specific programs and services at their convenience; virtual orientations to offer an additional on-ramp to services to assist job seekers, incumbent workers, customers with accessibility or transportation barriers, and anyone unable to visit centers during regular hours of operation; and the use of remote access points. Kern County established remote access points for county services using San Joaquin Air Pollution Control Grant aimed at reducing vehicle miles. These remote access points are provided using video equipment that could be used to provide career services in outlying areas. KIM WDB will continue to explore technological advances that can help us to provide customers with other options for service delivery in remote areas.

At the present time, KIM WDB is partnering with the Kern County Public Library (KCPL) system to help expand AJCC services for customers that are unable to visit the centers during regular hours of operation. The KCPL system has 22 branches some of which are located in remote areas of the county.

In addition, KIM WDB staff uses CareerHubUS.com's Virtual Service Model ("VSM") to communicate with clients and employers. The VSM permits staff to communicate more effectively and efficiently with clients by texting information to their mobile devices. This allows staff to provide job seekers in the targeted populations with assistance through the use of innovative service delivery methods and lets employers know about services they have requested. Staff is able to provide technical assistance, coaching, virtual training, reminders, referrals to on-line and shared community resources, notices to job/resource fairs, employer recruitments and other employment opportunities, and matching clients with job opportunities via text, email and voicemail to the customers' smartphone regardless of their geographic location. The VSM has increased efficiency and program outcomes through engagement of the targeted population.

***D. How the Local Board and AJCC partners will coordinate workforce and education activities with the provision of appropriate supportive services.***

ETR met with staff from California State University, Bakersfield, Kern High School District's Bakersfield Adult School, Bakersfield and Taft Colleges, and Kern County Superintendent of Schools regarding improved access to credentials. One of the colleges suggested encouraging local employers to increase use of WorkKeys as an assessment tool for their specific occupations. Another suggestion was to provide additional cross training to staff in order to better understand how more students, not just those enrolled in target industry clusters, might be assisted by the one-stop AJCC system including access to supportive services. Suggestions

also included for staff to assist individuals that need out-of-state, out-of-country credentials evaluated to meet the credential requirements of California.

KIM WDB has also partnered with the Kern County Public Library (KCPL). The KCPL provides the public free Wi-Fi and public access computers, with low-cost printing, copying, and scanning available. Residents with personal, professional, or educational needs may visit any KCPL branch for in-person services such as technology assistance, English and citizenship classes, one-on-one computer help, job recruitments and fairs, as well as to access free online databases for test prep and business learning. KCPL visitors may also utilize library computers to search for jobs, submit job applications, and seek assistance with library personnel during workforce appointments. Beale Memorial Library, the main branch, which is located in Bakersfield, also provides tutors in math and reading through scheduled appointments and in conjunction with their Snacks in the Stacks program which provides free meals to children 18 and under. Utilizing partners, such as the library supports student and adult learners by strengthening Kern County networks that ensure better retention and completion of beneficial credentials to provide a literacy/digital lab at Beale Memorial Library. Students needing to improve their keyboarding and computer skills may make appointments for one-on-one tutoring to learn how to navigate the World Wide Web as well as the Windows Software programs. Beale Memorial Library also provides tutors in math and reading through scheduled appointments; have access to practice tests on a variety of subjects; and non-traditional hours of operations to afford more public use and support the adult learner. Utilizing partners to strengthen the support networks for students and adult learners will help with retention to ensure forward progression of credentials.

Presently, the referral system allows WIOA and community Partners to email a referral form to the other partner(s) which includes the information about the customer and services needed. However, this referral system is antiquated and needs a more robust universal referral tracking system in place to ensure customers are receiving the services they deserve from the AJCC. The One-Stop Operator has been working with the WIOA and community Partners to formalize a universal referral tracking that is acceptable to all partners. Unfortunately, EDD and DOR are unable to utilize third party referral software. The WIOA and community Partners, in cooperation with the One-Stop Operator are working on implementing a referral system that is user friendly and provides direct access to all of the AJCC partners (except EDD and DOR) through real-time technology. EDD and DOR will continue to use the present referral system. The third-party software will allow WIOA and community Partners to track outcomes together, identify service gaps and at-risk populations, and most importantly, refer customers to partner services to benefit the community.

Supportive Services are provided to eligible customers that present a financial need which affects their ability to obtain or maintain employment. Current services include, but are not limited to transportation, hygiene kits, tools, uniforms,

certifications/license fees and other expenses such as books and background checks. KIM WDB coordinates with One Stop partners and other community-based organizations to provide services not afforded by KIM WDB. In the interest of improving customer service, the coordinator will serve as a point of contact for the customer and be responsible to report the outcome of services. This prevents duplication of services, enhances braiding of resources, and prevents the customer from being lost in red tape. KIM WDB also maintains a community resource directory of services available through other agencies and community-based organizations. The directory provides contact information for organizations providing transportation, utility assistance, legal services, childcare services, food, clothing, shelter, tax assistance, substance abuse counseling, and assistance for battered women, and youth in crises.

Two examples of coordination with partners are:

Supportive services are used for eligible customers to take the bilingual exam at Bakersfield College. Attainment of this recognized certificate qualifies them for many job opportunities with private employers and public organizations.

Community Connection for Child Care provides subsidized childcare services to families meeting eligibility criteria. Families in need can either place their child(ren) in licensed day care programs or may have a family member compensated while caring for their child(ren). This is a much-needed service to individuals entering the workforce. KIM WDB leverages funds by making direct referrals for services without utilizing WIOA supportive services dollars.

**E. *How the Local Board and AJCC partners will comply with WIOA Section 188 and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, materials for individuals with disabilities, as outlined in Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity Procedures (WSD17-01).***

KIM WDB has universal workstations located all of its comprehensive, affiliate and specialized one-stop AJCCs. These universally accessible workstations are available to any person with a disability including those with mobility, hearing and visual barriers. The workstations are typically placed in the Resource Room where a staff member is located. This allows for easy access to the workstation and staff is readily available for assistance. The universally accessible computer has Windows-based software with assistive technology including:

- *Screen Magnifier*: Magnifies the computer screen up to a maximum of 1500%
- *Narrator*: Requires the use of headphones and has the ability to read a selection of words or paragraphs

- *Speech Recognition*: Uses an external microphone for speech-to-text. The built-in MS Windows software works in all applications including the MS Office Suite, Google Chrome and Internet Explorer
- *Flatbed Scanner*: Compatible peripheral device connected to the workstation with the capability to scan both text and image documents to various file types including PDF, JPEG, TIFF via push button on the scanner and/or an on-screen guide

KIM WDB is aware of the difficulties individuals with disabilities encounter when accessing AJCC One-Stop services and is committed to ensuring individuals with disabilities have physical and programmatic access to the One-Stop system and services. The DOR administers California's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program and is represented throughout Kern Inyo and Mono Counties. The AJCC One-Stops promote universal access in order to achieve full compliance with state and federal laws and to increase employment of individuals with disabilities. KIM WDB's staff are provided annual training to improve and coordinate agency services to customers with disabilities. KIM WDB's AJCC One-Stop facilities are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act and offer TTY, Braille materials and other adaptive equipment as requested. One-Stops are located near major bus transportation routes which allow for easy access. Most AJCC One-Stop Resource Rooms contain Universal Access Workstations (UAW) which are available to any person with a disability including those with mobility, hearing and visual barriers. KIM WDB complies with all State issued policy guidance with regard to access for individuals with disabilities. Kern County also contracts with an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter service, and Independent Living Center of Kern County. Spanish bi-lingual staff can translate documents as needed, while other languages are available when requested.

### III. STATE STRATEGIC PARTNER COORDINATION

#### A. ***How the Local Board will coordinate with County Health and Human Services Agencies and other local partners who serve individuals who access CalFresh Employment and Training service.***

The Kern, Inyo and Mono Workforce Development Board (KIM WDB), by and through its administrative and fiscal agent, Kern County Employers' Training Resource (ETR) have partnered with Kern County Department of Human Services (DHS) to identify ways to increase communication and reduce barriers with shared customers. In addition, ETR will continue to work with community-based organizations (CBOs), service providers, community colleges, and representatives of DHS to increase employment rates and wage gains for all individuals who receive CalFresh with the common goal to help low skilled, low income or low wage individuals find sustainable employment. DHS has also entered a partnership with

the Foundation for Community Colleges Fresh Success and third-party provider, Bakersfield College, to provide educational career development opportunities and supportive services.

Partnerships between these agencies emphasize sharing information through access to their respective programs, braiding resources, and blending services at each of their locations. This includes physical co-location of staff, cross training of staff, virtual access through phones or websites, distribution of printed materials and establishing a process for reciprocal referrals to appropriate services offered through the partnering agency.

CalFresh E&T focuses on serving a population that traditionally have not had their workforce needs met by other federal workforce programs: low-income individuals with significant barriers to success.

CalFresh participants need more education and training to succeed in advancing to middle-skill jobs compared to other job seekers. For example, a majority of Kern County CalFresh households include an adult caretaker without a high school diploma. Although participation in CalFresh E&T is not limited to these groups, the CalFresh recipients targeted for E&T participation are able-bodied adults and college students, and General Assistance Employable (non-aged/disabled) recipients. Participation in E&T is strictly voluntary for the CalFresh program.

<i>Kern County Department of Human Services (DHS)</i>	
<i>CalFresh Participant Demographics: November 2024</i>	
<b>Cases</b>	104,799
<b>Individuals Participating</b>	226,834
<b>Ages 18-59</b>	104,555
<b>English Second Language (ESL)</b>	57,391
<b>Receiving Employable General Assistance</b>	196
<b>Higher Education Students</b>	4,343
<b>Estimated CF Employment and Training Participants</b>	95

The barriers these individuals face may include a lack of knowledge about training program options, lack of childcare or transportation, low basic skills (literacy/numeracy), basic English language proficiency, homelessness or housing instability, psychological issues and/or criminal backgrounds.

Workforce services must be developed to improve employment rates and wage gains for all individuals who receive public benefits and create a seamless service

delivery flow between DHS and its CalFresh E&T partners. Workforce services targeted for unemployed or underemployed individuals should:

- 1 Increase job placements, retention and able to increase wages to “a living wage”;
- 2 Increase CalFresh E&T participation across a dynamic mix of people, communities and cultures;
- 3 Increase employability by removing barriers to employment;
- 4 Increase skills to attainment and credentialing; and
- 5 Braid funding streams to maximize budgets.

Examples of these services include, but are not limited to:

- On-the-job training;
- Work experience (including paid apprenticeships);
- Educational programs (including ESL Classes);
- Job Search skills;
- Job Club;
- Vocational training;
- Career/technical programs;
- Job retention for up to 90-days post-employment; and
- Providing supportive services that directly help participants succeed in E&T components.

Making these E&T services accessible to these targeted individuals will assist them in eventually getting a “good job”, which will provide them “a wage sufficient to support a family adequately, and, over time to save for emergency expenses”.

DHS offers the following employment services to local community members:

- Job Fest (Fairs) – DHS organizes and hosts several job fairs throughout Kern County (Bakersfield, Lake Isabella, Taft, Ridgecrest, Shafter, Mojave, Lamont and Delano, and Wasco). Over a hundred potential employers from the private and public sector participate and at times, may interview and hire on-site.

DHS partners with Employer’s Training Resource to provide the following E&T service components to eligible CalFresh E&T participants on a voluntary basis:

- Job Search – Orientation and Job Readiness Assessments provide a participant-centered evaluation of basic skills, education, work history, occupational skills, general employability, interests, and aptitudes. Supervised job search activities are provided both on-site and virtually. Access to CalJOBS, assistance with resume building, and training on how to search for

jobs, job interview skills, guidance on completing job applications, instructor lead training on job retention skills and techniques and how to dress for interviews.

- Non-Paid Work Experience – Evaluation of each participant for potential placement in appropriate non-paid work experience programs. Job site monitoring ensures participants are performing within the scope of the job as outlined in the site agreement and that participants attain positive work habits. The non-paid work experience placement may be completed concurrently with the Supervised Job Search activity.

DHS offers the following supportive services to CalFresh E&T participants:

- Transportation Funds – participants of the Employment and Training program may receive bus passes to be able to travel to the designated areas required to complete training workshops or seek employment, and attend interviews.

In the upcoming year, DHS will roll out a new partnership with the Foundation for Community Colleges to operate E&T utilizing the Fresh Success program model. The Foundation will offer the following E&T service components through a third party provider, Bakersfield College, to eligible CalFresh E&T participants, on a voluntary basis:

- Education – Bakersfield College will offer Fresh Success enrollment to students enrolled in for-credit Career Education courses and programs, as well as students enrolled in noncredit programs such as basic skills, high school equivalency, English for Multilingual Students, and vocational training. Participating students meet with the Basic Needs or Students of Concern team and their academic counselor to discuss academic progress, potential barriers, and course of action to address barriers through direct referrals to on or off-campus service providers.

The Foundation receives federal funding for the administration of the Fresh Success E&T program through contract with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), with no exchange of funds through DHS.

The Foundation's Fresh Success program offers the following supportive services as needed to CalFresh E&T participants:

- Transportation funds;
- Textbooks;
- Training materials and supplies;

- Tests and fees;
- Emergency housing and utilities;
- Minor automobile repairs;
- Interview/work clothing and tools;
- Internet/mobile device service payments; and
- Medical, vision and dental expenses; personal hygiene products and services.

The Foundation receives funding for supportive services through philanthropic sources, as well as federal 50/50 reimbursement, with no funds passing through DHS.

DHS also collaborates and provides referrals to several community agency partners to assist with CalFresh participant's barriers. Some partners include:

- America's Job Centers – Employment and training services.
- Child Support Department – Custodial and non-custodial parent referrals to obtain assistance with information on their child support payments received, or required to pay.
- Community Connection for Childcare – Subsidized and unsubsidized childcare referrals for individuals in need of childcare.
- Housing Authority – Housing assistance for low-income individuals.
- Veteran's Department – Assistance in seeking VA benefits that individuals or their dependents might be entitled to receive.
- Community Action Partnership of Kern – Housing cost assistance and income tax preparations (Federal and State EIC).
- Kern Behavioral Health – Substance abuse treatment and mental health services.

Several Partnership opportunities can be developed to assist these targeted individuals with the outlined barriers above by leveraging the CalFresh Employment and Training 50/50 federal funding and partnering with third parties to deliver and provide the resources and services needed to achieve the goal of obtaining a "good job".

Partner information sharing is accomplished by providing access to their respective programs, service locations; which includes physical co-location of staff, cross training of staff, virtual access through phones or websites, distribution of printed materials and establishing a process for reciprocal referrals to appropriate services offered through the partnering agency.

With the common goal to help low skilled, low income or low wage individuals find sustainable employment, DHS could seek third-party partners (AJCCs, Community and Technical Colleges, and/or CBOs) to deliver Employment and

Training (E&T) services, including partners who can assist with removing employment barriers.

The goal is to coordinate services in which braiding of funds can be utilized to pay for E&T services and achieve a blending of services (combine and eliminate duplicate services to the same population) to provide these individuals with a customized plan that meets their needs. The braiding of resources to achieve the coordination of service delivery could be achieved by leveraging the CalFresh E&T's 100% Federal and 50/50 matching funds, WIOA (Adult Low Income and Dislocated Worker) funds and Non-federal matching funds such as, AB 109 and County general funds. The operating costs to provide these services would be shared upon the partners under a Memorandum of Understanding agreement.

The E&T partners would enter into a referral agreement, which could be a reciprocal referral procedure that would do the following:

- Individuals seeking employment or training resources at AJCCs, Community Based Organizations (CBOs), Community Colleges, or Educational Institutions could be referred to DHS to apply for CalFresh and be approved; DHS would refer these individuals to E&T partners which would then enroll the individuals in the necessary services; or
- Individuals receiving CalFresh could be referred by DHS to partners, which could then enroll the individual in the necessary services.

When seeking partners to braid resources and blend services or collaborating with CBOs, the following objectives would need to be met:

- 1 Work jointly to identify models of workforce services based on one-stop partnerships that meet the baseline federal expectations and evaluate service delivery to improve outcomes;
- 2 Work together to implement WIOA program strategies through a value-added partnership in which partners contribute to the basis of their programmatic expertise. The WIOA strategies would be as follows: subsidized employment, sector strategies, career pathways, and providing supportive services, “earn and learn” training models, including apprenticeships, integrating service delivery and braiding resources, and creating cross-system data capacity;
- 3 Provide access to their respective programs, service locations by means to be determined, which may include physical co-location of staff, cross training of staff, virtual access through phones or websites, distribution of printed materials and establish a process for reciprocal referrals to appropriate services offered through the partnering agency; and

- 4 Work to identify & implement best practices & model partnerships that encourage program coordination & alignment meeting federal standards for workforce service delivery models.

The following policy objectives of the state plan would need to be met by potential local partners to help provide services to CalFresh participants:

- 5 Fostering demand-driven skills attainment. Workforce and education programs need to align program content with the state's industry sector needs so as to provide county business and employers with the skilled workforce it needs to compete in the state's economy;
- 6 Enabling upward mobility for all Kern County residents, including populations with barriers to employment. Workforce and education programs need to be accessible for all county residents and ensure that everyone has access to a marketable set of skills and able to access the level of education necessary to ensure economic self-sufficiency and security;
- 7 Aligning, Coordinating, and Integrating Programs and Services to economize limited resources while providing the right services to clients, based on each client's particular needs, including individuals with disabilities; and
- 8 Serving Individuals with Barriers to Employment. This may include remedial education and English language literacy services.

Ultimately, the goal of the E&T partners would be to work together to identify and implement best practices and model partnerships that encourage program coordination and alignment to meet federal required standards pertaining to workforce service delivery models.

E&T partners would ensure that target populations have access to employment services, supportive services, training, and education programming that will help these individuals eventually get a "good job". This includes developing principles of common programs information, participant information sharing and common reporting through electronic mechanisms, including shared technology.

Partners could have success in retaining these individuals in E&T programs by participating in joint program planning, plan development and modification of activities to accomplish the following:

- o Continuous partnership building;
- o Continuous planning in response to state and federal requirements;
- o Responsiveness to local and economic conditions, including employer needs, and (v) Constantly reviewing the individuals E&T plan to ensure that any barrier is identified and services are available and provided to overcome the barrier.

***B. How the Local Board will coordinate with Local Child Support Agencies and other local partners who serve individuals who are non-custodial parents.***

Kern County Employers' Training Resource (ETR) will partner with Kern County Department of Child Support Services (KCDCSS) to identify ways to increase communication and reduce barriers with shared customers. Providing immediate and direct communication with customers at the time of service ensures customers have the necessary information to make educated decisions. Specifically, KCDCSS will provide video-conferencing equipment to be placed in strategic AJCC one-stop centers to ensure face-to-face interviews to discuss their specific child support case, educate the non-custodial parent on what to expect once they are employed, and review their case to ensure the order accurately reflects their current earning situation. In addition, a referral system has been created between the departments to inform one another of parents who would be qualified candidates for services.

As of September 2024, KCDCSS managed 47,638 open cases. Most families receiving services are living in poverty or are income instable. Of the total caseload, 25.9% families are currently receiving and 58.1% have previously received TANF benefits through the Department of Human Services. For these families, child support is a critical safety-net as consistent reliable child support payments help provide for the basic needs of the children in their care. Parents in these cases can have multiple cases and, depending on the situation, the person may be a custodial parent in one case and a noncustodial parent in another. Noncustodial parents in these cases can live throughout the state of California and nation, and in some cases internationally. There are 21,665 non-custodial parents with at least one open child support case. Of the total number of open cases, 7,003 noncustodial parents have some form of incarceration history. 86.0% of noncustodial parents are male. 45.5% of noncustodial parents are identified as Hispanic, 21.9% are White, and 13.8% are Black. Of the cities within the County of Kern, Bakersfield has the largest number noncustodial parents with a total of 16,141 people. The four other top Kern County cities include: Delano, Ridgecrest, Shafter, and Wasco.

KCDCSS currently works with all parents by proactively communicating throughout the establishment and enforcement of their child support order. During these interactions, parents are educated about the child support process and the specific impacts to their case. Throughout the life of the case and as personal situations change, court ordered child support amounts are reviewed and modified to reflect current circumstances. Staff are also educated about other available community resources and actively share this information with customers when appropriate.

Parents face a wide variety of challenges in meeting their parental responsibilities. Some of these challenges can be attributed to two different reasons. The first of which is reliable, consistent employment. Many parents struggle in finding full-time employment at a sustainable living wage. Formerly incarcerated and low skilled workers face greater challenges in securing full-time work as they are competing with higher skilled and more educated people entering the job market. Often, they rely on seasonal or part-time work

without benefits to just sustain themselves, with nothing left for their children. To be successful, parents need help with increasing their marketable skill sets making them more attractive to potential employers. Additionally, parents need available reliable jobs where they could earn livable incomes. Even if the person has the skills needed by employers and there are available job opportunities, access to available employment becomes the second area of difficulty. If the parent has additional challenges such as being an English language learner or not having reliable transportation, these challenges are exponentially more difficult to overcome.

As Kern County geographically spans over large distances, parents may live a considerable distance away from available employers making reliable transportation a necessity. The second challenge is private transportation costs, including purchasing of a vehicle, gas, and vehicle maintenance. All of these expenses can be detrimental for those living in both the larger cities as well as in neighboring towns. Public transportation is limited, can be difficult to use or access, and may not fit the family needs relating to childcare. For these parents to succeed in the labor market, they need assistance with overcoming these barriers.

Job preparation and training are critical for non-custodial parents to obtain meaningful and sustainable employment. Custodial Parents need to be able to depend on consistent monthly child support payments to successfully manage their budget. Non-Custodial Parents need to be prepared for the workforce which will provide them with enough wages to support themselves as well as their children. Recognizing unemployed or underemployed parents often have multifaceted challenges to securing full-time employment and may need additional resources and support, KDCDCSS has created a Family Resource Team dedicated to creating an additional level of support to parents while they are seeking employment or experiencing other hardships. For those parents referred through the partnership with ETR, KDCDCSS provides continued education and personalized child support case management to support parents actively participating in the workforce development services. This specialized support ensures parents understand the importance of supporting their child while reducing barriers for parents as they continue with the program.

To serve customers efficiently, KDCDCSS' Customer Service Representatives are able to handle most customer needs by phone, including making payments. For those seeking in-person services, KDCDCSS has worked to create a welcoming environment to reduce customer fear and apprehension of accessing services. There are three offices strategically located throughout Kern County for customers to access a case manager directly. The Bakersfield office serves as the main office location and is conveniently located with a bus stop steps from the property. For those traveling by motor vehicle, the building is easily accessible from the freeway and there is plenty of convenient customer parking. The Ridgecrest branch office provides services in the East Kern area. In 2023, the Delano branch office was opened to better serve Northwestern Kern County.

For even greater convenience, a mobile unit was secured this past year providing the department with a greater opportunity to serve customers in person throughout the county. This mobile unit is fully equipped for parents seeking child support services

allowing the case manager to take a variety of actions from opening cases, conducting genetic tests, printing documents, updating cases, and taking actions to establish, enforce, or modify orders. Lastly, customers have 24/7 access to review their accounts, make and receive payments, review child support resources, and submit questions to their case manager through Customer Connect Website on their personal computer or phone.

KCDCSS is committed to providing services for non-English speaking customers. The department actively hires Spanish speaking staff at all public points of contact so that customers can talk directly with a child support professional in their own language. There is also a dedicated caseload for customers whose primary language or language of preference is Spanish. Staff assigned to this team are proficient in both English and Spanish to ensure customers are provided with the highest quality of service directly and without an interpreter. For additional languages, KCDCSS utilizes language interpretation services, and most forms are available in a variety of languages.

KCDCSS also attempts to minimize any challenges customers with disabilities may face in accessing or utilizing services. Most, if not all, services provided by the KCDCSS can be handled telephonically or through the mail minimizing the need for customers to come into the office. The department actively uses email and TextPro as communication tools which are very popular with customers. Over the past few years, Kern County Superior Court has allowed for select legal documents to be electronically signed which has significantly reduced the need for in person services. For those who prefer face to face services, each branch office has been designed to fit a variety of customer needs and the new mobile unit was also customized to ensure customers can access staff easily. If additional assistance is needed, customers can authorize someone they trust to receive information and act on their behalf.

While the department has worked to increase accessibility and ease of communication for everyone, the department acknowledges that customers may still have apprehension, fear and distrust of government which creates a barrier that prevents people from seeking services, disclosing information, and overall cooperation. In addition, with the increase in scams, some customers are leery, and distrust electronic communications initiated by the department are trustworthy. As such, the department will continue to work to build trust throughout the community. One such effort includes KCDCSS is piloting is virtual customer interviews. This option may provide the best of both worlds for the customer, where they can experience a face-to-face interview at a place most convenient for them. This option will continue to be explored to provide another avenue to communicate with customers.

Program partners have a pivotal role in reducing some challenges faced by parents and extending trust to the department. While agencies specialize in their own particular area, parents often face multiple challenges and require assistance from multiple partners to address each circumstance. When a parent seeks services from one partner they trust, those partners create a bridge to other services needed by the family. By gaining greater understanding of services each partner provides and increasing accessibility to each other's services, staff can provide important information and guidance to help with the

family with their dynamic and multi-faceted needs. Staff at all levels should be knowledgeable of the available resources in their community, understand what barriers the customer is facing, and refer him/her to the appropriate agency with the subject matter expertise to assist in eliminating each barrier the customer is facing. Program partners must work together to streamline and simplify processes for customers needing services who already have so many other challenges to overcome.

One obstacle to meaningfully engaging local partnerships is the strict confidentiality rules within the Department of Child Support Services. These rules are mandated by the state and federal government and strictly prohibit sharing of customer information with anyone outside of the program. While these challenges add a level of complexity to referral processes and do not allow for sharing of information between community partners, KDCDCSS continues to build partnerships throughout the community, especially in areas with shared customers, including:

- Kern County Employer's Training Resource: In addition to the referral system and video conferencing kiosks, this partnership has evolved to experiment with different tactics, such as presenting an educational workshop at KDCDCSS for unemployed parents with child support orders.
- Kern County Sheriff-Lerdo Detention Facility: Through this partnership, KDCDCSS staff provide education and support to incarcerated parents regarding the child support process while they are incarcerated and what they can expect once released. Case Managers ensure child support amounts are accurate based on their current circumstances and build relationships with the parents that will continue post-incarceration. Specifically, this partnership includes an on-site video-conferencing kiosk which allows the inmate to have a direct face-to-face discussion with a Child Support Case Manager during regular business hours Monday through Friday and answer any questions they have about their case directly. To provide additional education and support, weekly in-person presentations are also provided to inmates to learn more about child support. Case Managers are available at that time to talk with inmates about their specific circumstances and immediately handle any actions needed in their case.
- Department of Human Services: Understanding that some parents have different circumstances, there are times were parents who are custodial parents of one child, may also have other children they are responsible for paying child support for. KDCDCSS has partnered with DHS Welfare-2-Work program creating a referral for these parents to review these cases and provide any additional support. This partnership reduces barriers and provides additional support for parents who are cash aided and seeking employment services.
- Family Justice Center: For customers in domestic violence crisis, KDCDCSS has a video-conferencing kiosk stationed at the Family Justice Center both in

Bakersfield and Lamont to provide face-to-face services to parents interested in learning more about the child support program and the service provided.

- Kern County Family Law Facilitator: KDCDCSS has also partnered with and provides referrals to the Kern County Family Law Facilitator to assist customers with other legal matters outside of child support. In addition to the referral system, throughout the year, the Kern County Family Law Facilitator will also co-locate staff in the KDCDCSS lobby to help customers directly with any legal matters they need assistance with relating to child support.
- In addition, KDCDCSS seeks opportunities to be out in the community to provide services at events or activities parents may be. Often these include partners who have already build positive relationships with customers we service. For these events, staff bring computers and printers to event, so they are able to access the person's information, update case information, print documents, and take any necessary action immediately. Examples include: Kern County Public Library, Kern County Veterans Stand Down, and Kern County Homeless Collaborative.

To provide additional assistance and support to parents, KDCDCSS has an area in the lobby available to customers for job searching and community resources. The "Kids Count Resource Room" provides a variety of resources, including public computer access and employer hiring information free of charge. Community members can access hiring websites, gain knowledge of those who are hiring, and submit applications. Staff are knowledgeable about community resources and able to assist customers with additional needs. KDCDCSS also uses its social media presence to share valuable community partner information with the public. In order to increase KDCDCSS staff awareness of community resources, each month community partners are invited to present and share information about their programs and services to staff. This information is then actively shared with customers as needs arise.

Overwhelming challenges in the job market have led to apathy by some noncustodial parents. Unable to fully support themselves, parents are frequently not able to provide additional support to their children. They often want to support their children but are frustrated with the lack of employment opportunities and disappointed with the on-again, off-again nature of the work they are able to find. Along with noncustodial parents, custodial parents also struggle with consistent employment. In addition to the previously identified barriers they share with noncustodial parents, such as inconsistent work and transportation issues, custodial parents have additional challenges. Unreliable, limited, and expensive childcare often prevents custodial parents from obtaining sustainable employment. Addressing these concerns for the custodial parent would also help to secure financial independence from government assistance for the family. As such, custodial parents could benefit from the workforce services collaborative approach.

KDCDCSS will continue to collaborate with ETR and implement a referral process for noncustodial parents who are unemployed and/or under-employed during both the

establishment and enforcement of their order. In addition, to increase the level of customer-centered service, KDCSS will work towards expanding video-conferencing kiosks to additional AJCCs around Kern County. Specifically, these kiosks will be located at the affiliate AJCC One-Stop Center in Delano (once a new location is opened) and the affiliate AJCC One-Stop in Oildale (1129 Olive Drive, Suite H, Bakersfield). Through this video-conferencing kiosk, customers will have direct access with a child support case manager to discuss case specifics and remove any potential barriers that will prevent the customer from successfully obtaining sustainable employment.

KDCSS understands the value of educating staff across the departments as they are the ones who will be providing services to our shared customers and will be important in the success of the referral process. As such, KDCSS has provided informational sessions to staff located in the AJCC to educate them on the importance of child support services for the family, the services the department provides, and how the referral process works. KDCSS is open to continuing to provide these types of informational sessions to AJCC staff as kiosks are deployed to new locations, as refreshers, and for newly hired staff.

KDCSS is open to attending and/or hosting collaborative AJCC education events in which multiple partners provide education to child support program participants. These events could educate customers and/or employers on a variety of work-related topics and include information on the child support program and what can be expected. KDCSS will partner with ETR and DHS to expand the services provided in the KDCSS Kids Count Resource Room and receive consistent job information which can be shared directly with customers.

KDCSS supports the KIM WDB by working with CBOs to provide training and offering services. KDCSS partners with the DHS, Kern County High School District, and California State University Bakersfield to support interns who need practical experience to develop marketable skills and bridge them successfully into the workforce. While at the department, interns assist with various functions throughout the office. Depending on the employment field they are hoping to enter, interns practice and develop various skills such as clerical, marketing, customer service, paralegal, and graphic design. Through this partnership, interns have successfully moved on to permanent positions within the department and with other public and private employers.

***C. How the Local Board will coordinate with Local Partnership Agreement partners, establish in alignment with the Competitive Integrated Employment Blueprint, and other local partners who serve individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities.***

Kern High School District, Kern Regional Center, Kern County Employers' Training Resource (ETR) and Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) continue to collaborate and update collective plans to assist individuals with Intellectual Disability and Developmental Disabilities in achieving CIE. The Local Plan Agreement (LPA) was

established to identify the ways in which Kern, Inyo and Mono Counties will work together in achieving this goal.

Educational agencies, DOR Branches, Kern Regional Center and AJCCs located in Kern, Inyo and Mono Counties are collaborating by developing Local Partnership Agreements (LPAs). LPA's create frameworks that transcend changes to personnel, funding, and political climates. They are critical in efforts to change the ways mutual consumers of the core partners (LEAs, DOR, AJCC and Kern Regional Center) are served, to better utilize resources, and to produce improved employment outcomes. By taking the time to develop a plan for working together, partners create a shared vision of what's possible. During the past few years, the partners have been collaborating to have LPAs developed between DOR districts, regional centers, and 270 LEAs. Kern High School District has been convening quarterly LPA meetings.

As part of this process, AJCC Staff have been trained in the following areas: (1) Windmills Training (Disability Awareness and Etiquette Training); (2) Working with Individuals with Hidden Disabilities, Including Mental Health Disabilities; and (3) Consumer Self-Disclosure and Related Barriers, How to Address. In addition, DOR assisted ETR by identifying the assistive technology needed for each comprehensive, affiliated and specialized AJCC site located in Kern, Inyo and Mono Counties.

AJCC staff have been working closely with DOR staff and community partners to expand the pathways to employment in supporting individuals with ID/DD in achieving CIE.

DOR has been working with AJCC and other Partners to streamline service delivery, engage the community and increase CIE opportunities for individuals with ID/DD.

DOR developed a plan with its community partners for recruitment, referral, and employer engagement strategies. DOR continues to work with community partners to provide student services as well as Vocational Rehabilitation services to the local population identified as individuals with disabilities. In addition, DOR continues to pursue new local community partners that are linked to serving this population. DOR has been sharing resources with community partners while working with them to streamline processes needed to service the population. DOR also works to provide information to individuals with disabilities to help them participate based on their needs, interests, and the choices available. DOR is part of an active Local Partnership Agreement which offers five types of DOR Student Services available to PE students: Job Exploration, Work-Based Learning Experiences, Postsecondary Enrollment Counseling, Workplace Readiness Training, and Instruction in Self Advocacy. The DOR Student Services team will engage the student in identifying needed services and exercising informed choice. The student services and activities in which the student expect to participate in will be documented in the DR 205 – Student Services Plan. The Plan also includes chosen providers and estimated start dates. DOR staff coordinates with the student and the LEA to provide Student Services directly or through a collaborative contract. The student is responsible for providing information

requested by DOR, notifying DOR if they change schools or no longer enrolled in school and fully participate in Student Services meeting and activities. In addition, DOR staff work on an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) in collaboration with the consumer, the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) Counselor, and other stakeholders to assist in development of the employment goal when the client has: applied for services, completed the assessment process, found eligible for services, and are placed in a disability priority category being served.

***D. How the Local Board will coordinate with community-based organizations and other local partners who serve individuals who are English language learners, foreign-born, and/or refugees.***

The Kern County Adult Ed Programs Consortium (Kern AEP) is a partner of the Kern County Employers' Training Resource (ETR). As such, the Kern AEP is working to coordinate resources and service delivery with ETR. The Kern AEP is serving individuals who are English language learners, foreign born, and refugees in need of adult education services. These services include the following:

- High School Equivalency (General Education Diploma [GED]) classes;
- English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction;
- Programs designed to support older adults;
- Pathways and programs for re-entry to work;
- Opportunities for adults to assist elementary and secondary school children;
- Programs for adults with disabilities;
- Short-term Career and Technical Education; and
- Pre-Apprenticeships.

The Kern AEP is working together on building a referral system between adult education, community college, and ETR to track student progress.

The Kern AEP provides adult education and services that help individuals reach their goals of attaining livable wage jobs and careers in high-demand regional sector pathways. This includes high school equivalency courses, citizenship classes, and multiple career pathways. The Kern AEP employs retention strategies throughout the consortium and at Kern AEP member locations including childcare, transportation, tutors, career and college counselors, post-secondary transition specialists, and other individualized supports.

The consortium members continue to work with ETR stakeholders by providing services and employment plans to the extent that this information is provided by the client/student at the time of enrollment in adult education program services. The client/student provide ETR or stakeholders with Kern AEP enrollment information.

The Kern AEP continues to provide Burlington English for students to use. In addition, Kern AEP continues to support distance education options in addition to in-person instruction. Kern AEP which is part of Kern Community College District, was awarded the full Perkins Reserve Innovation Grant fund, without conditions in the sum of \$300,000 which was used to purchase Career Choices and Changes Curriculum. This grant allowed Kern AEP to create career pathways for students who are English language learners, foreign-born, and add virtual reality components its courses.

The Kern AEP is focused on building pathways for English language learners and supporting those students as they develop necessary skills to thrive in the regional workforce. The Kern AEP offers a number of programs to assist individuals who are English language learners, including. These efforts include expanding career pathways to college and offering a range of instructional options such as Smart classes at remote sites where students can interact with an instructor at a different site, interactive technology that enables two classrooms to interact with one another; self-paced options, and dual enrollment opportunities for students to get high school credits and college credits at the same time. The Kern AEP also offers assistance to international students who need to have their international degrees evaluated with World Education Services (WES). The WES evaluation identifies prior course equivalents that the student has completed, thereby helping advisors identify any remaining courses the student needs to complete in order to earn their degree in the United States. With the successful completion of a degree at an American institution of higher education, these international students are better prepared to find meaningful employment in the field of their studies.

Additionally, ETR, Kern AEP, and other community-based organizations support the continued development of pre-apprenticeship programs for the KIM farmworker population. The focus has been on pre-apprenticeships that include Language Learning, Child Care, and Job Training skills at one site with the overarching goal of helping this population join the ranks of Governor Newsome's goal of having 500,000 apprentices in California by 2029. Pre-apprenticeships are designed to prepare participants to participate in a registered apprenticeship program that will further develop their job-related knowledge and skills.

***E. How the Local Board will coordinate with Local Veteran Affairs, community-based organizations, and other local partners who serve veterans.***

KIM WDB provides essential information to Veterans and their eligible spouses that offers priority of service including employment, training, and supportive services. Through Operation V.I.P., veterans can transition from military to civilian life by attending the Veterans Job Club Workshop which is held weekly facilitated by staff from the Employment Development Department (EDD) and Employers' Training Resource. Veterans can receive assistance with filling out applications, learn how to build resumes, and get tips on how to dress for success. In addition, Veterans can discover valuable

interviewing techniques. Veterans are able to network with fellow veterans and stay updated with the latest job openings. Kern County Human Resources also shows veterans how to navigate the County website as veteran applicants are given veterans' preference.

Veterans are invited to attend employer informational sessions, recruitments, and other hiring events organized by ETR. Referrals are coordinated and are given priority of service through a partnership with the Employment Development Department's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Representatives specialists (DVOP) and the Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER). EDD services include a veteran 24-hour priority hold on all job listings. Veterans are encouraged to schedule an appointment with an EDD Veterans representative for personalized services and assistance to achieve professional goals.

ETR staff also refer veterans to Kern County Veterans Service Department with regards to their eligibility for United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits based upon their discharge from active military service under honorable conditions. Veteran dependents and survivors may also be eligible for certain benefits, these services include benefit counseling, claim preparation, submission, and follow up, education, pension, health care, requests for military records, burial benefits, vocational rehabilitation, VA home loan, and surviving spouse benefits.

Another partner is California Veterans Assistance Foundation (CVAF) to assist housing impaired or at risk of becoming homeless veterans, to restore and improve their lives by alleviating homelessness through information, advocacy, and service. California State University Bakersfield's Small Business Development Center is able to assist Kern County's veteran entrepreneurs and small business owners by providing one-on-one consulting, business training, and research. They provide guidance on how-to-do so and offers low-income loans.

ETR's staff also attend quarterly Kern County Veterans Collaborative meetings whose goals are to meet the needs of veterans and their families. The collaborative hosts the Resource Fairs and Veterans Stand Down events in Bakersfield, California City, and Ridgecrest. Besides, ETR, other community partners that provide assistance to Veterans are California Veterans Assistance Foundation, Kern County Veterans Service Department, Kern County Behavioral Health & Recovery Services, Bakersfield College Veterans Resource Center, California State University of Bakersfield Veterans Resource Center, Employment Development Department, Veteran Affairs of Bakersfield Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC), and Wounded Heroes Fund.

***F. How the Local Board will collaborate with the Strategic Planning Partners to address environmental sustainability.***

Kern, Inyo and Mono Counties Workforce Development Board (KIM WDB) seeks to collaborate with its Strategic Planning partners, including labor, business, government, and other community stakeholders such as economic development, and education by

supporting the creation of new, high-quality jobs that are closely aligned with the objectives of California Jobs First. It is essential that individuals seeking employment opportunities gain the necessary skills, knowledge and competencies to succeed in the labor market and contribute to a dynamic and resilient economy through higher wages. Career advancement opportunities are also a crucial component of this strategy. By investing in workforce training and upskilling programs, it aims to provide workers with the skills needed to eventually compete for higher-level positions within the priority sectors, including Energy and Natural Resources/Renewables; Healthcare Services; Aerospace & Defense; Transportation, Logistics and Advanced Manufacturing; Value-Add Agriculture; and Tourism Recreation. These programs will offer clear pathways for career progression, allowing workers to move into more specialized and better-paying roles. In addition, these programs will be designed through partnerships among employers and local educational institutions, including community colleges and technical schools, to offer training and certification courses tailored to the specific occupational needs of advanced manufacturing employers. By focusing on skills such as precision machining, robotics, and quality control, these programs will prepare workers for high-demand roles in sectors like aerospace, clean energy, and agriculture. For example, the Kern Economic Development Center's Manufacturers' Alliance of Kern (MAK), which brings together 400+ manufacturers, could partner and support workforce development programs, providing staff to help provide direct training or keep close collaboration with educational institutions to ensure they stay up to date on the latest job market needs.

KIM WDB will need to increase its recruitment efforts through outreach, engagement, and education initiatives designed to speak to specific subregions and communities of the Kern County region, conducted in partnership with community-based organizations. These would include job fairs, apprenticeship programs, and partnerships with industry associations to highlight the opportunities available in the region's advanced manufacturing sector. Special attention will be given to recruiting individuals from disinvested communities, helping to ensure equitable access to high-quality jobs.

The partnership will emphasize the development of innovation hubs and incubators, which will serve as centers for research, development, and entrepreneurship. By connecting manufacturers with local innovation resources, these hubs will help accelerate the adoption of new technologies and processes, driving competitiveness and growth within the sector. For example, the Kern Economic Development Corporation and its partners could provide the space and equipment for ideas incubation and prototyping. This could also be hosted by educational institutions like the Kern Community College District, Taft Community College District and vocational training centers such as Bakersfield Adult School and Delano Adult School, among others.

Community-based organizations, labor unions, and worker organizations need to play a crucial role in this strategy. These organizations may include the Kern Chambers of Commerce, the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW), and the Kern, Inyo, and Mono Counties Building and Construction Trades Council. Collaborative efforts will ensure that training programs not only meet industry

standards but also address the needs and rights of workers, promoting safe working conditions and opportunities for career advancement.

The KIM WDB will be expanding workforce development programs tailored to skills needed for emerging clean energy sectors, with a focus on absorbing former oil and gas workers. This will include partnerships with community colleges and industry stakeholders and targeted outreach to former oil and gas workers to build upon their existing skillset through the Displaced Oil and Gas Worker Fund which is a five-year grant. The program provides former oil and gas workers with the necessary training to obtain clean energy jobs should be a priority. Clean energy jobs are generally high quality, offering relatively high pay, healthcare and retirement benefits, stability, and opportunities for collective worker input (Urban Institute 2024). Analysis by the Urban Institute shows that a larger share of jobs in energy efficiency and renewable energy generation are high quality than in the overall labor market. Further, clean energy jobs, especially those in renewable energy generation and green construction are highly accessible to individuals with less than a four-year degree; only 39% of high-quality renewable energy generation jobs and 37% of green construction jobs require a bachelor's degree or higher. Fifty-seven percent of high-quality renewable energy generation jobs have high union coverage while also requiring less than a bachelor's degree. Notably, women and BIPOC tend to be under-represented in the highest-quality clean energy jobs, indicating that successful strategies for growth will need to include incentive and opportunities to boost employment for these groups. Proposed strategies aim to retain existing high-quality jobs while also working to create new jobs in both existing clean energy areas and frontier technologies. Newly created jobs are expected to maintain the high level of quality offered by existing clean energy opportunities. The clean energy strategy in the Kern County region is designed to provide substantial indirect and direct community benefits, particularly to disinvested communities. Given the region's economic history and significant environmental challenges, the clean energy sector presents an opportunity for transformative change, addressing both economic disparities and environmental justice. Job creation and training are central to its success.

The clean energy sector offers a pathway to high-quality, sustainable jobs. By developing tailored training programs and providing clear pathways for necessary education or skills, it ensures that members of disinvested communities can access these opportunities. These efforts will include partnerships with local educational institutions and targeted outreach to former oil and gas workers, leveraging their existing skills for clean energy roles. The plan includes culturally sensitive training programs at accessible times and locations, covering relevant skills such as solar panel installation, energy efficiency audits, and clean technology maintenance. This concept places a strong emphasis on workforce retraining and upskilling, ensuring that the local labor force is well equipped to meet the demands of emerging clean energy jobs. This approach will address talent recruitment and development while fostering strategic collaboration among businesses, educational institutions, labor organizations, and other stakeholders. The opportunity focuses on matching skills to available jobs by supporting comprehensive workforce development

programs tailored specifically to the needs of the clean energy industry. By mapping the current skillsets of the local workforce, particularly those transitioning from the oil and gas sector, our strategy can design targeted training modules that build on existing competencies while addressing any gaps. These training programs combine classroom instruction with hands-on experience in critical areas such as solar and wind energy installation, maintenance, energy storage systems, and advanced manufacturing for clean energy technologies. This alignment ensures that graduates are job ready and possess the skills that employers are seeking. For example, the partnership between the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) and the Kern College Community District (KCCD) has created numerous opportunities for students to collaborate with industry employers via internships, classwork, events, and more, and learn skills that meet the needs of the industry. In addition, Bakersfield College created a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Energy Center whose learning topics include technical skills desired by employers.

Addressing talent and recruitment challenges involves targeted outreach efforts to attract individuals from the oil and gas sector, as well as other industries, into employment opportunities in clean energy. In the Kern County region, the oil and gas industry has historically provided high-paying, moderate-to-high skill level jobs that are accessible to workers with low levels of education. Facilitating the transition to clean energy will require a balance to maintain the accessibility of jobs for people with a range of education levels while also further diversifying the workforce and retraining current energy sector workers to fill gaps in skills needed for clean energy. Recognizing the valuable skills and experience of former oil and gas workers, KIM WDB's strategy aims to create pathways that facilitate their transition into renewable energy roles through tailored training. Additionally, inclusive recruitment practice will ensure diverse participation from underrepresented communities, leveraging local CBO networks to reach potential candidates. Strategic collaboration with local education institutions, industry stakeholders, and labor organizations is essential to the success of any initiative. These partnerships will help develop and deliver training programs that align with industry needs, provide support services such as job placement and apprenticeships, and ensure that training programs are responsive to current and future labor market demands. This cohesive approach to workforce development helps ensure equitable access to high-quality jobs for all members of the community.

The growth of the clean energy sector in the Kern County region strongly aligns with several key statewide strategies. The region's focus on expanding renewable energy projects directly supports California's overarching climate goals, including those outlined in the California Climate Scoping Plan and the California Climate Adaptation Strategy. By increasing the production of clean energy from solar, wind, and other renewable sources, the Kern County region will contribute significantly to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. This not only helps meet the state's ambitious targets for emissions reductions, but also mitigates the impacts of climate change, aligning with broader

adaptation and resilience objectives Moreover, the development of the clean energy sector in the Kern County region enhances air quality and public health, which are critical components of the state's environmental strategies. By replacing fossil fuel–based power generation with renewable sources, the county reduces pollutants that contribute to poor air quality. This supports state efforts to improve air quality and public health outcomes, particularly in regions like Kern County that face significant air pollution challenges.

#### **IV. WIOA TITLE I COORDINATION**

##### ***A. Training and/or professional development that will be provided to frontline staff to gain and expand proficiency in digital and distance learning.***

Kern County Employers' Training Resource (ETR) explores opportunities in providing frontline staff ways to expand their proficiency in digital and distance learning. KIM WDB purchased licenses in 2023 for Metrix Learning, an online training platform that provides digital and distance learning topics on a variety of soft skills and hard skills. All staff have access to the Metrix Learning and can access a diverse catalog of training courses that covers the full spectrum of skills needed in the workplace including, but not limited to, Microsoft software training, customer service training, DEI training, safety training, and more. The training platform comes with career pathway training modules. With a catalogue of over 3,000 individual courses that include skill check tests with certificates, staff have a diverse offering of courses to expand their proficiency and skills. Staff working in specific units can be assigned career pathway trainings that are relevant to their job and assist in filling any skills gaps employees are experiencing. The training platform also has professional development courses for those interested in advancement into supervision and management.

The Workforce Services Branch Statewide Training Unit provides staff with ongoing CalJOBS training webinars. Staff receives both the CalJOBS Individual Management Series and the CalJOBS Employer Services Series on such topics WIOA Program Enrollment, Case Management Tools, Helpful Case Management Reports, Performance for Case Management, CalJOBS Reporting Process, Six Indicators of Performance, Creating and Managing Job Orders, and Recruiting Candidates.

Staff attended and participated in virtual conferences for designated WIOA formula and NFJP grants, such as the Youth Symposium for EPIC Staff in 2021 and 2022 and the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs (AFOP) National Virtual Conference 2022.

Workforce 180 Online Trainings and Certifications is an effective multimedia platform tool for ETR's case managers and job developers as the courses are online, self-directed, self-paced, and exam-driven for certifications. Courses completed and certifications received by staff are Business Services, Case Management, and Re-entry Services.

EconoVue and Jobs EQ are utilized by Administrative Analysts, Management, Lead Staff, and the Rapid Response/Layoff Aversion team as they are provided current real-time workforce labor market data and economic analytics at a glance such as demographics, occupations, wages, certifications, etc. Assigned staff can access virtual training sessions, individual training, and videos to assist them in properly utilizing the tools.

CareerHubUS.com's Virtual Service model permits staff to communicate effectively and efficiently as staff are able to text information to their clients' mobile devices. This allows staff to provide job seekers in targeted populations with assistance through the use of innovative service delivery methods. Staff has been able to provide technical assistance, coaching, virtual trainings, send reminders, and make referrals to on-line and shared community resources, job fairs, and other employment opportunities via text, email, and voicemail to the clients' smartphones regardless of their geographic location.

Ninjio Dojo are security and awareness trainings sent out to all staff by Kern County's Information Technology Services to keep ETR staff knowledgeable about how to avoid potential cyber-attacks on their County-issued computers and mobile devices and make sure they remain safe from cyber-attacks. With a partnership with CSUB and Small Business Development Center (SBDDC), webinars are provided for Job Developers for their knowledge and for them to invite the employers they work with on funding resources available to assist their employers from small business loans to grant funds for businesses, disaster relief loans, business leasing and purchasing options, creating value added services and products.

DocuSign is a new solution frontline staff are using for electronic signatures from clients, employers, supervisors, and management. Staff are using DouSign for On-the-Job Training contracts and supportive services. Staff have learned how to send, approve, and track documents in DocuSign.

Other digital and distance learning are provided through CWA's virtual seminars to train staff on a variety of topics including how to utilize technology to connect with customers remotely.

***B. Training and/or professional development that will be provided to frontline staff to ensure cultural competencies and an understanding of the experiences of trauma-exposed populations.***

To ensure continuous cultural competencies, staff use Target Solutions, a web-based learning management system that captures all of staff's completed trainings. On this online platform, staff were required to successfully complete the Preventing Discrimination in the Workplace training. All staff are also required to attend sexual harassment training, with nonsupervisory staff required to attend an hour of training every two years and supervisors every year. A variety of training platforms are utilized for this training, including virtual and in-person training. Staff have access to Metrix

Learning modules that cover cultural competency and working with a diverse population.

Staff just completed a year-long series of trauma informed training offered through the Regional Planning Unit (RPU), which is the San Joaquin Valley and Associated Counties. The trainings included Traumatic Stress, Trauma Informed Coping Toolkit, and Trauma Informed Systems Change for Management. KIM WDB will continue to participate in these regional trainings throughout the next four years.

***C. How the Local Board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the Local Area with statewide rapid response activities, as outlined in Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion Activities (WSD16-04).***

KIM WDB, through its fiscal and administrative agent, Kern County Employers' Training Resource (ETR) will take a coordinated approach with One Stop partners and relevant stakeholders to conduct Rapid Response activities in the local area for the purpose of effective delivery of services in matters of business closures, downsizing or for layoff aversion. Under WIOA, the State has interpreted "layoff aversion as an integral component of Rapid Response policy" (EDD Directive WSD 16-04, July 22, 2016). Therefore, it anticipates that ETR will incorporate the two.

The purpose of Rapid Response is to assist workers to "quickly re-enter the workforce" (Title 20 CFR 682.220, 4. Subpart C-Rapid Response Activities) or to "prevent layoffs all together" (EDD Directive WSD 16-04, p.3). The intent of Layoff Aversion is to "prevent or minimize the duration of unemployment" (Title 20 CFR 682.320). ETR will address these areas proactively by working closely in business-to-business relationships; and getting to know industry trends and concerns. ETR will also identify businesses deemed at-risk by gaining knowledge through one-on-one business engagement and shared knowledge with partners such as Kern Economic Development Corporation and Small Business Development Center. In addition, ETR will use EDD's Labor Market information, and EconoVue, a Dunn & Bradstreet and commercial database that provides predictive indicators of potential for downturn in economic activity. Rapid Response services will also continue to utilize JOBS EQ, a Chmura Labor Market Software that is utilized to review RTI (Real Time Intelligence). JOBS EQ will be used to generate a 5-year report to forecast downward trends in occupations, these reports will help anticipate industries who may face closure or layoffs for more efficient services. The knowledge will be used to strategize with businesses to mitigate or eliminate the loss of jobs. Strategies will include industry-related and incumbent worker training, targeting of Career Pathways, coordination with Apprenticeship Standards, and Work Sharing.

The Local Board will use WARN notices, media, and word of mouth for notification of layoffs. Upon notification, the Rapid Response Team, comprised of EDD and Board staff, will conduct outreach to the businesses and offer to provide onsite or offsite Rapid Response workshops to affected individuals. Outreach to the community will be implemented by focusing on a higher community presence to educate the public about Rapid Response Services. Outreach will be conducted through the attendance of business associated events in Kern, Inyo and Mono Counties. In the spirit of the law, "Rapid Response will be available regardless of the number of affected workers" (CFR 682.300). The workshops will address Unemployment Insurance Benefits, Trade Readjustment Assistance, WIOA training/ job services, CalWORKs, CalFresh, Medi-Cal, Covered California, Child Support Services, Kern County HR staff, Department of Human Services employment team (Job Fest). In cases where Layoff Aversion and Rapid Response will have a regional impact, the KIM WDB will coordinate with regional Boards to serve those impacted. The board will continue to be actively involved with Central Valley Industry Engagement Roundtable (CVIER), a collaboration of neighboring WIBs and WDBs to determine best practices and efficient services for regional layoffs impacting ETR and surrounding Kern County areas.

ETR will continue to stay Informed of affected areas, industries, and primary sectors that are or will be experiencing layoffs and closures now or in the future. By using early detection tools and rapid deployment of Rapid Response/layoff aversion teams, services, and funding resources to mitigate the impact of the layoffs and closures. Sectors and industries that have been identified as "priorities of concerns" within Kern, Inyo and Mono Counties for 2024-2025 reporting cycle are: Gas and Oil sector and all of its supporting businesses, Manufacturing Sector (specifically related to Oil and Gas and local foods manufacturing), Retail sector (small local and large regional/national businesses), Hospitality sector (Restaurant Industry), HealthCare sector (Hospitals, and medical service providers).

All oil and gas businesses in Kern County are at a high risk and need to be actively monitored due to the political climate in this State. ETR is closely working with the following businesses: California Resource Corporation, Schlumberger Technology, Key Energy Services, Golden State Drilling, Inc., and many more. ETR will be devoting significant resources to serve this industry in the foreseeable future. ETR recently received a three-year grant to serve the oil and gas industry as layoffs increase due to state policy decisions on energy extraction. cRapid Response funding will be braided with the Dislocated Oil and Gas Workers Fund (DOGWF) grant to serve this industry and assist with rapid reemployment and training of affected workers.

- D. A description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the Local Area. This is how the Local Board will ensure that priority for adult career and training services will be given to recipients receiving public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient, as outlined in WIOA Adult Program Priority Service (WSD15-14).***

Kern County Employers' Training Resource (ETR), the administrative and fiscal agent of the KIM WDB provides direct Basic Career Services to its customers, including Outreach, Orientation, Intake, Initial Assessment and Eligibility. Additionally, ETR provides direct Individualized Career Services, including Assessments, Staff Assisted Job Search Assistance, Direct Placement and Case Management. Paid Work Experience is provided by ETR's subrecipient providers Kern High School District and Proteus. ETR also funds 75+ occupational training programs that are approved on the State's Eligible Training Provider List.

ETR establishes Priority of Service status during the intake/eligibility appointment. Staff documents the participant's status as low income, basic skills deficient or a recipient of public assistance. ETR's policy describes in detail the type of documentation to be collected and documented in the participant file. Priority of Service is used for adult and dislocated worker participants receiving Individualized Career and Training services. The establishment of Priority of Service during the intake/eligibility process ensures that we identify and provide Veterans and priority groups Priority of Services pursuant to WSD 15-14. ETR's policy explains in detail the order in which participants are to be served, dependent upon their Priority of Service status.

ETR, guided by Training and Employment Guidance Letters (TEGL) from Department of Labor and Workforce Service Directives (WSD) from the State of California, will continue to stay abreast of changes in policies that affect how Priority of Services are to be carried out. Further, ETR will update, create and implement policies that are in alignment with federal and state guidelines and will proactively seek innovative ways to address and meet the needs of individuals with the most barriers to employment, as a top priority.

***E. A description and assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce investment activities in the Local Area, as outlined in WIOA Youth Program Requirements (WSD17-07). This includes any strategies regarding how to increase the digital literacy and fluency of youth participants, including youth with disabilities.***

Kern County Employers' Training Resource, the fiscal and administrative agent for the Kern, Inyo and Mono Counties Workforce Development Board provides a comprehensive year-round young adult workforce development services via a network of five subcontracted young adult service providers. These adult service providers operate a total of two In-School youth programs and four Out-of-School young adult programs. Services are provided in Greater Bakersfield, Delano/North Kern, Tehachapi, Mojave, Southeast Kern, and Taft/West Kern. Young adult service providers provide most of the 14 Elements of Service directly, the rest via referral, and are required to provide ETR with partner agency information for any services not offered directly. All are

required to offer paid work experience. Issuance of a competitive Request for Proposals for comprehensive In-School youth and Out-of-School young adult service providers generally takes place in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the program year prior to the next fiscal start on July 1<sup>st</sup> and or as new funding opportunities become available throughout the program year. During the procurement process, priority may be given to programs serving participants with additional barriers, such as young adults who have aged out of the foster care system, justice involved young adults, parenting young adults, and young adults with disabilities.

In addition to the subcontracted young adult service providers, ETR operates the Envision-Plan-Innovate-Connect (EPIC) Program for opportunity young adult between the ages of 18-24. This program operates in a stand-alone location in downtown Bakersfield and features workforce services that prepare young adults for employment, advanced education, and life sustaining careers.

A variety of experiences are available for participants to gain proficiency with 21st Century skills, including digital technology skills. Examples include Kern High School District Career Resource Department courses in the use of electronic communications, Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Microsoft Access; and Bakersfield College non-credit, free-of-cost courses in basic office skills that cover digital literacy topics. Laptops/Computers, hotspots, printers, and other technology assistance are also available as supportive services.

***F. The entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds as determined by the Chief Elected Official (CEO) or Governor and the competitive process that will be used to award the subgrants and contracts for WIOA Title I activities.***

The County of Kern is the fiscal recipient of local WIOA funds on behalf of the Kern, Inyo and Mono Counties Workforce Development Board (KIM WDB). Kern County Employers' Training Resource (ETR) is the administrative and fiscal agent of KIM WDB. A joint powers agreement between Kern, Inyo and Mono counties define their roles. The County has integrated the staff to the WDB into the County's Division of Economic and Workforce Development. ETR may utilize Request for Proposals (RFP), Request for Refunding (RFR), or sole source procurement processes to award sub-grants and contracts for WIOA Title I activities. Sole source procurement is allowable when one of the following conditions occurs: the item or service is available only from a single source; a public emergency precludes delay; the awarding agency authorizes the specific non-competitive procurement; or, after a solicitation of a number of sources, competition is determined inadequate. Use of non-competitive procurement for public emergency reasons should be for goods, suppliers, or services that will provide for the agency's immediate need to enable correction or resolve the emergency. For long-term or ongoing needs, one of the competitive procurement methods must be used. The issuance of RFPs are announced through public notice in the local newspaper, the AJCC's website, ETR's website and the County of Kern's

website. Separate RFPs may be sent for specific programs or services (for example, Youth Programs) in which case both the format of the RFP itself and the review forms used for that procurement may be specific to that program or service. In addition to publishing the notice in the newspaper, RFP packets are sent to agencies on the KIM WDB's Bidders/Mailing List. A bidder's conference may be held. ETR conducts competitive procurement for WIOA programs and services at least once every three years.

***G. A description of how the AJCC Operator and/or the Career Services Provider roles are fulfilled within the Local Area outlined in Selection of AJCC Operators and Career Services Providers (WSD19-13). This includes the name(s) and role(s) of all entities.***

The responsibilities of the AJCC Operator includes: Reporting to the KIM WDB on operations, performance, and continuous improvement recommendations; Implementing policies established by the KIM WDB; Coordinating the service delivery of required AJCC partners and service providers; Ensuring the implementation of mandated partner responsibilities and contributions under the Infrastructure Funding Agreements agreed upon in Memorandums of Understanding; Convening and facilitation of monthly WIOA partner meetings that focus on systems alignment, process improvement and building value added collaboration amongst system partners; Acting as a liaison between the KIM WDB and the WIOA partners and as such shall be required to submit a written report to the Chief Workforce Development Officer (Director) for the Kern County Employers' Training Resource identifying the services being provided by the AJCC Operator and any progress and/or developments thereof a minimum of ten (10) business days prior to the Local Board's quarterly Executive Committee meetings and quarterly the KIM WDB's meetings, and to attend said meetings in order to orally present the content contained in each written report; Performing customer satisfaction surveys for all co-located WIOA Partners at the comprehensive, specialized and affiliate AJCC one-stop centers, and on a quarterly basis, submit a written report detailing the results of said surveys to the Director of Kern County Employers' Training Resource, a minimum of ten (10) days prior to the KIM WDB's Executive Committee meetings and KIM WDB's meetings, and attend said meetings in order to orally present the content contained in said written report; Any other assigned duties consistent with the WIOA and related regulations, directives, policies procedures and amendments; and Adhering to all applicable federal and state guidance. The role of the Adult and Dislocated Worker Career Services Provider includes the following: Providing basic career services, including, but not limited to, participant intake, orientations, initial assessments, employment services, and referrals to other partners and services; Providing individualized career services, including, but not limited to, comprehensive and specialized assessments, case management, individual employment plans, career planning, and vocational counseling; Managing the daily operations in coordination with local fiscal agents for the lease, utilities, and other property activities in support of AJCC premises; and Managing the hours of operation for all of the comprehensive, affiliate and specialized AJCCs.

**V. APPENDICES**

The following Items are Included as part of this Local Plan.

Attachment 1: Joint Powers Agreement between Kern, Inyo and Mono Counties

Attachment 2: Stakeholder and Community Engagement Summary

Attachment 3: Public Comments Received that Disagree with the Local Plan

Attachment 4: Signature Page

Kern County  
Agt. # 511-2020

**JOINT POWERS AGREEMENT  
(Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act)**

THIS AGREEMENT, made and entered into this 18<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2020, by and among the COUNTY OF KERN, COUNTY OF INYO, and COUNTY OF MONO, each a political subdivision of the State of California;

**WITNESSETH:**

WHEREAS:

- (a) In 2014, the Congress of the United States enacted the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (P.L. 105-220; hereinafter "WIOA") for the purpose of consolidating, coordinating and improving employment, training, literacy, and vocational rehabilitation programs, and for other purposes; and
- (b) The WIOA provides for the delivery of WIOA-funded services through Local Workforce Development Areas; and
- (c) The Governor of the State of California has designated the Counties of Kern, Inyo, and Mono as a single Workforce Development Area; and
- (d) Government Code §26227 authorizes counties to establish programs necessary to meet the social needs of their population; Government Code §53703 authorizes counties to do all acts necessary to participate in programs whereby federal funds are granted to counties for purposes of education and welfare, including the authority to contract and cooperate with other local public agencies; and Government Code §6500 et seq. authorizes counties to jointly exercise any power common to them all; and
- (e) The parties hereto desire to enter into an agreement to specify their responsibilities under the WIOA to be operated in the Workforce Development Area comprising Kern, Inyo, and Mono Counties;

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS MUTUALLY AGREED by the COUNTY OF KERN, COUNTY OF INYO, and COUNTY OF MONO as follows:

1. Definitions. Except as otherwise set forth herein, all terms shall have the same meaning as set forth in the WIOA or its implementing regulations.
2. Purpose. This Agreement will provide the administrative framework for the Counties of Kern, Inyo, and Mono to cooperate in undertaking the WIOA-funded programs and other WIOA responsibilities to be operated within their jurisdictions. It is the parties' intent to both maximize local control and decision-making over their individual programs and to work together regionally, when appropriate.
3. Establishment of the Kern, Inyo, and Mono Workforce Development Board.
  - a. Pursuant to §107a of the WIOA, there is a Workforce Development Board for the Kern, Inyo, and Mono Counties Workforce Development Area.

- b. The Board of Supervisors of each County (or their respective authorized representatives), subject to the State Workforce Development Board's and Governor's certification, shall appoint members to the Local Workforce Development Board (hereinafter "Local Board") in the manner provided in the WIOA.
  - c. Inyo and Mono Counties may each appoint one member and Kern County will appoint the balance. Should Inyo and/or Mono Counties not appoint a member, Kern County will appoint members, as necessary.
  - d. The Local Board shall initially be composed of 33 members. Thereafter, the number of members of the Local Board shall be determined by the Local Board.
  - e. The Local Board shall function pursuant to the requirements of the WIOA (§107d) and shall have the authority to, among other things, enter into agreements with the Counties of Kern, Inyo, and Mono; and select a grant recipient and entity to administer the workforce development plan.
  - f. The Local Board shall review, monitor, and evaluate the programs conducted under the workforce development plan.
  - g. The Local Board shall develop its own operating procedures.
  - h. The Counties of Kern, Inyo, and Mono may establish individual advisory councils for the purpose of advising the Local Board on the training needs within their individual jurisdictions.
4. Duties and Responsibilities of the Counties.
- a. Acting within the parameters of the WIOA, it's implementing regulations, all applicable laws, and as authorized by the Local Board, each County will be responsible for operating WIOA-funded programs within its own jurisdiction. Program operations shall include, but not be limited to, recruitment, determination of participant eligibility, assessment, counseling, placement, training, follow-up, grievance procedures, providing required insurance, and other workforce development plan activities, including Basic Career Services, Individual Career Services and Training Services.
  - b. Each County shall develop mechanisms for coordinating its programs with public and private service deliverers within its own jurisdiction.
  - c. Each County may enter into vendor agreements, Individual Training Accounts and/or subcontracts with public and private agencies as necessary, to fulfill its responsibilities under the WIOA and the workforce development plan, subject to the terms of any agreement between the Counties and the Local Board.
  - d. Each County shall implement any and all accounting and reporting procedures necessary to assure compliance with the requirements of the WIOA. The Counties of Inyo and Mono shall submit any and all necessary information, documentation, and reports to Kern County in a timely manner.
5. Additional Duties and Responsibilities of Kern County. Due to its large population (in comparison to Inyo and Mono Counties) and its experience as an Administrative Entity and Grant Recipient under the Job Training Partnership Act and the Workforce Investment Act, Kern County will undertake the following duties:

- a. Receive WIOA funding from the State and develop necessary accounting and disbursement systems for providing such funding to the Counties of Kern, Inyo, and Mono.
  - b. With the assistance and cooperation of Inyo and Mono Counties, compile and submit WIOA reports as required by the State.
  - c. Provide support staff to the Local Board.
  - d. Provide monitoring and auditing services to Inyo and Mono Counties, which services shall be available on a cost reimbursement basis.
  - e. Provide additional services to Inyo and Mono Counties as needed on a cost reimbursement basis.
6. Allocation and Disbursement of Funds.
- a. WIOA funds received by Kern County shall be disbursed to each County in the same proportion as determined by the formulas in the WIOA and using the same data sources used for the Workforce Development Area allocation; except that individual allocations for each County will be used, if provided by the State.
  - b. Funding to individual Counties may be withheld if there is a determination that a County is not in compliance with this Agreement, an agreement with the Local Board, the WIOA or its implementing regulations, or existing laws.
  - c. There shall be strict accountability for all WIOA funds and each County shall provide all necessary reports of all receipts and disbursements.
7. Term. This Agreement shall become effective upon its execution by all parties hereto and shall continue in effect until terminated in the manner hereafter provided.
8. Termination. This Agreement may be terminated by:
- a. Appropriate action of the State of California or the U.S. Department of Labor;
  - b. The State of California designating an alternate Workforce Development Area involving a party to this Agreement; or
  - c. A party hereto withdrawing, following 90 days written notice to the Local Board and each of the other Counties.
  - d. In the event this Agreement is terminated, all real and personal property and WIOA funds in the possession of the administering entity shall be disbursed pursuant to WIOA requirements or State or U.S. Department of Labor orders. Absent such requirements or orders, said property and funds shall be distributed to the parties in accordance with the "population basis" formula initially employed in disbursing the funds, after payment of any outstanding debts or reimbursable costs.

- 9. Amendments/Modifications. This Agreement may only be amended or modified by the written consent of all parties hereto.
  
- 10. Liability of the Parties.
  - a. Each of the parties hereto shall be liable for the activities conducted within its own jurisdiction pursuant to this Agreement.
  
  - b. No debt, liability, or obligation of any one party to this Agreement shall constitute the debt, liability, or obligation of any of the other parties to this Agreement.
  
  - c. Each of the parties to this Agreement shall indemnify and hold harmless the other parties to this Agreement for any damages, costs, or liabilities arising out of the acts or omissions of its own officers, agents, and employees.
  
  - d. All of the privileges and immunities from liability, exemptions from laws, ordinances and rules, all pension, relief, disability, worker's compensation, and other benefits which apply to the activity of officers, agents, or employees of any party to this Agreement when performing their respective functions within the territorial limits of their county of employment or agency, shall apply to them to the same degree and extent while engaged in the performance of any of their functions and duties extraterritorially under the provisions of this Agreement.
  
- 11. Successors. This Agreement shall be binding upon and shall inure to the benefit of any successors to or assigns of the parties.
  
- 12. Pledge of Cooperation. Each of the parties hereto pledges its cooperation to the other parties hereto in attempting to accomplish the purposes of this Agreement and the WIOA.
  
- 13. Compliance with Laws. Each of the parties hereto shall comply with the provisions of the WIOA and its implementing regulations, and any and all applicable federal and state laws.
  
- 14. Severability. Should any part, term, portion, or provision of this Agreement be finally decided to be in conflict with any law of the United States or of the State of California, or otherwise be unenforceable or ineffectual, the validity of the remaining parts, terms, portions, or provisions shall be deemed severable and shall not be affected thereby, provided such remaining portions or provisions can be construed in substance to constitute the Agreement which the parties intended to enter into in the first instance.

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IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have caused this Agreement to be executed by their respective officers and agents on the day and year first written above.

COUNTY OF KERN

ATTEST *Ruthen Krause*  
Clerk, Board of Supervisors

*[Signature]*  
Chairman  
Board of Supervisors

COUNTY OF INYO

ATTEST *[Signature]*  
Clerk, Board of Supervisors

*[Signature]*  
Chairman  
Board of Supervisors

COUNTY OF MONO

ATTEST *[Signature]*  
Clerk, Board of Supervisors

*[Signature]*  
Chairman  
Board of Supervisors

RECOMMENDED AND APPROVED  
AS TO CONTENT - KERN COUNTY

APPROVED AS TO FORM  
OFFICE OF COUNTY COUNSEL  
KERN COUNTY

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RECOMMENDED AND APPROVED  
AS TO CONTENT - INYO COUNTY

APPROVED AS TO FORM  
OFFICE OF COUNTY COUNSEL  
INYO COUNTY

*[Signature]*

*[Signature]*

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RECOMMENDED AND APPROVED  
AS TO CONTENT - MONO COUNTY

Jacob Sloane  
Jacob Sloane (Jpl 2), 2020 12:57 PM

APPROVED AS TO FORM  
OFFICE OF COUNTY COUNSEL  
MONO COUNTY

[Signature]  
Sharon S. [Signature], 2020 12:57 PM

TH/eb

Attachment 2

**COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY**

To facilitate the engagement of the community and stakeholders in planning for the local workforce development delivery system and in the development of the Local Plan for PY 2025-28, the Kern, Inyo and Mono Counties Workforce Development Board (KIM WDB) hosted one community and stakeholder forum which focused on the following topics:

- How Kern County Department of Human Services and other local partners will coordinate services to individuals who access CalFresh Employment and Training Services.
- How Kern County Child Support Services and other local partners will coordinate services to individuals who are non-custodial parents.
- How local partners will braid resources and coordinate service delivery to English language learners, foreign-born, and/or refugees.
- How KIM WDB will collaborate with the Strategic Planning partners to address environmental sustainability.

This forum was held virtually via Teams on November 13, 2024.

The following attendees participated in 1-to-1 discussions with the KIM WDB and related County Departments, and engaged in the local planning process:

<b>Attendees</b>	<b>Employer</b>
1. Marsha Manos	Employers' Training Resource
2. Michael Saltz	Employers' Training Resource
3. Stephanie Ahlf	Driltek Inc,
4. Kyla Griffin	Mono County HHS, Social Services
5. Brandon Evans	Employers' Training Resource
6. Esther Solis	Employers' Training Resource
7. Dyann Barrientos	Garden Pathways DOO
8. Jana Webb	Employers' Training Resource
9. Danette Williams	Employers' Training Resource
10. Deborah McDade	SER Senior Community Service Employment Program
11. Brenda Mendivel	Bakersfield Family Medical Center
12. Stacy Pfluger	Vice Chancellor of Educational Services and Student Success, Kern Community College District
13. Ashley Coyle	Assistant Program Director, Department of Human Services
14. Rosario Miranda	Housing Services Program Manager Adult Re-Entry, Community Action Partnership of Kern

15. Nora Dominguez	Farmworker Institute of Education and Leadership Development, Chief Operating Officer
16. John Morales	Teamsters Local Union 87
17. Stacey Wuertz	Assistant Director, Kern County Child Support Services
18. Kristyann Thorp	EDD WSB Regional Advisor for KIM (Kern/Inyo/Mono) and San Joaquin Valley WDB's and Ventura
19. Imelda Ceja	Community Affairs Rep, Teamsters Union Local 87
20. David Teasdale	Kern Community College District Workforce and Economic Development
21. Gabriela Silva	Staff Services Manager I California Department of Rehabilitation
22. Devin Daugherty	Interim VP of Economic and Workforce Development, Taft College
23. Luanne Santos	Employers' Training Resource
24. Brian Holt	Business Manager, IBEW Local 428
25. Valerie Rangel	Program Director, Department of Human Services
26. Priscilla Varela	Staff Services Manager, Department of Rehabilitation
27. Scott Couture	Employers' Training Resource
28. Brooke Beaman	Employers' Training Resource
29. Steven Dominguez	Program Manager, Bakersfield College
30. Christina Arzate	Field Operations Coordinator - California Indian Manpower Consortium, Inc.
31. Norma Rojas-Mora	Associate Vice Chancellor Public Affairs and Development, Kern Community College District
32. Morningstar Wagoner	Deputy Director Public Assistance and Aging, Inyo County Health and Human Services
33. McKenna Liebgott	Adult Education Program Manager, Tehachapi Unified School District
34. Leonor Vasquez	Director of Grants Management - The Wonderful Company
35. Christina Garza	Central Valley Deputy Division Chief, Employment Development Department
36. Jeremy Shumaker	Assistant Director, Employers' Training Resource
37. Devin Forester II	
38. Miriam Ocampo-Arreola	Assistant Director, Kern County DHS
39. Jose Rocha,	HR Manager - Wonderful Orchards
40. Juan Rocha	Program Director Employment Services
41. Jacqueline Huang	Assistant Program Director, Department of Human Services

42. Matthew Wanta	Chair of Allied Health Dept., Director of Vocational Nursing and Health Careers, Cerro Coso Community College
43. Ruben Jauregui	Employment Development Specialist, EDD Workforce Service Branch,
44. Cody Brooks	Executive Director, Kern County Chapter NECA
45. Shawna Rodriguez	Director of Operations Proteus, Inc.
46. Erica Maldonado	Director of Community & Workforce Development  Proteus, Inc.
47. Bonita Steele	Director Programs & Program Development, Kern Community College District
48. Miriam Richards	Program Manager, Kern County Child Support
49. Kenia Jimenez	
50. Heidy Forsythe	Garden Pathways
51. Marleni Maston	Wasco High School District
52. Brenda R. Duenas	Employers' Training Resource
53. Jacqueline Stoner	Program Director, Nursing & Allied Health Bakersfield College
54. Shawna Rodriguez	Director of Operations Proteus, Inc.
55. Karine Kanikkeberg	Kern High School District
56. Endee Grijalva	Program Director- Customized & Corporate Training, KCCD
57. Daniel Rodela	Community Organizer, Faith in the Valley
58. Shawna Rodriguez	
59. Jaime Lopez	Interim Dean of Instruction, Taft College
60. Alissa Reed	KIM Building Trades Council (Unverified)
61. Ian Journey	Journey Engineering, Inc.
62. Christine Couture	Director of Operations, Tailored Brands
63. Kenny Spratt	Director of Talent Partnerships, The Wonderful Company
64. Nicole Griffin	Dean, Career Technical Education, Cerro Coso Community College
65. Peggy Langels	Employers' Training Resource
66. Danielle Beckett	Cluster Manager: State of CA EDD Workforce Services Branch
67. Carolina Aldaco	Assistant to the Deputy Division Chief, EDD
68. Lee Lopez	Principal McFarland Adult Ed Program
69. Maria Olvera	Program Specialist, Employers' Training Resource
70. Tamar Asatryan	Asst. Director, Farmworkers Institute of Education & Leadership (FIELD Institute), FIELD

Total Number of Participants: 70

### **Stakeholder and Community Engagement Summary (Continued)**

Kern County Employers' Training Resource (ETR), the fiscal and administrative agent for the Kern, Inyo and Mono Counties Workforce Development Board held a virtual Stakeholder and Community Engagement – Local Planning Forum (Forum). The overall focus of the Forum was that employment has evolved through the rise of remote work, the growth of the gig economy, the importance of skills over degrees and the increasing impact of artificial intelligence & automation. ETR has learned that in-person forums do not attract many attendees due to the distance they must travel to attend. ETR held its Forum on Wednesday, November 13, 2024 from 8:30 am – 11:30 am. The forum topic included:

- Braiding resources & coordinating services for English Language Learners, foreign-born & refugees
- Coordinating services with Department of Human Services' CalFresh Employment & Training customers
- Aligning services for non-custodial parents through Child Support Services
- Addressing environmental sustainability through collaboration

The Forum had 70 attendees and consisted of four presenters that had subject matter expertise discussing a variety of relevant topics that were instrumental in the preparation of the Local Plan. Each presenter delivered their presentation while engaging the virtual attendees. At the end of each presentation, questions were asked by attendees which caused other attendees to either ask additional questions or provide further feedback which helped the presenter. One presenter asked several engaging questions of the attendees during her presentation and sought feedback using the chat box feature. The attendees were very engaged and learned a great deal about the programs and collaboration being offered by ETR's partners. The final presenter discussed California Jobs First, formally known as California Economic Resilience Fund. This statewide initiative brought about the most discussion amongst attendees. The presenter indicated that the Kern Coalition is set to help communities diversify and strengthen local economies while transitioning to a carbon-neutral economy to create equitable access to high-quality jobs. There was a lot of discussion about the definition of a quality job, as well as priority tradeable industries versus locally-serving industries. The Forum was deemed successful by attendees and the presenters.

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Mode of Outreach	Target of Outreach	Summary of Attendance	Comments
Emails and reminder emails	Employers, Labor Organizations, WIOA partners, Community-Based Organizations, KIM WDB members, Governmental Agencies, and Educational Partners.	All of the targeted outreach attended	KIM WDB had 70 people attend the Stakeholder and Community Forum
Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter	General Public	Outreach attempted and had a few attendees	Please see above.

Attachment 3

Public Comments Received that Disagree with the Local Plan

1.	<i>From:</i>	<i>Date:</i>
<i>Comment:</i>		

2.	<i>From:</i>	<i>Date:</i>
<i>Comment:</i>		



**Signature Page**

The Local Board chairperson and local CEO must sign and date this form. Include the original signatures with the request.

By signing below, the local CEO and Local Board chair agree to abide by the Local Workforce Development Area assurances included in this document.

**Kern, Inyo and Mono Counties  
Workforce Development Board**

**Kern County Board of Supervisors**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ian Journey  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Leticia Perez  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair  
Title

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San Joaquin Valley & Associated Counties Regional Planning Unit

# REGIONAL PLAN



2025 - 2028

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## **I. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

With the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014, Congress moved the national workforce system in a new direction in terms of how to approach economic and labor market demands. While establishment of local workforce areas over the last four decades has always taken into account local labor markets, WIOA recognizes that economies tend to be regional, spilling easily over jurisdictional boundaries that commerce finds inconsequential. WIOA's recognition of regional economies gave rise to California's establishment of Regional Planning Units (RPUs), which represent groups of local workforce areas that work collaboratively to develop strategies reflecting regional economic needs of business and the workforce. In accordance with federal and state guidance, the San Joaquin Valley and Associated Counties (SJVAC) RPU has developed this four-year Regional Plan to guide strategic initiatives throughout Program Years (PY) 2025-28, which covers July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2029.

### **A. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act**

Passed by Congress with a wide bipartisan majority, WIOA is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in a global economy. WIOA represents the most recent version of federal workforce legislation providing funding to states and local areas to administer and operate workforce development programs. WIOA was preceded by the Job Training Partnership Act (active from 1982 to 2000) and the Workforce Investment Act (active from 2000 to 2015).

WIOA requires that a workforce development board (WDB) be established in each local workforce development area (LWDA). The area's chief local elected officials appoint members to the WDB. Local workforce development boards are business-led and the majority of members must come from the business community. Required WDB members also include representatives from labor, education, economic development, and specific federally funded workforce programs. The chief local elected officials may also select representatives from other groups, such as community-based organizations, to sit on the WDB.

While the PY 2025-28 Regional Plan addresses the programs, services, and activities of many organizations that derive their primary funding from a wide range of federal, state, and private programs, it is WIOA that requires the development and publication of the Plan and that prescribes its core content.

### **B. Regional Plans and the WIOA Planning Structure**

The SJVAC RPU Regional Plan is best understood within the context of a three-tiered planning structure envisioned by WIOA that requires development of plans at the state, regional, and local levels.

**State Plans:** Under WIOA, state plans communicate the vision for the statewide workforce development system. WIOA planning requirements aim to foster effective alignment of federal investments across job training and education programs, in order to coordinate service delivery among programs for shared customers; improve efficiency; and ensure that the workforce system connects individuals with high-quality job opportunities and employers. Cross-program planning promotes a shared understanding of the workforce needs within each state. California's PY 2024-2027 Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan represents agreement among the WIOA core program and other partners and serves as the framework for the development of public policy, fiscal investment, and operation of the state workforce and education systems.

**Regional Plans:** In states such as California, where Governors have established workforce planning regions encompassing one or more LWDA's, regional plans are required. Local WDBs within the region participate in a planning process that describes elements such as: analysis of regional labor market data, development and implementation of sector initiatives for targeted industries and in-demand occupations; coordination of workforce services with regional economic development services and providers; and establishment of regional service strategies, including use of cooperative service delivery agreements. The SJVAC RPU is one of California's fifteen workforce regions.

**Local Plans:** The local plan is intended to serve as a four-year action plan to develop, align, and integrate the local area's job-driven workforce development systems and provide a platform to achieve the local area's vision and strategic and operational goals. Features of the local plan include: coordination among economic development, education, and workforce partners to build a skilled workforce through innovation in, and alignment of, employment, training and education programs; implementation of job-driven strategies and services through the local career center system; and delivery of education and training to ensure that individuals, including youth and individuals with barriers to employment, have skills necessary to compete in the job market and that employers have a ready supply of skilled workers.

WIOA requires that Local Plans be incorporated into the Regional Plan. Therefore, the PY 2025-28 SJVAC RPU Regional Plan includes the PY 2025-28 Local Plans developed by the region's eight local WDBs.

### **C. California's Strategic Workforce Priorities**

California's Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan describes the state's priorities for the public workforce system. Under the leadership of the Governor and the Secretary of the Labor and Workforce Development Agency, California's vision for the future of workforce development is centered on the establishment and growth of a workforce system that promotes opportunity, job quality, and environmental sustainability for all Californians. The state is committed to developing a workforce system that enables economic growth and shared prosperity for employers and employees, especially those

with barriers to employment, by investing in industry partnerships, job quality, and meaningful skills attainment. One area in which the California Workforce Development Board (CWDB) pursues these aims is through its “High Road” programming. High Road refers to a “family of strategies” for achieving a participatory economy and society by aligning workforce, economic policy, and different interests with long-term goals of environmental sustainability, high-quality jobs, and a resilient economy. High Road emphasizes the complementary nature of these aims over the long term. In practice, High Road policy builds upon areas where the interest of employers (in trained and productive workers), workers and jobseekers (in good quality and accessible jobs), and environmental protection (for a sustainable future for all) overlap to create pathways to high-quality jobs while raising the profile of existing ones.

In consideration of the practical implementation of High Road principles in workforce development policy, the CWDB describes in the current State Plan four distinct “flavors” or styles of intervention. These interventions are directly relevant to High Road projects but also inform, to a greater or lesser extent, all of CWDB’s workforce efforts. They include: (1) lifting all workers to the “High Road;” (2) professionalizing precarious work (i.e., employment that is temporary, non-standard, and insecure, often with poor pay and no protection); (3) democratizing access to high-quality, middle-skill jobs; and (4) participatory planning for a low-carbon economy.

In accordance with the requirements of WIOA, both the SJVAC RPU Regional Plan Local Plan and the eight associated Local Plans support the State Plan priorities by:

- Maintaining a dual focus on providing programs and services that meet the needs and support the goals of businesses and job seekers/workers.
- Concentrating on industry sectors which drive growth and prosperity within local labor markets and regional economies.
- Targeting jobs that offer career advancement opportunities and that lead to positions that pay family-sustaining wages and provide pathways to self-sufficiency and the middle class.
- Committing to the adoption and implementation of strategies and processes that support environmental sustainability and climate resilience through workforce development.

## **D. Overview of the SJVAC RPU and the Region**

The parties to the Regional Plan are the eight local workforce development boards within the RPU, which include seven boards representing single counties (Fresno, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Tulare) and one consortium board representing three counties (Kern, Inyo and Mono). Through their Central California Workforce Collaborative (CCWC) network, the WBDs were all actively involved in the regional planning process by reviewing State guidance; engaging external expertise to assist in the process; providing resource documents; organizing regional forums; and meeting as a group to share insights, make decisions, and establish priorities for regional

coordination. As the designated lead for the RPU, development of the PY 2025-28 Regional Plan was managed by the Stanislaus County WDB.

The boundaries of the RPU are those defined by the ten counties referred to above. The area comprises approximately 40,760 square miles, roughly 25% of California. With approximately 4.3 million residents, the region is more populous than 25 states.

## E. Guiding Principles

In addition to support for the State Plan, the SJVAC RPU Regional Plan is built upon five principles, which represent the values, vision, and commitment of the Central Valley's workforce stakeholders. They include:

The Workforce System is Demand-Driven: Industry drives job demand and businesses define skills needed for jobs. It is the obligation of the workforce system to train candidates in these skills, preparing them for careers.

Regional Sector Pathways are an Effective Approach to Meeting Demand: Structured, high-quality education, training, and support programs offer opportunities for success for everyone who is preparing for a career.

The Workforce System Encompasses All Stakeholders: The system is not merely WIOA programs. Rather, it is comprised of the work, resources, and unique capabilities of all organizations and individuals with a stake in building and maintaining a prosperous, competitive economy.

Long-Term Regional Collaboration: The Central California Workforce Collaborative (CCWC) is a manifestation of a partnership that has existed for 40 years. Through the joint efforts of the eight WDBs, this collaboration has yielded many benefits.

Climate Resilience and Environmental Sustainability Are Critical to the Regional Economy: Every occupation and industry is affected by climate change and/or influences the environment to varying degrees. As California moves toward a carbon-neutral economy, entire industries are changing, along with the jobs, knowledge, and skills needed within those sectors.

## F. Approach to and Context for Plan Development

To support development of the PY 2025-28 Plan, the region contracted with experienced workforce and economic development subject matter experts to design the stakeholder engagement process, analyze labor market and workforce data, facilitate community forums, and craft the language of the plan. Local board directors, managers, and staff were active during every stage of the plan development. The content of the Plan contemplates myriad opportunities and challenges that are expected to persist over its four-year span. Among these are:

### **Potential Challenges**

An Aging Workforce: A large number of baby boomers and even later generations are retiring, creating a potential gap in experienced workers.

Skill Shortages Resulting from Automation: Rapid technological advancements, including artificial intelligence and robotics, may render certain skills obsolete, requiring significant workforce upskilling.

Attracting and Retaining Talent: Competition for skilled workers is expected to intensify, making it challenging to attract and retain talent.

A Multigenerational Workforce: Managing diverse generations with different expectations and work styles within the same workplace.

Work-Life Balance and Flexibility: Balancing employee demands for flexible work arrangements with the need for productivity and performance.

Funding for the Workforce System: Managing costs that continue to rise and the increasingly complex needs of customers, while funding for the system has not kept pace.

### **Key Opportunities**

Leveraging artificial intelligence in recruitment: Utilizing these tools to analyze candidate data and efficiently identify talent matches.

Upskilling and reskilling initiatives: Investing in training programs to equip current employees with the skills needed for emerging technologies.

Focus on employee experience: Prioritizing employee well-being, engagement, and career development to improve retention.

Remote work and hybrid models: Offering flexible work arrangements to cater to diverse employee needs.

Data-driven decision making: Utilizing data analytics to inform workforce strategies and talent management.

Building a learning culture: Encouraging continuous learning and adaptability to keep pace with technological advancement.

## **G. Program Year 2025-28 Regional System Priorities**

During the process used to develop the PY 2025-28 Regional Plan, business and industry leaders, community members, regional stakeholders, and system partners were invited to participate in a series of discussions regarding the direction of the local workforce system over the next four years. As a result of these discussions, the following priorities have been identified:

- Focus on key industries
- Support businesses in managing change
- Engage businesses in the design and delivery of training
- Address climate impacts on economy and work
- Identify and train the workforce in core employability skills
- Prepare youth and young adults for careers
- Recognize changes in worker priorities
- Leverage under-resourced workers
- Bring services to communities
- Expand collaboration

Section IX of this plan summarizes these and other regional issues, strategies, approaches, and key considerations that workforce system leadership and system partners will examine over the four-year course of this plan.

## II. ANALYTICAL OVERVIEW OF THE REGION

The Regional Plan for the Central Valley provides an overview of the region's economy and workforce environment and describes collaborative strategies across the eight local workforce development areas. Leveraging a broad range of expertise and resources, the SJVAC RPU has completed an analysis of labor market data, as well as economic conditions and trends in the region, and analysis of the educational attainment of the current workforce.

As the lead organization for the SJVAC RPU, Stanislaus County WDB engaged the Tulare County WIB to complete data analysis required for the Plan. In January 2025, Tulare County published the results of this analysis in a report titled "[San Joaquin Valley Regional Planning Unit: Data Analysis for Regional Plan PY 2025-28.](#)" The analysis is accessible in its entirety through the preceding hyperlink.

### ***Data Analysis Methodology***

The data presented by Tulare County WIB representatives (hereafter "the analysts") supports regional planning objectives linked to the labor market and workforce. The analysts used publicly available data from several federal agencies, including the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bureau of Economic Analysis, and the Census Bureau, as well as from Lightcast, a private data analytics service that conducts additional analysis using public data sets, private sources, and proprietary data analytics.

Aside from Decennial Census data, which this report only contains embedded in survey benchmarks and other data smoothing methods, all data analysis is based on survey methods and derivations of those outputs. The main survey used is U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS). This is a yearly survey on a wide-reaching array of economic, social, demographic, and employment topics. Survey results are presented in 1-year estimates (ACS 1-year) and 5-year estimates (ACS 5-year). Generally, the report relies on ACS 2023 1-year data, as it presents the most current available data. In some instances ACS 5-year estimates are presented. ACS 5-year estimates cannot and should not be directly compared with ACS 1-year estimates.

In addition, the analysts make use of Industry and Occupational data that was prepared by the California Employment Development Department (EDD) for Unemployment and industry level analysis. These EDD reports also use a combination of the U.S. Department of Labor's Current Population Survey (CPS) and Current Employment Statistics (CES). EDD generally rounds figures to the nearest -100, and the estimates presented should not be interpreted as a census of workers.

Projections of employment or industry activity are derived using myriad methods. No single method, combination of methods, or algorithm can be used to predict the future. However major industry trends should be considered when devising workforce development strategies.

Lightcast shares its methodology publicly and it is available for review at no cost. A non-comprehensive list of resources is attached to the Regional Plan Data Analysis report for readers to use to further examine data.

### **Overview**

Data analysis conducted to support the SJVAC RPU's PY 2025-28 Regional Plan serves as a critical tool to support workforce planning and strategic decision-making aimed at fostering economic growth and addressing workforce challenges within the region, including the development of career pathways linked to growth industries and other strategic and promising sectors. This comprehensive analysis of the region's labor market and economic trends will inform workforce development strategies for the coming years.

The report on which data in this section of the Plan is based highlights resilience in recovery from the pandemic, showcasing significant job growth and economic gains across key sectors and industries. Between 2019 and 2024, total nonfarm employment grew by 9.67%, with sectors like Educational and Health Services (+19.55%) and Trade, Transportation, and Utilities (+12.77%) leading this expansion. However, the region continues to see weakness relative to the rest of the state when it comes to high wage employment in sectors such as technology, media, and other higher end service and manufacturing jobs.

The San Joaquin Valley has taken advantage of its geographic endowments to support the emerging logistics and e-commerce economy. Affordable land and the central location of the region relative to the rest of the state have led to strong job growth in associated industries. These growth sectors are driven by increased consumer demand for healthcare and logistics services, positioning the Central Valley as a critical hub for e-commerce and community services. Conversely, traditional sectors like agriculture experienced job losses, with Crop Production declining by 7,531 jobs (-12%). This trend reflects broader challenges such as water scarcity, advancements in automation used in agriculture, and Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) related water conservation, which all underscore the importance of adapting workforce strategies to these economic shifts.

Despite these advancements, challenges remain in addressing structural employment disparities and workforce skill gaps. The region is undereducated and earns less relative to the rest of the state. Addressing these educational and skill deficits is critical to unlocking the full potential of the region's workforce. By investing in targeted training programs and educational initiatives, the region can bridge these gaps, ensuring sustained economic growth and a more equitable labor market.

### **A. Analysis of Employment and Unemployment Data**

Generally, unemployment rates in the counties that comprise the SJVAC RPU can be several percentage points higher than the statewide average. Much of this discrepancy is due to the high share of farm jobs relative to the rest of the economy, as well lower

skilled employment that can lead to lower perceived or real job security. Table 1 shows that the overall unemployment rate is higher than it was five years ago, but this does not necessarily reflect a weakening of the overall labor market which continues to show expansion. A larger share of the population entering the workforce and searching for jobs, as well as persons switching careers or positions looking for higher pay or better opportunities, can also explain this rise.

In comparison to the whole of California, the SJVAC RPU has a slightly higher base unemployment rate, but largely mirrors statewide changes over a 5-year period.

**TABLE 1**  
**Unemployment Rates in SJVAC RPU**  
 September 2024: Not Seasonally Adjusted Data

Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA)	September 2019	September 2023	September 2024	Sept. 2019-Sept. 2024 Change	Year-Over Change (Sept. 23-Sept. 24)
California	4.0%	5.0%	5.3%	1.3%	0.3%
SJV RPU	5.87%	6.68%	7.14%	1.27%	0.46%
<b><u>LWDAs</u></b>					
San Joaquin	5.0%	5.8%	6.2%	1.2%	0.4%
Stanislaus	4.9%	5.8%	6.3%	1.4%	0.5%
Merced	5.9%	7.5%	7.8%	1.9%	0.3%
Madera	5.3%	6.2%	6.7%	1.4%	0.5%
Fresno	5.7%	6.3%	6.9%	1.2%	0.6%
Kings	6.1%	6.9%	7.3%	1.2%	0.4%
Tulare	8.2%	8.9%	9.3%	1.1%	0.4%
Kern/Inyo/Mono <sup>1</sup>	6.2%	7.0%	7.5%	1.3%	0.5%

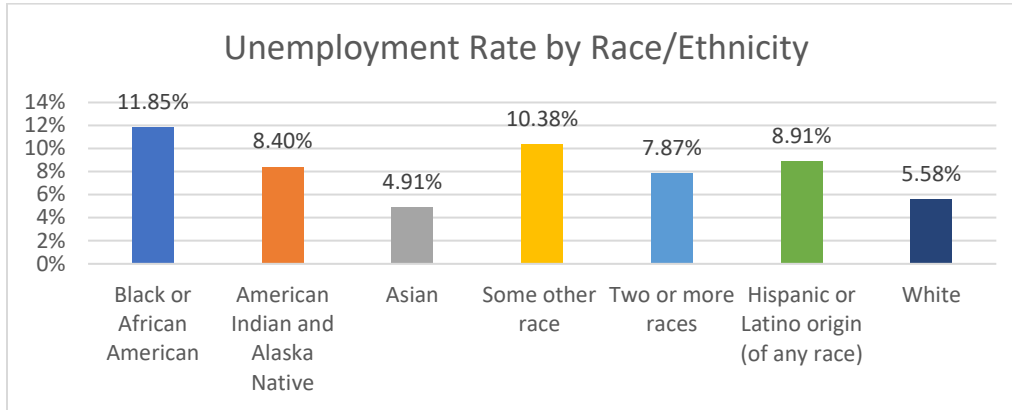
Source: Employment Development Department

<sup>1</sup>Kern, Inyo, and Mono counties are combined into a single Local Workforce Development Area

**A Closer Look at Unemployment Rates – Race/Ethnicity**

The following graph uses ACS 1-Year data to examine differences in unemployment status among self-reported racial and ethnic groups. White and Asian subgroups performed best, with other minorities or self-identified racial groups having higher rates of unemployment. Black, American Indian, and Hispanic/Latino (see note below) showed much higher rates of unemployment. These systemic challenges can be tied to factors such as educational attainment, language barriers, and their over-representation in low-wage, high turnover industries. Workforce development boards and educational institutions will need to continue targeted outreach and investments into these communities to continue closing the gap.

**Graph 1**  
**SJCAV RPU Estimated Unemployment Rates by Race/Ethnicity**  
**2023 1-Year ACS Estimates**



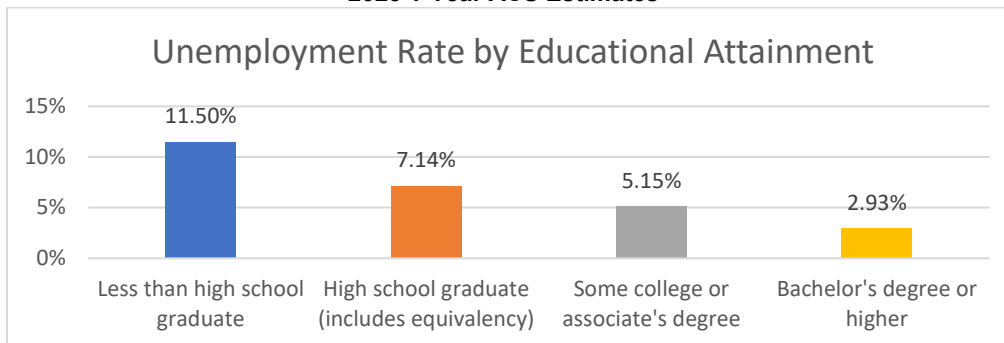
Source: ACS 1-Year Estimates, S2301 Employment Status. Does not include Mono/Inyo counties. County populations are too small to have accurate estimates for 1-Year Estimates

**A Note on Race and Ethnicity:** The large number of people who identify as some other race reflects a survey method decision in the way the U.S. Census Bureau classifies individuals by race. The Bureau classifies Hispanics/Latinos as an ethnic group instead of a racial group and considers ethnicity and race not to be mutually exclusive. As such, one can be Hispanic ethnically and White or Black simultaneously and the Census has different variables to reflect this. However, this ethnicity and race distinction appears to be blurred among ACS respondents. The Census Bureau reports that the vast majority of respondents who identify as some other race were Hispanics/Latinos. This same blurring of race and ethnicity may also inflate the two or more race count.

**A Closer Look at Unemployment Rates – Educational Attainment**

Below, Graph 2 illustrates the power that progressive levels of education play in providing job security and lower rates of unemployment. The types of occupations that higher educational attainment allow stabilizes and otherwise provides job security in a way that those without a high school degree do not experience.

**Graph 2**  
**SJVAC RPU Estimated Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment -**  
**2023 1-Year ACS Estimates**



Source: ACS 1-Year Estimates, S2301 Employment Status

**Labor Force Participation**

Labor Force Participation is a measure of the population of those working or seeking work as a ratio to the full population size of a given area. The United States experienced a severe dip in Labor Force Participation during the pandemic, but it has largely recovered to previous trendlines, last estimated at 63.8%. According to those same estimates, the State of California recorded a Labor Force Participation of 64.3% and the SJVAC RPU, in the same snapshot, stood at 61.3%.

**Table 3**  
**Labor Force Participation - ACS 1-Year Estimates**

	2021	2022	2023
United States	63.00%	63.50%	63.80%
California	63.40%	63.90%	64.30%
SVU RPU	59.38%	61.17%	61.30%

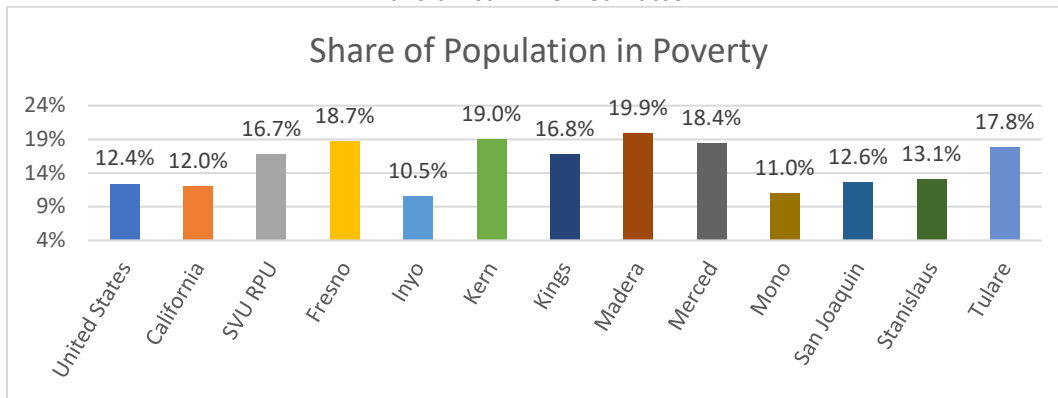
Source: 2023 ACS 1-Year estimates, S2301 Employment Status

While the region has generally lagged behind in Labor Force Participation rates, this should be viewed within the context of historical baselines and the growth in population that the SJVAC RPU has experienced relative to both the state and the rest of the nation. The total labor force is growing and remains robust, despite high baseline unemployment.

**Poverty in the Region**

Poverty rates in the SJVAC RPU, as one might expect based on the median earnings, are higher than in California as a whole. Interestingly, poverty measures are higher in the southern portion of the region than in the North. This may be due to the proximity to the greater Bay Area and Sacramento economies that they share. However, there are likely other underlying factors. Poverty rates have been declining for most of the region over the last several years due to a number of economic and policy factors including the post-pandemic labor shortage, changes in minimum wage, and farmworker pay structures.

**Graph 3**  
**Share of Population in Poverty - Nation, State, SJVAC RPU, and Counties**  
**2023 5-Year ACS Estimates**

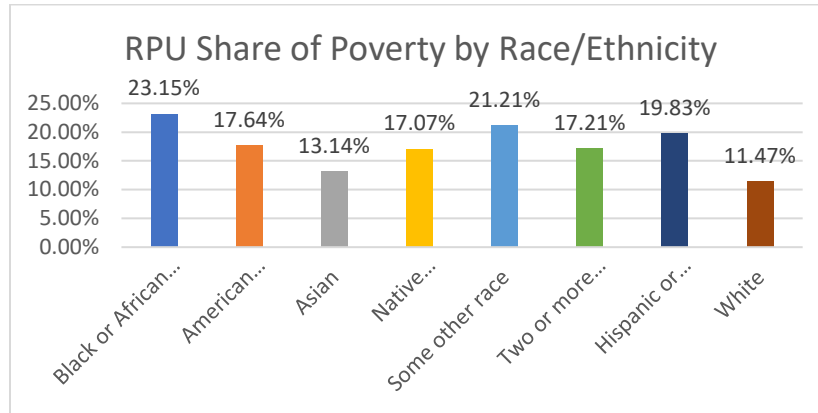


Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, S1701 Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months

**A Closer Look at Poverty – Race/Ethnicity**

As one might expect, the racial makeup of poverty is not evenly experienced. White, non-Hispanic, populations outperform all other recorded ethnic or race categories collected by the American Community Survey with the lowest estimated poverty rates. This tracks largely with educational attainment and unemployment statistics across the different ethnic and race groups.

**Graph 4**  
**Share of Population in Poverty, by Race/Ethnicity - San Joaquin Valley RPU**  
**2023 1-Year ACS Estimates**

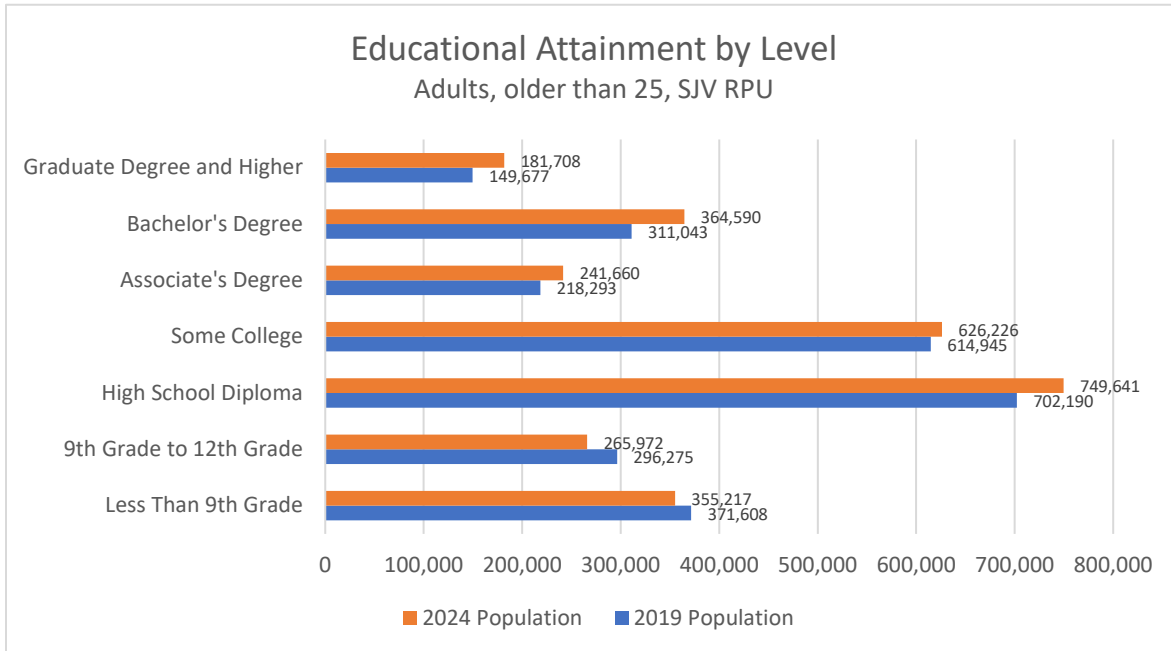


Source: ACS 1-Year Estimates, S1701 Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months

**B. Analysis of the Educational and Skill Levels of the Workforce**

Overall, Educational Attainment has improved for the RPU over the last five years. As seen in the following graph 5, high school diplomas, those attending college, and college degrees all increased, while those with less than a high school education decreased. With continuing emphasis on high school graduation and alternative technical pathways programs, trends seen here should continue.

**Graph 5**  
**SJVAC RPU Educational Attainment by Level Adults older than 25**  
**2023 1-Year ACS Estimates**



Source: ACS 2023 1-Year Data, EDD RPU Data Portal

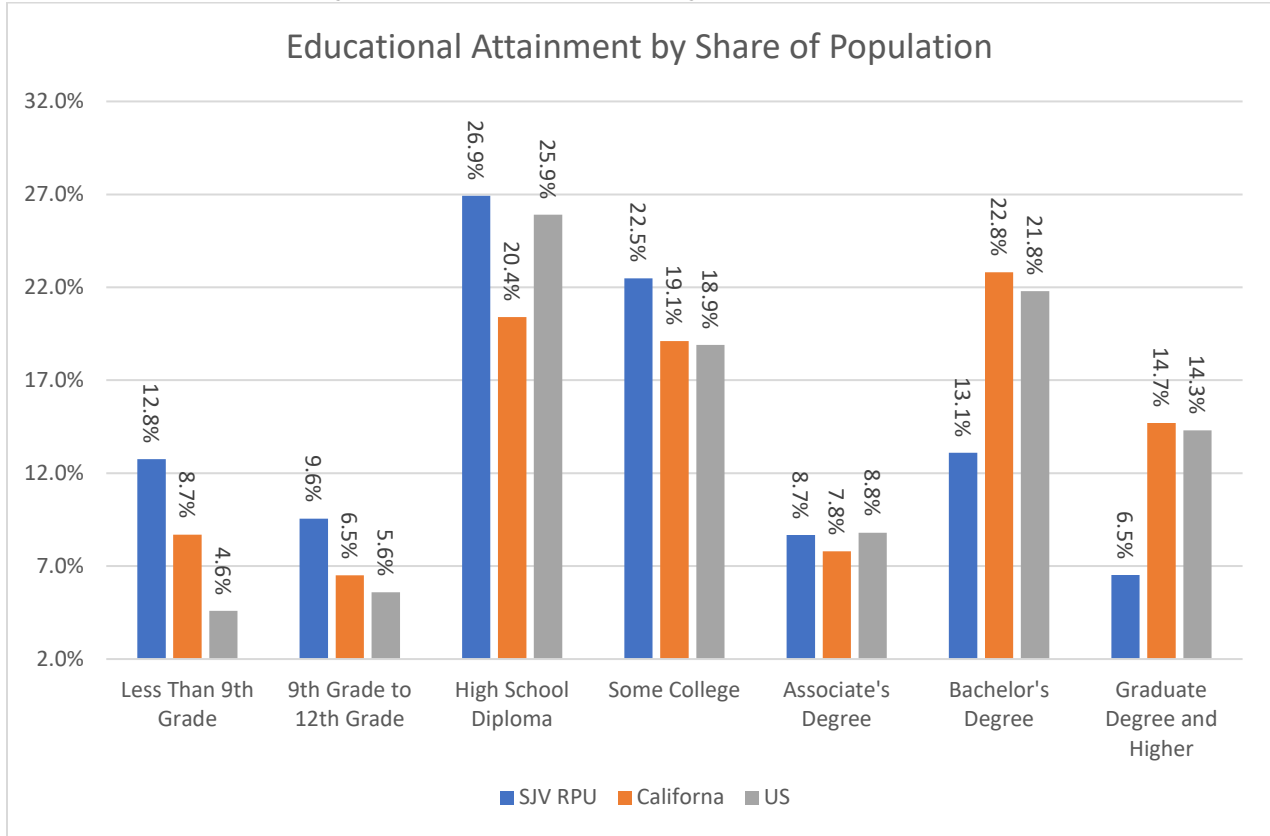
***Educational Attainment – Missed Opportunities***

Despite educational gains, the SJVAC RPU still lags behind the rest of the state and the nation in overall education levels. One major weakness in the region is the lack of post-secondary education options. Currently, the region is served by three California State University campuses (Stanislaus, Fresno, and Bakersfield) and one University of California campus (Merced). There are no public, 4-year degree offering institutions in 6 of the SJV RPU’s 10 counties.

There is a robust community college system that has increasingly taken a leading role in post-secondary education and licensing, but those seeking bachelor’s and graduate degrees are continually underserved and often seek education outside of the region, contributing to the loss of human capital in the Valley.

Additionally, rural communities often face barriers like long travel distances to colleges, fewer advanced placement courses, and lower internet connectivity, all of which can hinder educational progress. These disparities are critical, as they limit workforce opportunities and economic development in rural California, perpetuating cycles of lower income and reduced mobility. Addressing these challenges requires targeted investments in educational infrastructure, digital access, and community support programs to ensure rural residents can compete on an equal footing with their urban counterparts.

**Graph 6**  
**Educational Attainment by Share of Population**  
**Country, State, and San Joaquin Valley RPU Adults Older Than 25**

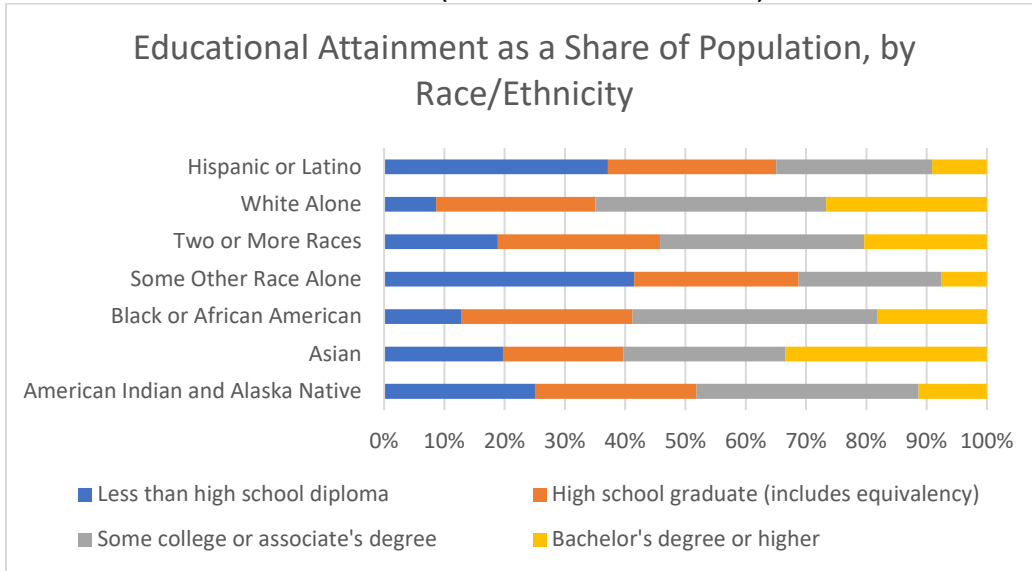


Source: EDD RPU Data Portal, Educational Attainment

**A Closer Look at Educational Attainment – Race/Ethnicity**

The stacked bar chart below compares the differences in educational attainment between race/ethnic groups as a ratio. Overall, this reveals that those identifying as Hispanic or Latino have the largest share of their population not possessing a high school diploma or equivalency. This may be due to the large relative share of foreign-born population that come to the U.S. as adults. However, at the other end of the educational attainment spectrum, they are also one of the demographic groups most underrepresented with higher levels of education attainment, such as bachelor’s or graduate/professional degrees.

**Graph 7**  
**Educational Attainment as a share of population, by Race/Ethnicity**  
**EDD Statistics (from ACS 5-Year Data 2022)**

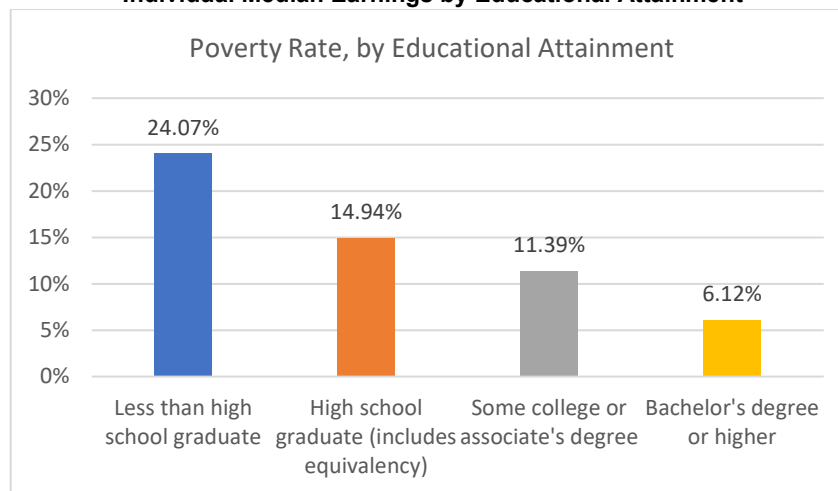


Source: EDD RPU Data Portal, Race/Ethnicity

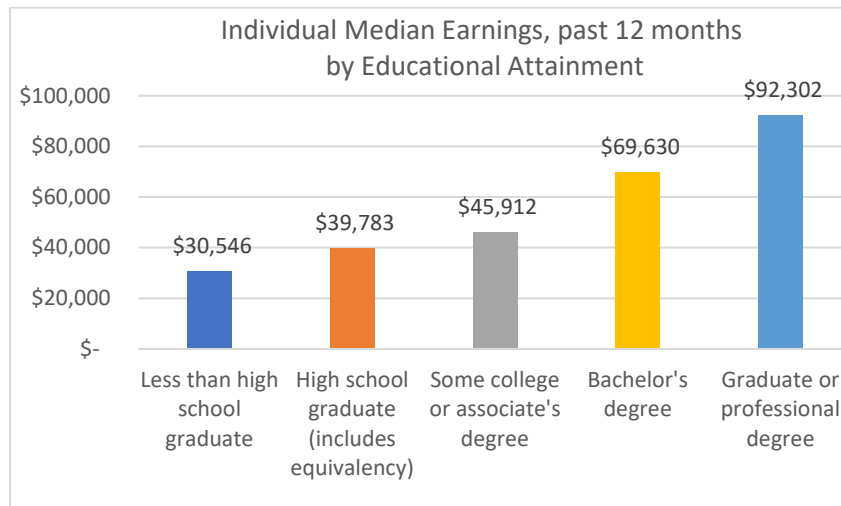
**A Closer Look at Educational Attainment – The Key Antipoverty Program**

Educational Attainment significantly increase access to better-paying and more stable job opportunities. Individuals with a high school diploma are more likely to secure employment with benefits, while those with college degrees often access higher-paying professions in industries like healthcare, technology, and finance. Education also provides critical skills such as problem-solving, communication, and adaptability, which are increasingly valued in today’s economy.

**Graph 8 and 9**  
**SJVAC RPU Poverty Rate by Educational Attainment**  
**Individual Median Earnings by Educational Attainment**



ACS 1-Year Data (2023)



Source, both graphs: ACS 2023 1-Year Data, San Joaquin Valley RPU Weighted Averages

### C. Analysis of Industries and Occupations with Existing and Emerging Demand

This analysis takes into account both existing industry and occupational demand and demand that is emerging throughout the region. The regional Plan Data Analytics report may be viewed here: [SJVAC-Data-Analysis-Report-2025-2028](#).

#### Industry Sector Growth

Looking at industries that gained jobs in the last five years, the following list and analysis of growth industries filters out those with fewer than 1,000 jobs and 5-year growth of less than 7%. This removes small industries that can skew data analysis.

Transportation, Warehousing, Logistics: This collection of industries displayed strong growth in the region and appeared at or near the top of both largest and fastest growth. This is a continuing development in the economy that does not show signs of relenting, although it may slow as markets become more saturated.

Healthcare and Social Services: Hospitals, doctors offices, social services, and other public health and social services are large and important employers. This industry, especially with skilled nursing, offers the most direct path to high wages and social mobility

Construction and Related Industries: While representing a smaller portion of the labor market, this is an important sector to invest in and keep a close eye on, given its status as a leading economic indicator as well as offering high wages for skilled trade work.

Education and other Public Sectors: In many areas of the region, especially in rural towns, this sector is the highest paying and requires the most education. Teachers, public administrators, and public safety are vital skills and resources to the region’s communities and a lack of investment can risk atrophying already stressed public entities.

Restaurants and Recreation: While not an industry that is seen as a lynchpin of economic activity, it does suggest a robust economy with spending money that can support and expand these offerings. Another contributing factor can be found in an increase in outdoor tourism driven by the pandemic and supported by the many public lands, national parks, and other natural outdoor tourism activities in the SJVAC RPU.

Manufacturing: Manufacturing, outside of post-harvest processing, remains a niche industry with low demand. It remains to be seen what public investments from federal and state levels as well as an increased emphasis on domestic manufacturing can manifest within the region.

Within the PY 2025-28 Regional Plan Data Analysis report, Table 5 illustrates industries (using 4-digit NAICS coding) that have gained jobs over the past 5 years. The left column organizes industries based on estimated total jobs gained and the right column organizes industries based on a percent change to attempt to capture industries that are quickly expanding. >

**TABLE 5**  
Real Gross Domestic Product, by County (2019-2023)  
Thousands of chained (2017) dollars

Counties in RPU	2019	2022	2023	2019-2023 Economic Growth (5-year)	2023 Economic Growth (1 year)
California	2,969,609,000	3,184,007,800	3,248,656,600	9.3%	2.0%
SJV RPU <sup>1</sup>	187,698,433	190,837,086	195,682,118	4.25%	2.54%
<b><u>Counties<sup>1</sup></u></b>					
San Joaquin	31,274,535	33,301,759	33,097,405	5.83%	-0.6%
Stanislaus	23,329,680	23,803,366	24,067,824	3.16%	1.1%
Merced	9,251,024	9,511,320	9,548,937	3.22%	0.4%
Madera	6,222,075	6,043,485	6,226,914	0.08%	3.0%
Fresno	45,018,790	46,107,283	47,612,742	5.76%	3.3%
Kings	6,457,601	6,868,202	7,041,297	9.04%	2.5%
Tulare	18,480,075	18,399,182	18,824,792	1.87%	2.3%
Kern	45,410,206	44,626,843	46,941,848	3.37%	5.2%
Inyo	1,223,022	1,089,927	1,141,849	-6.64%	4.8%
Mono	1,031,425	1,085,719	1,178,510	14.26%	8.5%

<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Economic Analysis data is collected and presented by county. For this section we have broken out the different counties in the Kern/Inyo/Mono LDWA consortium. Figures for the RPU were developed from BEA county-level data.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

**Industry Sector Losses**

The following analysis of industry losses removes industries with job changes over 5 years that were higher than -2%

Agriculture: The largest employer for most of the region is the agricultural industry and it continues to show a decline in employment. Despite these job losses, agricultural output has remained steady which suggests an improvement in labor productivity. The industry continues to take advantage of automation innovations, as well as shifts in crop planting. These factors, along with uncertainty and expected contraction in farmed area due to climate change and public policy (namely SGMA), may lead to a further contraction in the farm labor market.

Retail and Related In-Person Commerce: While logistics, home delivery, and transportation have expanded in the SJVAC RPU, in-person commerce and retail establishments have shown large declines. Some of this can be attributed to the direct competition e-commerce offers, other automation activities can also be factors.

Federal and State Government: In comparison to the expansion and immediate requirements of local government employment, certain state and federal employment has been pulled back in the past 5 years. This may be a shift of certain public administration from those authorities down to the local level as well as efficiency gains made by state and federal officials, but it is a cautionary sign of reduced public investment into the region.

Within the PY 2025-28 Regional Plan Data Analysis report, Table 8 illustrates industries (using 4-digit NAICS coding) that have lost jobs over the past 5 years. The left column organizes industries based on estimated total jobs lost and the right column organizes industries based on a percent change to attempt to capture industries that are quickly expanding.

TABLE 8

**2019-2024 Losses for Industry Sector Jobs in San Joaquin RPU**

Lightcast database analysis using QCEW, ACS, BEA, and other publicly available data. 4-digit NAICS classification

<u>Industries That Lost the Most Jobs</u> (2019-2024 Change in Number)	<u>Jobs Lost</u>	<u>Industries That Declined Fastest</u> (2019-2024 Change in Percent)	<u>Percent Change</u>
Crop Production	(7,531)	Business Support Services	(57%)
Support Activities for Crop Production	(3,948)	Insurance Carriers	(50%)
Business Support Services	(3,345)	Facilities Support Services	(39%)
Insurance Carriers	(2,804)	Vocational Rehabilitation Services	(33%)
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Retailers	(2,588)	Furniture and Home Furnishings Retailers	(25%)

Employment Services	(2,534)	Clothing and Clothing Accessories Retailers	(23%)
Private Households	(2,100)	Wired and Wireless Telecommunications (except Satellite)	(23%)
State Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals	(1,700)	Support Activities for Air Transportation	(20%)
Vocational Rehabilitation Services	(1,531)	Private Households	(19%)
Depository Credit Intermediation	(1,221)	Support Activities for Mining	(19%)
Support Activities for Mining	(1,206)	Nondepository Credit Intermediation	(17%)
Animal Production	(1,139)	Printing and Related Support Activities	(16%)
Utility System Construction	(1,084)	Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools	(15%)
Furniture and Home Furnishings Retailers	(946)	Depository Credit Intermediation	(14%)
Facilities Support Services	(928)	Utility System Construction	(14%)
Wired and Wireless Telecommunications (except Satellite)	(819)	Crop Production	(12%)
Education and Hospitals (State Government)	(816)	Employment Services	(9%)
Grocery and Related Product Merchant Wholesalers	(810)	Taxi and Limousine Service	(9%)
Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools	(790)	Beer, Wine, and Distilled Alcoholic Beverage Merchant Wholesalers	(7%)
Department Stores	(730)	Department Stores	(7%)
Federal Government, Civilian	(677)	Grocery and Related Product Merchant Wholesalers	(6%)
Support Activities for Air Transportation	(477)	Education and Hospitals (State Government)	(6%)
Management of Companies and Enterprises	(437)	State Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals	(5%)
Child Day Care Services	(427)	Highway, Street, and Bridge Construction	(5%)
Printing and Related Support Activities	(427)	Animal Production	(5%)
Nondepository Credit Intermediation	(390)	Miscellaneous Nondurable Goods Merchant Wholesalers	(4%)
Religious Organizations	(279)	Child Day Care Services	(4%)
Miscellaneous Nondurable Goods Merchant Wholesalers	(201)	Management of Companies and Enterprises	(4%)
Taxi and Limousine Service	(181)	Sporting Goods, Hobby, and Musical Instrument Retailers	(3%)
Beer, Wine, and Distilled Alcoholic Beverage Merchant Wholesalers	(171)	Support Activities for Crop Production	(3%)
Sporting Goods, Hobby, and Musical Instrument Retailers	(169)	Specialty Food Stores	(2%)
Highway, Street, and Bridge Construction	(119)	Federal Government, Civilian	(2%)
Other Wood Product Manufacturing	(74)	Other Wood Product Manufacturing	(2%)
Specialty Food Stores	(72)	Religious Organizations	(2%)

Source: Lightcast Industry Table, SJV RPU, 4 Digit NAICS

**Occupational Gains**

Occupational data differs from industry data in certain categorical and survey-design choices but attempts to highlight similar information. The main takeaways from analysis of occupations with the highest and fastest growth align largely with those of the industry level data.

Within the PY 2025-28 Regional Plan Data Analysis report, Table 9 illustrates both occupations that added the most jobs and occupations that grew the fastest.

**TABLE 9**

**2019-2024 Growth for Occupational Data in San Joaquin RPU**

Lightcast database analysis using QCEW, ACS, BEA, and other publicly available data. 4-digit SOC classification

<u>Occupations That Added the Most Jobs</u> (Five-Year Change in Number)		<u>Occupations That Grew the fastest</u> (Five-Year Change in Percent)		<u>Percent Change</u>
Total Jobs		Total Jobs		
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	24,628	Couriers and Messengers		117%
Laborers and Material Movers	18,908	Training and Development Specialists		84%
Driver/Sales Workers and Truck Drivers	10,228	Logisticians and Project Management Specialists		66%
Cooks	6,515	Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers		59%
General and Operations Managers	5,126	Miscellaneous Personal Appearance Workers		45%
Counselors	3,239	Home Health and Personal Care Aides		44%
Logisticians and Project Management Specialists	2,876	Bartenders		42%
Miscellaneous Business Operations Specialists	2,793	Marketing and Sales Managers		41%
Elementary and Middle School Teachers	2,513	Medical and Health Services Managers		41%
Shipping, Receiving, and Inventory Clerks	2,393	Software and Web Developers, Programmers, and Testers		40%
Marketing and Sales Managers	2,297	Human Resources Workers		38%
Physicians	2,214	Physicians		34%
Registered Nurses	2,209	Miscellaneous Business Operations Specialists		32%
Miscellaneous Healthcare Support Occupations	2,115	Shipping, Receiving, and Inventory Clerks		32%
Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	1,968	First-Line Supervisors of Transportation and Material Moving Workers		32%
Miscellaneous Managers	1,889	General and Operations Managers		32%
Security Guards and Gambling Surveillance Officers	1,827	First-Line Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers		32%
Human Resources Workers	1,807	Special Education Teachers		32%
First-Line Supervisors of Transportation and Material Moving Workers	1,782	Food Service Managers		31%
Substitute Teachers, Short-Term	1,731	Counselors		28%
Training and Development Specialists	1,697	Miscellaneous Managers		26%

Bartenders	1,591	Construction Managers	26%
Therapists	1,575	First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	25%
First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	1,505	Therapists	25%
Medical and Health Services Managers	1,497	Cooks	23%
Miscellaneous Personal Appearance Workers	1,462	Laborers and Material Movers	21%
Software and Web Developers, Programmers, and Testers	1,455	Driver/Sales Workers and Truck Drivers	20%
First-Line Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers	1,415	Security Guards and Gambling Surveillance Officers	19%
Special Education Teachers	1,412	Industrial Machinery Installation, Repair, and Maintenance Workers	18%
Couriers and Messengers	1,397	Butchers and Other Meat, Poultry, and Fish Processing Workers	18%
Butchers and Other Meat, Poultry, and Fish Processing Workers	1,374	Accountants and Auditors	15%
Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	1,293	Substitute Teachers, Short-Term	13%
Accountants and Auditors	1,268	Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	12%
Food Service Managers	1,186	Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	11%
Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers	1,178	Miscellaneous Healthcare Support Occupations	10%
Secondary School Teachers	1,104	Elementary and Middle School Teachers	10%
Industrial Machinery Installation, Repair, and Maintenance Workers	1,071	Secondary School Teachers	9%
Construction Managers	1,045	Registered Nurses	8%

Source: Lightcast Occupation Table, SJV RPU, 4 Digit SOC

### ***Occupational Losses***

Occupational data differs from industry data in certain categorical and survey-design choices but attempts to get at the same information. As with occupational gain, data on occupational losses align with industry level data.

Within the PY 2025-28 Regional Plan Data Analysis report, Table 10 illustrates both occupations that lost the most jobs and occupations that declined the fastest.

TABLE 10

Five-Year Losses for Occupational Data in San Joaquin RPU

Lightcast database analysis using QCEW, ACS, BEA, and other publicly available data. 4-digit SOC classification

<u>Occupations That Lost the Most Jobs</u> (Five-Year Change in Number)		<u>Occupations That Declined Fastest</u> (Five-Year Change in Percent)	<u>Percent Change</u>
Miscellaneous Agricultural Workers	(19,263)	Radio and Telecommunications Equipment Installers and Repairers	(53%)
Cashiers	(6,032)	Tellers	(42%)
Retail Salespersons	(4,003)	Crushing, Grinding, Polishing, Mixing, and Blending Workers	(26%)
Childcare Workers	(2,570)	Graders and Sorters, Agricultural Products	(25%)
Waiters and Waitresses	(2,055)	Childcare Workers	(19%)
Bailiffs, Correctional Officers, and Jailers	(1,793)	Claims Adjusters, Appraisers, Examiners, and Investigators	(18%)
Graders and Sorters, Agricultural Products	(1,421)	Bailiffs, Correctional Officers, and Jailers	(16%)
Radio and Telecommunications Equipment Installers and Repairers	(1,412)	Hosts and Hostesses, Restaurant, Lounge, and Coffee Shop	(16%)
Tellers	(1,407)	Engineering Technologists and Technicians, Except Drafters	(15%)
Construction Laborers	(1,100)	Derrick, Rotary Drill, and Service Unit Operators, Oil and Gas	(15%)
Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers	(1,087)	Miscellaneous Teachers and Instructors	(14%)
First-Line Supervisors of Sales Workers	(1,043)	Medical Records Specialists	(14%)
Office Clerks, General	(1,021)	Credit Counselors and Loan Officers	(14%)
Receptionists and Information Clerks	(657)	Cashiers	(14%)
Miscellaneous Teachers and Instructors	(652)	Miscellaneous Agricultural Workers	(12%)
Crushing, Grinding, Polishing, Mixing, and Blending Workers	(612)	Waiters and Waitresses	(12%)
Hosts and Hostesses, Restaurant, Lounge, and Coffee Shop	(594)	Retail Salespersons	(11%)
Engineering Technologists and Technicians, Except Drafters	(593)	Insurance Claims and Policy Processing Clerks	(11%)
Counter and Rental Clerks and Parts Salespersons	(530)	Billing and Posting Clerks	(10%)
Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	(521)	Painters and Paperhangers	(10%)
Billing and Posting Clerks	(474)	Clinical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians	(10%)
Dishwashers	(470)	Dishwashers	(9%)
Painters and Paperhangers	(432)	Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	(9%)
Derrick, Rotary Drill, and Service Unit Operators, Oil and Gas	(415)	Receptionists and Information Clerks	(8%)
Claims Adjusters, Appraisers, Examiners, and Investigators	(372)	Construction Laborers	(8%)
Medical Records Specialists	(302)	Tax Examiners, Collectors and Preparers, and Revenue Agents	(8%)
Credit Counselors and Loan Officers	(280)	First-Line Supervisors of Sales Workers	(6%)

Insurance Claims and Policy Processing Clerks	(236)	Counter and Rental Clerks and Parts Salespersons	(6%)
Welding, Soldering, and Brazing Workers	(207)	Drywall Installers, Ceiling Tile Installers, and Tapers	(5%)
Recreation and Fitness Workers	(206)	Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers	(5%)
Tax Examiners, Collectors and Preparers, and Revenue Agents	(202)	Welding, Soldering, and Brazing Workers	(4%)
Clinical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians	(195)	Helpers, Construction Trades	(4%)
Drywall Installers, Ceiling Tile Installers, and Tapers	(171)	Office Clerks, General	(4%)
Helpers, Construction Trades	(87)	Clergy	(3%)
Securities, Commodities, and Financial Services Sales Agents	(74)	Securities, Commodities, and Financial Services Sales Agents	(3%)
Clergy	(69)	Recreation and Fitness Workers	(3%)
Carpet, Floor, and Tile Installers and Finishers	(46)	Carpet, Floor, and Tile Installers and Finishers	(2%)

Source: Lightcast Occupation Table, SJV RPU, 4 Digit SOC

### III. REGIONAL INDICATORS

The California Workforce Development Board has established “regional indicators” to assess coordination and measure progress within California’s 15 RPUs. The indicators serve to track processes and activities utilized by regions, providing a foundation for regional approaches that align with the needs of businesses in key sectors.

Regions must choose at least two of the following indicators:

Indicator A: The region has a process to communicate industry workforce needs to supply-side partners.

Indicator B: The region has policies supporting equity and strives to improve job quality.

Indicator C: The region has shared target populations of emphasis.

Indicator D: The region deploys shared/pooled resources to provide services, training, and education to meet the target population's needs.

#### A. Regional Indicators and Associated Metrics

The SJVAC RPU has selected indicators B and D. The following are the outcomes and metrics established for these two regional indicators of efficiency and effectiveness.

***Metrics for Indicator B: The region has policies supporting access and strives to improve job quality.***

**Outcome 1:** The region has developed benchmarks and measurements to track progress toward ensuring access and job quality and serving employers that provide quality jobs that provide economic security through family sustaining wages and comprehensive benefits.

The region developed a statement on system access along with corresponding principles that will support regional work and can be adopted by local boards to fulfill goals within their areas. Each local area will determine its primary target population. WIOA performance measures provide the foundation for metrics associated with this outcome.

**Outcome 2:** The region has developed benchmarks measures to track individuals that complete training and/or attain industry-recognized credentials aligned with the sectors and occupations emphasized in the Regional Plan.

The SJVAC region has developed training completion benchmarks and measures for target populations. The CalJOBS system will be used to track data.

***Metrics for Indicator D: Region deploys shared/pooled resources to provide services, training, and education to meet target populations’ needs.***

**Outcome 1:** The region has a system in place to track co-enrollment strategies to serve participants holistically and track individuals that complete training and/or attain industry

recognized credentials aligned with the sectors and occupations emphasized in the Regional Plan.

The local boards within the SJVAC RPU utilize the CalJOBS system to manage co-enrollments, while recognizing that the system has limited capabilities for co-enrollment reporting. Some local boards in the region offer cohort training for their customers. In such cases, services are coordinated, and customer progress information is shared. For example, as part of the English language learners served under SJVAC RPU's Regional Planning Implementation grants 4.0 and 5.0, individuals enrolled in training were tracked to determine how many obtained an industry-recognized credential and, of these individuals, how many receive certificates aligned to the region's target sectors and local demand occupations.

**Outcome 2:** The region has developed benchmarks and methods to track workforce staff and partner professional development training on services, job training, and education programs to meet target populations' needs.

- The SJVAC RPU conducts a bi-annual assessment of staff development needs to determine training that will be made available to regional partners and staff. Trainers are identified and properly procured, and a training calendar is developed. Those who participate in regional training complete evaluations at the conclusion of each session and follow-up surveys are conducted to gauge participants' retention of information and the impact of training in the workplace. Training topics are aligned with goals of both the Regional Plan and each of the eight WDBs' Local Plans.
- The region addresses all priority training areas for frontline staff that are identified in State policy guidance on required content for Local Plans. These areas include:
  - Expand proficiency in digital fluency and distance learning.
  - Ensure cultural competency, and.
  - Understand of the experiences of trauma-exposed populations

**Outcome 3:** Leveraging resources across local areas for regional initiatives.

This outcome is measured through collaboration and leveraging of financial resources, including the following:

- HR Hotline Service: The SJVAC and Middle Sierra regions contract with the California Employers Association to offer "HR Advice on Demand" services for local employers. Participating WDBs include Kern/Inyo/Mono, Madera County, Merced County, Mother Lode, Stanislaus County, and Tulare County. Each participating local area contributes a fair share of the cost for these services.
- Regional Equity Recovery Partnership (RERP) Grant: The SJVAC region and partners leveraged \$3,941,926 in support of RERP grant services to targeted populations.

- Joint Procurement of a One-Stop Operator: The WDBs in Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, and Stanislaus counties entered into an agreement for the procurement of a One-Stop Operator. This consortium is currently procuring a new OSO to be in place by July 1, 2025. The new Sub-regional contract will include Kings, Madera, Stanislaus, and San Joaquin Counties.

## **B. Impact of Indicators and Metrics on Service Delivery**

The SJVAC RPU's regional indicators, metrics, and outcomes will have the following anticipated effects on programs, services, strategies, and approaches at the local service delivery level.

***Local Service Delivery Impact for Indicator B: The region has policies supporting equity and strives to improve job quality.***

The development of the regional statement on access and related corresponding principles enables local boards to develop local service delivery goals and strategies resulting in increased participation by and outcomes for underserved and vulnerable populations. Service strategies that target populations that are most in need of services strive to increase enrollments in WIOA services; referral to and co-enrollment in partner programs and services; co-case management of participants across two or more partners; completion of academic and vocational training; credential attainment; job placement in career path employment; wages; and job retention. Over time, local strategies utilized to improve services and outcomes for targeted populations will be shared and, potentially, scaled across the SJVAC region.

***Local Service Delivery Impact Indicator D: Region deploys shared/pooled resources to provide services, training, and education to meet target populations needs.***

Tracking referrals and co-enrollments will enable local boards to identify strategies for holistic service delivery that result in better employment, earnings, and retention outcomes for participants. The indicator's focus on training for local boards' staff and partners will enable frontline staff and others to provide services that address participant barriers and respond to their needs. In addition, continued leveraging of financial resources among local boards will provide WDBs greater budget flexibility to meet their organizational needs.

To support Indicator D, local board Directors and board Chairs have agreed to meet annually to discuss regional and local activities, share best practices, and have conversations on challenges and opportunities.

## IV. FOSTERING DEMAND-DRIVEN SKILLS ATTAINMENT

Labor market information and intelligence gathered from representatives of businesses in priority sectors help to inform the content and quality of local and regional workforce programs. The workforce programs administered by local boards in the Central Valley are intensively focused on career pathways within key sectors of the regional economy.

### A. In-Demand Industry Sectors for the Region

SJVAC RPU's PY partners have again selected the following sectors as priorities:

- Advanced manufacturing
- Construction (including public infrastructure)
- Energy (including green energy)
- Healthcare
- Transportation and logistics
- Agriculture

The SJVAC Regional Plan continues to prioritize these sectors due to their prevalence within the region and predicted strength well into the foreseeable future. While some of these sectors have less growth than others, over the four-year period covered by the plan, there is demand for workers in these industries based on worker replacement considerations and regional demand for workers in emerging sectors, such as clean and renewable energy.

An analysis of the region's in-demand industries and occupations is provided in Section II-C of the Plan.

#### ***Regional Labor Market Conditions***

Despite the gravity of the acute public health crisis that the COVID-19 pandemic presented, the labor market and regional economy have proven to be remarkably resilient. Nearly all major industries have shown expansion. As the economy bounced back more quickly than originally anticipated, original labor market data trajectories become more apparent. A previous regional analysis done in 2021 noted the emergence of several key industries along with the potential weakening of the total farm labor employment. For instance, the Transportation and Logistics sector has shown strong growth in the region. This is due to relatively inexpensive land, access to major highway arteries, and an increasing share of retail trade being conducted online and with fast delivery guarantees.

Other notable gains are found in Mining, Logging, and Construction, Educational and Health Services, and Leisure and Hospitality. Wildfires in 2021 and 2022 left large areas of dead timber within various public and private jurisdictions that will continue to take many years to evaluate and remove. While state and local governments have taken recent steps to limit the expansion of fossil fuel extraction, there remains a robust

extractives industry, specifically in Kern County. Public Health outcomes for much of the San Joaquin Valley region are lower relative to the rest of the state owing to poverty, lack of health care access, environmental pollutants, and other reasons specific to the geography and economy of the region.

There are some variances in the total job gains within the RPU's eight local workforce areas, but notably all have shown substantial growth. Despite having a slightly higher unemployment rate compared to the rest of the state, this suggests a robust labor market that has approached all-time highs in many of the region's counties.

### ***Economic Growth and Incomes***

The Central Valley region has generally seen positive economic growth in the five years from 2019 to 2024, the last year of available county level data that the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis has released. Historically, the agriculture industry has represented a major share of economic activity for much of the region. Economic output from this sector, along with the extractives sector, relies heavily on worldwide commodity markets and is subject to pricing swings year to year. This can have the effect of clouding overall growth numbers and masking growth in the non-farm economy. Still, agriculture is the economic anchor for the region, and a bad year for agricultural output will have spillover effects in tax revenue, public services, and other closely related industries.

Since 2019, the region has seen a slower cumulative growth in economic output compared to the rest of the state, although that trend was reversed in 2023. A slowdown in the technology sector, the entertainment industry, and other high value economic activities present in other regions of the state can help to explain these circumstances.

## **B. Sector and Related Industry-Focused Initiatives**

There are fully developed sector-focused career pathway programs in the Central Valley, many of which were developed based on specific requests from and input by industry. Other initiatives are emerging. While many of these sector initiatives already cross local boundaries, others are suitable for scaling up throughout the region. Examples of current and anticipated sector and industry-focused initiatives include:

### ***Healthforce Partners - Healthcare***

The healthcare sector in the Northern San Joaquin Valley needs qualified workers. Community residents want to pursue healthcare careers. To achieve these compatible goals, healthcare employers, educators, workforce development professionals, and community leaders worked together to launch an innovative partnership: HealthForce Partners Northern San Joaquin Valley. The mission is to serve as a catalyst to improve career pathway opportunities for community residents and to increase the supply of skilled healthcare workers. HealthForce Partners brings together leaders from healthcare, education, and workforce development to develop strategies that meet the needs of the region's employers and expand educational and work opportunities for community

residents. The partnership convenes key stakeholders to identify workforce gaps and develop solutions to address them. Programs include, but are not limited to: Registered Nursing, Certified Nursing Assistant, Medical Assistant, and Behavioral Health.

This program continues to expand to keep pace with the needs of the healthcare sector. Healthforce has and continues to provide insight on the needs of the health care sector for multiple local areas. Healthforce Partners is actively working toward having a presence in more AJCCs to help staff and the public fully understand the needs of the healthcare field and the experiences and skills necessary to fill critical roles in the healthcare field.

### ***Tulare - Kings Health Care Partnership – Healthcare***

This industry-driven partnership addresses the workforce, education, training, and competitiveness needs of the healthcare industry in Tulare and Kings counties. Established in 2009, it has 6 participating organizations representing over 9,000 employees. The partnership hosts an annual exploratory career conference for high school students, plans and facilitates an annual teacher externship event, and works to address industry pipeline needs through ongoing partnerships with education and workforce development. Tulare County WIB provides staffing support for this partnership, as this approach continues to function as an effective means of engagement with industry.

### ***EMS Corp – Healthcare***

Stanislaus County and Fresno County are engaged in the EMS Corp, which targets youth and young adults. The goal of the program is to prepare for entry level positions in the Emergency Medical Technicians field. This is considered a starting point on a career path to many other occupations in the healthcare sector. With additional education and training, EMT's may eventually become hospital support staff, Licensed Vocational Nurses, Registered Nurses, Surgical Technicians and other healthcare professionals. The EMS Corp is designed to spark interest in and give underserved youth an opportunity to join the healthcare sector workforce.

### ***South Valley Industrial Collaborative - Manufacturing***

The South Valley Industrial Collaborative (SVIC) is a partnership for community excellence that provides a platform to build industry-led, industry-driven, and community-supported partnerships to strengthen economies in the South San Joaquin Valley. This partnership grew out of an Industrial Advisory Board for which the Tulare County WIB provided staffing support. It is now an industry controlled 501(c)(6). The South Valley Industrial Collaborative provides a sub-regional platform, particularly focused on Tulare and Kings counties, for industry and businesses to collaborate and connect with regional, state, and national partner organizations to support the region's efforts to become a globally competitive location for manufacturing and industrial jobs. Key priorities for the SVIC Focus Teams are talent acquisition, development and retention; policies and regulations impacting business; and infrastructure.

***Tulare - Kings College and Career Collaborative – Multiple Industries***

Workforce boards from Tulare and Kings counties co-facilitate a workgroup to strengthen and scale industry partnerships. This year, the workgroup prioritized the launch of three regional industry advisory boards to connect education and industry. Workgroup members include representatives from chambers of commerce, the K-12 education system, post-secondary education, and workforce development. Volunteers have agreed to staff and support the advisory groups, develop an industry-focused structure, participate in facilitation of training, and launch three regional advisory boards: Business and Finance; Information and Communication Technology; and Arts, Media, and Entertainment. The workgroup is also considering advisory boards for Manufacturing and Product Design and Building Trades and Construction.

***Tulare-Kings TRAIN – Multiple Industries***

The Training Resources Aligned for Industry Need (TRAIN) Network facilitates coordination between local workforce areas and educational institutions by aligning program development with the needs of businesses in the region's target sectors. This is achieved through established sector partnership convenings, shared labor market analyses, and direct engagement with industry representatives to identify skills gaps. Education partners use this input to adapt curricula and create programs that address workforce demands, ensuring alignment with industry standards and regional economic goals. Current sector partnerships include one in healthcare and an industrial partnership, as described above, with plans to launch an agriculture sector partnership by utilizing leveraged funds.

***Fresno-Madera K-16 Collaborative***

Fresno State Foundation, on behalf of the Central San Joaquin Valley K-16 Partnership was awarded \$18.13M by the California Department of General Services, Office of Public School Construction's Regional K-16 Education Collaborative Grant Program to equitably strengthen education-to-workforce pathways and ensure that educational, vocational, and workforce programs work in partnership to address issues of income, racial, and gender disparities in education and employment.

***Kern County - Displaced Oil and Gas Workers Fund (DOGWF)***

Kern County Employers Training Resource was awarded the Displaced Oil and Gas Workers Fund (DOGWF) Grant in the amount of \$11,244,000 from the State of California EDD and California Labor and Workforce Development Agency. The grant's purpose is to provide services to oil and gas workers who have been displaced due to the recent shift in the oil industry in California. Participants will receive training services through a diverse selection of Industries while also receiving supportive services. The goal is to transition participants into other industry sectors that provide stable careers and comparable wages to the oil industry. The grant will serve 750 participants.

***Central San Joaquin Valley K-16 Partnership***

This collaboration of the Fresno-Madera K-16 Collaborative and the Tulare- Kings College and Career Collaborative was created to strengthen the region's education and socio-economic conditions, leadership, support, and impact on K-16 students and adult learners. The aim of the partnership is to eliminate intersegmental silos and unite partners to build relationship infrastructure for future work. By braiding approaches and resources, the partners are confident there will be a significant increase in filling an LMI-supported job talent pipeline to ensure that individuals thrive personally and professionally.

***Biomethane Production – Green Energy***

The Central Valley has seen substantial renewable energy production and infrastructure construction over the last five years. One area that is evolving and on the cusp of moving from small independent operations to more commercial production is biomethane producing anaerobic digesters, which use organic matter (dairy manure was the first) to produce two key products: renewable biomethane that is fed back into the grid through current infrastructure and remaining organic matter that is used as a natural fertilizer for agriculture. Growth is being spurred by new regulations. Specifically, these are the Mandatory Commercial Organics Recycling provisions that were put in place in 2016 under AB 1826 which phased up in September 2020. These provisions require all businesses with more than 2 cubic yards of solid waste to recycle a minimum of 50% of their organic waste, rather than dispose of it in the land fill. This has created a secondary market for the purchase of organic waste which supports transport, builds supporting equipment, and provision of supporting infrastructure from SCE and PG&E. The first large scale projects in the upper and lower parts of the Central Valley (complexes at least 100 acres each) have completed feasibility studies. This sector of the economy is currently impacting all Central Valley counties. This is exemplified by a facility in Madera County and by investments in and scaling projects in Stanislaus and Merced counties. The workforce system can provide training and placement services to support this emerging energy subsector.

***Carbon Capture and Sequestration Project***

Kern County is working on a carbon management business park that could clean the air in the Central Valley by participating in the U.S. Department of Energy's "Local Energy Action Program called "LEAP." Participating in the LEAP Program would be the first such initiative to explicitly align with the economic development and social related priorities of the County's B3K Prosperity economic development collaboration. The LEAP Technical Assistance Grant seeks to help communities access the economic and environmental benefits of clean energy and clean energy manufacturing. Opportunities and potential benefits include lower local air pollution, lower utility costs and energy burdens, improved access to reliable energy, enhanced economic productivity, and new clean energy supply chain and manufacturing.

***The Good Jobs Challenge***

The Good Jobs Challenge is a 4-county regional project led by the Fresno Economic Development Corporation where Madera, Fresno, and Tulare WDBs serve as backbone leads for the Transportation, Construction, and Manufacturing industries to facilitate sector partnerships between industry and education partners, determine gaps in training curriculum and pipeline, and increase access to training and expand work opportunities to upskill individuals. Madera's Transportation partnership has led to the development of our first Truck Driving Extravaganza and Job Fair as well as the development of a School Bus Driver training program between Advanced Career Institute and the Madera Unified School District to meet the needs of local employers.

***Valley Build – Construction***

The Valley Build High Road Construction Careers (HRCC) project is led by the Fresno Regional WDB and serves an expansive region that includes the following fourteen (14) counties: Alpine, Calaveras, Fresno, Kings, Inyo, Kern, Madera, Mariposa, Mono, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Tulare, and Tuolumne. The project provides inclusive access to MC-3 pre-apprenticeship training and related services that enable individuals from all backgrounds to qualify for employment and acceptance into apprenticeships in the skilled building and construction trades. The goal of the project is to build a network of community partners throughout the region to promote Valley Build and to recruit target candidates for pre-apprenticeship training.

***Central Valley Forestry Corps***

The Central Valley Forestry Corps is a partnership between the Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board, the Mother Lode WDB, Madera WDB, Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission's Local Conservation Corps, Reedley College, and Columbia College. The Central Valley Forestry Corps will train the next generation of forestry workers to address the natural disasters occurring within our forests. Beginning with funding from CalFire, the initiative is preparing an untapped workforce within the Central Valley to assist in the removal of more than 100 million dead trees. Training is crucial to decrease the number of wildfires in California.

***Inland Ports Initiative***

Fresno, Merced, and San Joaquin counties collaborated on a grant application to the California State Transportation Agency Port and Freight Infrastructure Program that seeks to improve the capacity, safety, efficiency, and resilience of goods movement to, from, and through California's ports. With a key focus on the transportation and warehousing sector, tied to this initiative will be training for workers across a wide range of occupations.

***Fresno-Merced Future of Food (F3)***

Serving Fresno, Kings, Tulare, Madera, and Merced counties, the Fresno-Merced Future of Food Innovation (F3) coalition, led by the Central Valley Community Foundation, will receive approximately \$65.1 million from Economic Development Administration (EDA) to accelerate the integration of technology and skills in the region's agriculture industry, improving productivity and job quality for existing farmworkers while driving a more resilient and sustainable food system. The coalition unites partners such as University of California, Merced, the California Farmworkers Foundation, industry leadership like the California Fresh Fruit Association, regional philanthropy, and local government around a vision for a more innovative, equitable, and resilient agricultural industry in one of the country's most important food-producing regions. Today, California's Central Valley produces 25 percent of the nation's food supply yet has one of the highest food insecurity rates among low wage farm workers. EDA funding will launch iCREATE, a new ag-tech hub, with the mission to accelerate the development and transfer of technology between researchers at local universities and farmers across the region, with a focus on reaching BIPOC or underserved small farmers. At the same time, community colleges throughout the Central Valley will receive access to new technology and training to equip workers with the skills needed to access higher quality, higher paying jobs in ag tech, improving both farm productivity and wages.

***UC Merced Water Systems Management Lab Project***

The project examines the impacts of the drought on California agriculture. Recent California climate extremes, which include among the most severe droughts on record, highlighted rapidly changing conditions that affect water supply for agriculture and the state's growing population. Incremental water management and institutional learning at all levels has provided building blocks to better manage water shortages. At the same time, communities connected to agricultural areas share, to varying extents, multi-year drought impacts such as water shortages, high temperatures, and their lingering effects through dry wells, fire risk, and degraded air and water quality. A project team made up of UC and CSU academics, in partnership with the Public Policy Institute of California Water Policy Center, will develop various milestone products including economic impact assessments, policy briefs, and an open access web tool that builds from currently available tools, and past collaborations. From this information, the workforce system in the Central Valley will assess and respond to workforce needs arising from water management strategies.

***Stanislaus 2030 – Multiple Industries***

Stanislaus 2030 leads collective action towards implementing the economic and workforce initiatives identified in its Investment Blueprint through coordination and aligning efforts across governmental agencies, private-public partnerships, educational institutions, businesses, service providers, and community groups for the greatest impact for all in local communities.

Child Care Expansion: \$1 million toward Child Care Expansion that will be administered by First 5 Stanislaus. These funds will support the Stanislaus 2030 Child Care Implementation Plan, which aims to scale home-based childcare entrepreneurship across the county. Stanislaus 2030 and First 5 will continue to engage collaborative partners over the next two years to achieve the goal of launching or expanding 200 home-based childcare businesses, which will create an additional 1,600 licensed child care spaces across the county.

Small Business Development: \$2 million from Stanislaus County will be administered by the Stanislaus Workforce Development Agency to manage projects to bolster the small business ecosystem, including launching a one-stop platform for businesses to access support and financing, a CDFI Cohort Program to manage loans and provide technical assistance, and a Business Support Cohort Program to build and expand capacity for businesses to develop service offerings, streamline operations, and improve service delivery. Considering that 99.9% of businesses in Stanislaus County are small businesses, with 56.8% of Stanislaus' workforce employed by a small business, this funding will be instrumental in catalyzing the bedrock of the region's economy.

Talent Development: \$1.5 million will also be managed by the Stanislaus Workforce Development Agency to strengthen the manufacturing talent pipeline, ensuring the local workforce meets the demands of expanding industries. The fund will offer grants and technical assistance to local education and workforce institutions for programs that advance strategies identified in the Stanislaus County Manufacturing Strategic Workforce Plan, and will enhance industry and education collaboration, address manufacturing perception challenges, improve job quality, expand apprenticeships and other "earn and learn" models, pilot and test innovative strategies to reduce time to certificate/credential completion, and develop robust career pathways.

### ***Regional Equity and Recovery Partnerships (RERP)***

Through the High Road approach of advancing economic opportunities and strengthening the workforce based on industry demand, the SJVAC region's "Skills to Success" projects will provide access to various training programs and work-based learning and increase opportunities and access for targeted populations. The targeted populations will gain access to the necessary skills to fill the skill gaps and become self-sufficient.

Fresno Regional WDB – Construction and Manufacturing: With the anticipated influx of public infrastructure spending, FRWDB in coordination with Fresno City College and the State Center Adult Education Consortium seeks to address the human capital needs of the Fresno metropolitan area and the surrounding rural communities by providing short-term training that will equip residents to secure quality, good wage jobs in the two sectors.

Kern, Inyo, Mono WDB – Healthcare: The Kern/Inyo/Mono RERP project, in partnership with education, is designed to address industry needs and educational capacity to

increase the pipeline of healthcare workers. The RERP initiative will address unmet needs and expand access to healthcare careers and quality jobs, especially among minority residents. Presently, Employer Training Resources has a partnership with Bakersfield College, Cerro Coso Community College, and Taft College to increase the number of individuals trained to be Registered Nurses, Licensed Vocational Nurses, Nursing Assistants, Medical Assistants, Emergency Medical Technicians, and Dental Hygienists.

Madera County WDB – Manufacturing: The project in Madera County will focus on manufacturing training for middle-skill jobs in the industrial maintenance, manufacturing and welding career pathways. Participants will earn a certificate of achievement in one of the pathways that prepares them for entrance into the manufacturing workforce or the ability to transfer to a four-year college program.

Merced County WDB – Manufacturing: Merced County will focus on the development of GED/High-School Diploma-to-Skilled Manufacturing pipeline. The project will cover Merced County as a whole but will utilize culturally competent outreach strategies to focus on residents living outside of the County's two largest cities (Merced and Los Banos) in the County's more rural communities.

San Joaquin County WDB – Manufacturing and Transportation and Logistics: The San Joaquin County WDB will address the workforce gaps in warehousing, goods movement, distribution and manufacturing. In partnership with the Delta Sierra Adult Education Alliance (DSAEA), the WDB will provide onramps to career paths in the transportation-distribution-logistics and advanced manufacturing sectors for community residents, including pathways to middle skill jobs requiring some college.

Stanislaus County WDB – Manufacturing: Stanislaus County will assist workers to enter the manufacturing occupations, discover their personal interests and strengths, and prepare for an apprenticeship that will lead to high wage occupations and journey-level skill attainment. Stanislaus County will offer options for job seekers to enter the manufacturing occupational career ladder and provide incumbent workers with tools necessary to further their value to employers.

Tulare County WIB – Construction, Manufacturing, Transportation and Logistics: The Tulare Workforce Investment Board (WIB) intends to use this investment to accelerate the work the WIB and its community colleges are doing together to ensure that the local economy expands and that its historically marginalized populations have an opportunity to participate in the resulting prosperity by securing quality jobs in demand sectors.

### **C. Strategies to Communicate with Regional Employers**

Most business contacts are made at the local level between the eight WDBs and employers within their service areas. This is primarily accomplished through direct contact and outreach by Business Service Representatives, and through sector partnerships. When two or more local boards work with the same business across their jurisdictions, they make every effort to collaborate and coordinate messaging and service delivery.

These efforts are common in rapid response and layoff aversion activities, the formation of industry-focused partnerships that cross regions, and with businesses that are establishing new operations in two or more areas in the Central Valley.

The region contracts with the California Employers Association to offer employers a no-cost option to assist businesses with their human resource needs. A Human Resources (HR) Hotline allows employers to call in five days a week and connect with a live HR director who is ready to answer questions on a variety of HR topics. In addition, no-cost monthly webinars are available that cover a variety of topics businesses are faced with. The utilization of the HR Hotline has allowed local boards throughout the region to engage with and offer value added resources to businesses. Local boards will continue to promote the HR hotline with the goal of encouraging more businesses to take advantage of this valuable service.

Several WBDs in the region are advancing sector partnerships in regional priority industries. The creation and facilitation of sector partnerships allows local boards to engage with employers to find solutions that will help advance in demand sectors. The utilization of sector partnerships and sector strategies greatly increases the collaboration and relationships between industry and local boards. Over the next four years local boards will continue to develop, foster, and advance industry-wide sector partnerships to expand business relationships throughout the region.

Local boards have collaborated on the development of a regional website focused on services for businesses. The Valley Work site communicates how workforce programs assist businesses, provides examples of strategies that have been deployed to support Valley-based companies, and includes contact information for employers. To improve the utility of the site, local boards continue to examine ways in which it can be revised for greater access to information about regional support for businesses. Under consideration and review are information about the HR Hotline service; promoting recruitment events, such as job fairs throughout the region; providing information beyond direct local board services, such as “employer tax credit” information; highlighting sector strategy initiatives; and various other enhancements. The local boards continue to work through the Central California Workforce Collaborative as described in Section VII (A) and its workgroups to design, develop, and implement improvements to the Valley Work site.

## V. ENABLING UPWARD MOBILITY FOR ALL CALIFORNIANS

Workforce system leaders throughout the Central Valley fully support the State Plan's focus on ensuring that workforce and education programs are accessible for all Californians, especially populations that experience barriers to employment. The region is committed to promoting access for everyone to training and services needed to prepare for careers that offer opportunities for long-term economic self-sufficiency and economic security.

### A. Working with Businesses that Provide Quality Jobs

The eight local boards all focus on identifying businesses that pay competitive wages and offer benefits and on matching qualified job seekers to openings with these businesses. Still, the nature of the work requires local workforce systems to assist job seekers from a wide range of backgrounds with varying levels of skills and experience. Local boards' strategies concentrate on the use of career pathway programs to train and prepare job seekers to become competitive candidates who qualify for good jobs that are commensurate with their skills and experience. Job placement on the path to a high road job is the first step for many participants.

#### ***High Road Jobs Strategy***

The local boards have prioritized sectors that represent high demand, high wage jobs. Such jobs exist in healthcare, logistics, construction, manufacturing, clean energy, and other industries targeted by the region. Companies in these sectors that pay the highest wages and offer the best overall packages to employees are those that are highly competitive and/or have unique positions within the economy. They include large companies, utilities, public agencies, and businesses whose workers are represented under collective bargaining agreements, among others. There are also small and medium-sized businesses that offer very attractive wages and benefits in an attempt to secure the best talent, enabling the businesses to grow and to fare better in the marketplace. As stated above, the local workforce system targets these companies and refers qualified candidates for available jobs. Because many of the job seekers accessing local workforce systems have limited work experience and entry-level skills, local boards also work with a wide range of other businesses, including those with jobs paying lower wages and offering fewer benefits. These jobs are not intended to be jobs with no potential for advancement. Rather, for job seekers on a career path, they provide the opportunity to gain experience, build their resumes, and put skills (including those that are newly acquired as the result of training) to work in a competitive work environment. The jobs are a step on a career path to high skilled, high wage, high road jobs.

#### ***Focus on Career Pathways***

The local boards represented by the SJVAC RPU have implemented regional career pathway strategies that begin with the provision of information. Such information is available through a regional initiative that culminated in the development of a website,

[www.careersinthevalley.com](http://www.careersinthevalley.com), which encompasses the entire SJVAC RPU. Job seekers engage in career exploration that informs choices about the jobs and careers they want to train for and increases their knowledge about training, skills, and experience necessary for these jobs and careers. For example, healthcare is the sector with the highest demand for jobs in the Central Valley and it provides a range of career ladder and career lattice opportunities. Most job seekers do not come to the one-stop system with skills that will enable them to become a Registered Nurse (RN) within a year. However, there are less skilled positions that can be trained for in that timeframe. Workforce system participants become aware of the steps necessary to move from a Certified Nursing Assistant position to that of RN. The position is part of the career path they have selected. The entry-level job and its wages are a stop on the way to a career destination.

### ***Promoting Job Quality***

The local boards promote job quality by looking for the best job matches for participants at all skill levels. They also do so through investments, such as focusing on on-the-job training positions that pay wages above a prescribed level and by only approving training that prepares individuals for high demand jobs in priority sectors through career pathways programs and other models focused on high growth and other demand industries.

There is no regional policy on job quality, as there is no structure through which a “region” can adopt policy. Policy is the purview of workforce development boards. Some WDBs have adopted or are working toward a definition within their respective local areas. Tulare County WIB has developed a forward-thinking definition that is “modular” in its design, recognizing that a “quality” job may vary based on a worker’s characteristics, career path, family size, priorities, and other factors. The Kern-Inyo-Mono WDB has defined a quality job for its Better Bakersfield and Boundless Kern (B3K) Prosperity Neighborhood Initiative as one paying no less than \$21.80 an hour.

In October 2022, The Stanislaus County Workforce Development Board adopted a tiered approach self-sufficiency standard which included a Good Jobs definition. Stanislaus 2030 released the 2022 Market Assessment Executive Summary in which they identified a good job starting at \$28.58. As a foundation, a good job means workers earning enough for the family to achieve self-sufficiency and economic mobility. Jobs in the report were categorized as “good”, “promising”, or “other” based on earnings, benefits and durability.

This definition of Good Jobs includes:

- i. Pay at least the target annual wage, meeting expenses and savings needs without California “safety net” benefits (e.g. SNAP, TANF, Medicaid).
- ii. Provide employer-sponsored health insurance, proxy for likelihood of other benefits like paid leave and retirement contributions; and
- iii. Afford stable career options to continue holding a good job in the future, considering factors like automation and career progressions

Other local areas in the region are working on producing a definition of job quality that aligns with median pay scales relevant to the local labor market. In some cases, this may

be related to a percentage of the Lower Living Standard Income Level for the area. Workforce leadership will continue to engage board members in discussions about job quality to determine what fits best with the policy framework of their local workforce systems.

## **B. Shared Target Populations and Targeted Service Strategies**

While the SJVAC RPU covers a massive area representing about one-fourth of California's geography, there are many commonalities throughout the region, including populations that are most in need of workforce services. The region's ability to identify shared populations and develop common strategies to meet the needs of these job seekers is enhanced by the WDBs' commitments to collaboration that are described throughout this plan.

### ***Shared Populations***

Across the entire region, target populations include English language learners, individuals who lack a high school credential, those who are basic skills deficient, CalWORKs recipients, individuals with disabilities, formerly incarcerated individuals, communities that are digitally disenfranchised, non-custodial parents with child support enforcement orders, disconnected youth, and veterans, among others. At a sub-regional level, there are also target groups shared by two or more boards. For example, boards in the northern part of the Valley serve many individuals who become commuters to jobs in the Capital region and the Silicon Valley. Counties which are home to the Valley's largest cities are increasingly focused on working with homeless and housing insecure individuals and families. Five of the region's boards completed a grant project that addressed workforce and support needs of individuals experiencing opioid addiction. Local boards agree that many served by their workforce systems have multiple barriers to employment.

### ***Targeted Service Strategies***

The region's local boards use many of the same strategies to address the needs of target populations. Often, due to distance factors, these are common strategies among the local boards, rather than systems that share providers or services. Joint grants in which multiple boards participate (e.g., Prison to Employment, Regional Equity and Recovery Partnerships) offer opportunities to apply common service strategies for target populations. One example is the use of Navigators across many grants. This strategy has proven successful in working with job seekers with disabilities, English language learners and other vulnerable populations. Moving forward, regional workforce leaders expect many opportunities to identify services strategies that may be effective for target populations across many local areas. As local boards address workforce needs during economic recovery, issues will likely arise that require new approaches that could be developed regionally and implemented locally.

## VI. CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The PY 2025-28 planning period marks the first time the eight local boards within the San Joaquin Valley are addressing environmental sustainability and climate resilience within the Regional Plan. However, the WDBs and their workforce system partners are not unfamiliar with these challenges and their impact on the regional economy and local labor markets. Within the expansive ten-county region, issues such as dead and dying trees, movement away from fossil fuels, and water conservation needs are beginning to affect the focus and content of workforce programs. Strategies have been developed to address the workforce needs associated with these and other issues impacting the environment. What is needed to gain momentum in these efforts is an overarching plan and structure to shape workforce programs into effective models to support a climate neutral transition.

### Opportunities for Building a Climate Resilient Economy and Workforce

As part of the process of developing the Regional Plan, local boards examined research and looked to existing efforts dealing with environmental sustainability in the Central Valley. A 2024 report by the Clean Air Task Force (CATF), [\*An Exploration of Options and Opportunities for the San Joaquin Valley's Clean Energy Future\*](#) stood out as uniquely pertinent to the interests of the local boards with respect to climate and the environment. The report reflects more than a year of intensive efforts to engage local government leaders, community leaders, subject matter experts, and state agencies on what a clean energy future might look like in the region. These leaders developed the following vision statement on how clean energy investments can contribute to the region:

*The San Joaquin Valley will leverage clean energy investments to authentically engage impacted communities, create a dynamic and inclusive economy that elevates local talent and enduring community benefits, generates high-road jobs, cultivates innovation, supports federal and state decarbonization efforts, and accelerates achievement of the region's sustainability goals.*

According to the report, the region has high resource potential and multiple pathways to support a clean energy future. The Valley is well suited to be a key player in the clean energy transition given its existing industrial base, rich land resources, skilled labor, multiple academic institutions, access to major transportation routes, and existing transmission infrastructure, alongside solar and other renewable energy and fuel potential. Clean energy brings new opportunities, not only by the direct value and jobs it creates, but also through its potential to attract other supply chain and manufacturing sectors, which can create sustained economic activity for the region.

Key activities for state and local partners will include:

- More detailed planning, including the completion of the Jobs First plans (discussed below);
- The development of locally determined community benefit agreements and/or frameworks;

- Workforce training needs assessment and training initiatives; and
- Federal, state, philanthropic, and private investments in project implementation.

The report states that Valley leaders have taken ownership of this effort and are continuing to push forward a thoughtful, self-determined, and coordinated approach to clean energy planning and established the following objectives:

### SJV Clean Energy Objectives

Objectives		Potential Outcomes
Equity	Help those who least benefit from the current economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility</li> <li>• Embed environmental justice &amp; Justice40<sup>23</sup> principles</li> <li>• Create local wealth</li> <li>• Construct an economy that benefits everyone in some way</li> </ul>
High Road Jobs	Create quality jobs that stay in the Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure sustainable, long-term jobs with investment in workforce and professional development and training programs</li> <li>• Create quality jobs that provide a living wage and benefits, such as health care and retirement</li> </ul>
Wealth Creation	Attract business and investment to the Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of entrepreneurs and business headquarters in the Valley</li> <li>• Attract private investment and Intellectual capital</li> <li>• Invest in workforce development and training so local residents can access high-road jobs</li> </ul>
Health	Result in cleaner environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Projects result in cleaner air, with the reduction of local fossil fuel consumption, and cleaner water</li> <li>• Consider including additional recreational facilities in negotiated community benefits</li> </ul>
Builds Upon Existing Assets	Complement existing SJV industries and build upon existing infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complement ongoing local initiatives and infrastructure projects in both industrialized and rural communities (civil, physical, educational, etc.)</li> </ul>

Experts from RAND, the international consulting firm, worked with Valley leaders through an iterative process to develop the San Joaquin Valley Clean Energy Portfolio Toolkit, which consists of:

- A spreadsheet-based Portfolio Design Tool to help stakeholders create portfolios of clean energy buildout over time in the Valley;
- A mathematical Portfolio Evaluation Model (modeling) to evaluate each portfolio along a variety of key metrics; and
- A Portfolio Explorer that provides interactive visualizations of the model results.

Among the workforce-focused themes that are consistent across the evaluated portfolios are:

Expansion of clean energy generation can create thousands of jobs annually within the Valley. Depending on the amount of different technologies in each portfolio, roughly half

of those direct jobs would be permanent jobs. For most technologies, well over half of all direct jobs are considered high-road jobs that pay more than the median U.S. income. Adding in indirect and induced jobs roughly doubles the estimated job creation.

Some technologies create more jobs than others. Hydrogen, bioenergy, and biogas projects create more jobs than solar per unit of energy they produce, and more of those jobs are permanent jobs. While utility-scale solar creates fewer jobs than other technologies per kilowatt-hour, solar still has the biggest clean energy resource potential, and given its scale, could still be a significant job creator. Solar energy is also used to support other technologies, such as hydrogen production, which, in turn, creates more jobs.

The modeling estimates are a lower bound for jobs created in the Valley. Efforts could be made to attract jobs to the region that might go elsewhere in the country. Clean energy development, in conjunction with jobs that are created to support or attracted to clean energy development (indirect and induced jobs), can serve as a foundation for additional job growth in the region.

The modeling does not show significant workforce constraints given existing workforce size, composition, and skills. However, existing workers will likely need training to successfully pivot to clean energy opportunities. Workforce training will be necessary and San Joaquin Valley leaders will need to do a gap analysis of what training is needed to meet clean energy transition jobs. The number of people who may require training is consistent with current graduation rates from community college training programs for similar skills in the region.

By working with leaders who are engaged in the work described in CATF's Clean Energy Future report, the region's local workforce development boards can align their climate-focused planning with those of industry, economic development, government, and other critical stakeholders.

### **Utilizing the California Jobs First Initiative as a Launchpad for Climate-Focused Workforce Development**

In 2021, California launched a \$600 million initiative (formerly known as the Community Economic Resilience Fund or CERF) to support thirteen (13) economic regions in creating quality jobs and bolstering their resilience to climate and global challenges impacting the state's diverse regional economies. As part of this program, each of the 13 regions has built a California Jobs First Collaborative tasked with developing a clear vision for their region's economic future.

The Central Valley is home to three California Jobs regions: Northern San Joaquin Valley, the Central San Joaquin Valley, and Kern County. Collaboratives in each of these regions are coordinated independently, with specific target industry sectors and foundational elements, enabling strategies that tie into a broader plan for an inclusive regional economy. The local boards within each region have been instrumental in the leadership

of these efforts across the Valley. This includes the Central San Joaquin region, where the Tulare and Madera County boards lead sub-regional efforts, and in the Northern San Joaquin Valley, where the Merced County Workforce Development Board serves as regional convener.

California Jobs First Northern Region: The North Valley THRIVE Strategic Plan charts the roadmap to a sustainable and inclusive future, where the people of San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Merced counties together realize the region's full potential. Stakeholders envision a future where the region is known for what people create and how they innovate, as well as for how communities care for each other and the land in and around local communities. Regional leaders will continue to be a key part of the dynamic Northern California mega region, with growing links to the Bay Area and Sacramento regions. The North San Joaquin Valley (NSJV) Strategic Plan outlines a transformative vision for the region's economic future by focusing on first deploying new technologies within the region, then on translating and manufacturing of advanced products and technologies within the region, and simultaneously on nurturing home-grown start-ups that take root within the region and help form distinct industry. Strategies focus on four priority sectors: Advanced Manufacturing, Clean Energy, Carbon Management, and Circular Bioeconomy. These sectors are identified as pivotal in transitioning the NSJV toward a more sustainable, equitable, and high-value economy that can meet the challenges of the 21st century, such as climate change, re-localization of supply chains, and increasing economic resilience in the face of technological disruption.

California Jobs First Central Region: The Sierra San Joaquin Jobs (S2J2) project is led by the Central Valley Community Foundation (CVCF) and is a four-county project consisting of Fresno, Madera, Tulare, and Kings counties. Utilizing a bottoms-up approach, local conveners have allowed for maximum input and inclusion at the local level by facilitating community conversations on the needs and challenges of each area and prioritizing project goals to elevate up to the region. CVCF kicked off an 8-week Spring Sprint in May 2024, to establish workgroups around the region's eight key priority areas: Climate Solutions, Responsible Food and Agriculture Systems, Circular Manufacturing, Water, Broadband, Small Business, Community Health, and Education and Skill Building. CERF Catalyst funds in the amount \$5.5 million of are available to support efforts in these priority areas. Local evaluators have screened and advanced project proposals to regional evaluators for funding consideration. The WDBs have been invited to serve on the Education and Skill Building Leadership Group to determine next steps for this component of the S2J2 regional plan. Four specific Investment Plans are included under the Climate Solutions: Clean Energy, ZEV Transition, Nature Based Solutions, and Carbon Capture. As S2J2 moves forward, the project will translate the broader strategies into specific, actionable initiatives. CVCF will engage in detailed planning and coordination of stakeholders to further define and prepare for implementation.

California Jobs First Kern County: The Kern County region's response to the California Jobs First initiative is led by the Kern High Road Transition Collaborative (KHRTC), a collective of members from disinvested communities, labor, business, government, and

other community stakeholders, such as economic development, philanthropy, education, and workforce development partners. The priority tradable industries emerging from this analysis are clean energy, advanced manufacturing, and agriculture. KHRTC prioritized clean energy for its competitive advantage in the Kern County region, positive impact on the environment, and strong alignment with state priorities. Advanced manufacturing, as a cross-cutting aspect of other industry verticals like agriculture, clean energy, and aerospace and defense, offers opportunities for inclusive employment that keeps industry value chains within the region, bolstering economic resilience. The announcement of new large, private solar and wind projects in the area, including Camino Solar Project and Alta Wind Battery Energy Storage, has led to expectations that clean energy jobs will grow rapidly in the Kern County.

## **VII. ACCESS AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE**

Each of the local boards represented by the SJVAC RPU supports and promotes equal access to all services and activities of its local workforce system. As such, workforce leaders and system staff will continue to use and will improve upon messages that communicate commitment to equal access to career information, job readiness services, training, support in securing and maintaining a job, and career advancement.

### ***Promoting Equal Access***

The workforce system relies on required system partners, community-based organizations, local government, economic development, education and training providers, and local businesses to achieve the goals and performance objectives of WIOA and related programs. Working together effectively requires that stakeholders share common principles that guide their work. While local boards expect that all partners are fundamentally committed to providing equal access to opportunities for services, training, and employment, the WDBs seek to ensure such access exists. Clear and consistent information and messaging is key to increasing the shared commitment of all stakeholders to providing equal access for all job seekers. The Central Valley is home to people of different ethnicities, nationalities, religions, cultures, and languages. Therefore, local boards communicate to providers and businesses the importance of equal access in all transactions. Each local board has and will continue to adopt its own approaches to promoting access, leveraging ideals, values, and messages that resonate in the communities they serve.

### ***Workforce System Commitment to Access***

As expressed throughout the Regional Plan, the region's workforce leaders are committed to access in every aspect of their operations and programs. Efforts to ensure full access to workforce development programs and services for all individuals and communities exist throughout the region. Local boards engage in collaborative efforts such as the High Road Construction Initiative, which aims to support underserved, low-income communities. Partnerships include key stakeholders, such as economic development, community colleges, local education, agencies, and training providers. Local boards collaborate with the California Department of Rehabilitation to provide accommodations and remove barriers for individuals with disabilities. In addition, programs such as Student Training and Employment Program (STEP), which is jointly administered by the Department of Rehabilitation and the Foundation for California Community Colleges, assist students with disabilities in gaining valuable work experience and accessing information about career opportunities.

## **VIII. ALIGNING, COORDINATING, AND INTEGRATING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

As described, the workforce development boards of the Central Valley have a long history of collaborating, regionally and sub-regionally, on sector strategies, initiatives serving key groups, and on the design, development, operation, and administration of successful workforce programs. Local boards within the region consistently strive to use limited resources as effectively as possible. The following is an overview of current and potential future efforts to achieve regional coordination and alignment of services, systems, and strategies.

### **A. Regional Service Strategies**

Regional agreements, strategies, and initiatives include the following:

#### ***Central California Workforce Collaborative Regional Agreement***

For more than a decade, the boards that comprise the SJVAC RPU have had a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in place that provides a framework for collaboration among the local boards and creates opportunities to coordinate, especially with regard to special projects and initiatives that cross local area boundaries. The purpose of the MOU is to maintain cooperative and mutually beneficial relationships. The MOU describe CCWC members as “a confederation of equals.” The CCWC operates under a general working structure, rather than as an entity. Both the current and prior MOUs stress the importance of collaboration with regard to securing regional funding and leveraging of resources to strengthen the workforce system throughout the Central Valley. The MOU emphasizes the independence of the eight boards and the fact that all parties agree to respect one another’s organizational practices and management structures in the execution of collaborative activities. The agreement empowers the boards to: develop and implement collaborative efforts at a regional and sub-regional level; conduct formal and informal meetings under the CCWC name to discuss best practices; utilize the CCWC name in sponsorship materials for third party organizations; and, on a project by project basis, designate local workforce development boards as the “lead agency” for regional and sub-regional initiatives. Furthermore, the CCWC MOU establishes a format for meetings, which may be held in person, via electronic media, or through conference calls, and for keeping minutes of scheduled meetings. Responsibilities for organizing meetings rotate among the boards. The agreement is periodically reviewed and updated, confirming the value that the boards place on cooperation and bringing greater capacity and resources to the region.

#### ***Central Valley Industry Engagement Roundtable***

Supporting regional and local efforts to serve business is the Central Valley Industry Engagement Roundtable (CVIER), which includes participation by all eight local boards in the Central Valley along with Mother Lode WDB. Also participating in CVIER are the EDD, the Small Business Development Center, and the California Labor Federation.

CVIER members have identified and responded to the need to increase staff knowledge about labor market information, Incumbent Worker Training, rapid response services, and sector partnerships. The group originally met monthly to coordinate messaging, discuss rapid response strategies, and develop business-responsive approaches for the region. Given the progress that the region has made, the group now convenes quarterly.

### ***Regional and Sub-Regional Grants***

One of the longstanding benefits of collaboration among local boards in the Central Valley has been jointly securing competitive grants. Based on the focus of the projects, collaborative grants may include participation by WDBs throughout the region or as few as two local boards. Regional grants include, but are not limited to:

Central Valley Forestry Corps: Fresno (lead), Tulare, Kern, Madera, Motherlode Job Training – Forestry and Fire services management programs. Programs are in process.

EMS Corp Grant: Fresno, Kings, Tulare, Stanislaus - Youth Entry into Emergency Medical Technician as a pathway to Medical occupations. Planning and implementation phases of the grant are in process.

Prison to Employment Grant (P2E): San Joaquin County (lead), Stanislaus County, Merced County, Madera County, Fresno County, Tulare County, Kings County, and Kern-Inyo-Mono Counties WDBs. The grant is in process.

Student Training and Employment Program (STEP): Tulare, Stanislaus, Fresno. Targets In-School Youth 16-21 with disabilities. Grants are in progress.

The Good Jobs Challenge: Madera, Fresno, and Tulare WDBs serve as backbone leads for the Transportation, Construction, and Manufacturing industries to facilitate sector partnerships between industry and education partners. Grant is in progress.

S2J2 Initiatives: Included are three separate initiatives for the three California Jobs First regions in the Central Valley. Projects address strategies around climate and environmental sustainability. Grants are in preliminary stages of program implementation.

Regional Equity and Recovery Program (RERP): Stanislaus (lead) San Joaquin, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Tulare, Kern/Inyo/Mono. The grant is in process.

### ***Regional Scaling of Local Models***

As described in connection with regional sector strategies, bringing successful local models to scale throughout the region is an ongoing goal for the SJVAC RPU. An example of a local initiative that many local boards remain interested in replicating is the apprenticeship programs that have been developed by the San Joaquin County WDB in partnership with local high schools and county government.

### ***The Regional Organizer Function***

CWDB requires that each RPU assign one local board as the Regional Organizer entity, with the activities being assigned to a designated staff person from that agency. The role of the SJVAC RPU Regional Organizer includes the following responsibilities:

- Attend bi-monthly meeting with the State Workforce Development Board to receive direction and guidance on Regional Planning Units' Objectives.
- Maintain communication with local WDBs on state objectives and regional initiatives by attending the Central California Workforce Collaborative meetings.
- Maintain momentum toward accomplishing Regional Plan goals by working with RPU sub-committees and/or designees.
- Support collaboration of regional workforce leaders.
- Coordinate the implementation of the Regional Plan.
- Support industry sectors partnerships by attending the Central Valley Industry Engagement Roundtable.

The Regional Organizer also serves as the "Regional Training Coordinator" for SJVAC Region. In this capacity, duties include:

- Conducting an assessment staff development needs and priorities to determine professional development activities.
- Procurement of trainers to meet regional staff development needs.
- Ensuring regional staff and partners receive necessary training and professional development to accomplish Regional Plan goals.

The role of the Regional Organizer is currently funded through discretionary grants from the CWDB and EDD.

## **B. Regional Administrative Cost Arrangements**

While the region does not have formal administrative costs arrangements in place, local boards' collaborative efforts yield efficiencies. An example is a shared contract with a one-stop operator that benefits five local boards. Madera County WDB manages as master agreement with the vendor (Beaudette Consulting, Inc.), which separately invoices each local workforce area for the services it provides. Participating WDBs include Madera County (lead), Kings County, Merced County, San Joaquin County, and Stanislaus County.

Additional collaborative initiatives that may be of interest to the local boards include:

- A single local board to function as a regional Eligible Training Provider List Coordinator;
- A single local board to function as a multi-WDB Monitoring Coordinator;
- Joint marketing efforts benefiting multiple local boards; and
- Coordination by a local board of procurement of an AJCC Certification consultant.

## **IX. PROGRAM YEAR 2025-28 REGIONAL SYSTEM PRIORITIES**

Based on the input that regional workforce leaders and stakeholders provided during discussions held throughout the process used to develop the PY 25-28 Plan, the following issues were identified as priorities for further examination, exploration, development, and/or enhancement over the four-year period covered by the Regional Plan. The Directors of the RPU's eight local boards will work with their WDB members, elected officials, business leaders, and local partners and stakeholders to set the agenda for review of these priorities and, following such review, determine where, when and how action should be taken.

The themes represented by the priorities that follow were identified through input from WDB leaders, system partners, and regional stakeholders at a series of discussion, including the three community forums that are described in Attachment 1.

### **1. Focus on Key Industries**

Given the importance of targeted industry sectors and other significant industries to the economic vitality of the region and the finite availability of economic and workforce development resources, local boards, education partners, training providers, and other system stakeholders should focus on sectors of the economy that represent the greatest potential to create wealth and opportunities for businesses and residents throughout the Valley. The priority industries outlined in the SJVAC RPU Regional Plan coincide with business and community perceptions of sectors offering significant opportunities. Stakeholders note the strategic position of the Valley as a hub for logistics and transportation; the need for a stable healthcare infrastructure for the region's growing population; and the continued importance of agriculture as the economic foundation of the San Joaquin Valley.

### **2. Support Businesses in Managing Change**

Businesses of all types and sizes face constant change and managing change is part of the normal course of business operations. However, many companies throughout the Valley were profoundly impacted by a range of disruptions to sales, supply chains, and operations that occurred in connection with the pandemic, and adjusted their business models to continue their operations. For a significant number of businesses, these adjustments included right-sizing their operations to remain viable. While such actions were necessary, some businesses, subsequently, have reduced capacity for change management. With rapid adoption of advanced technology in the marketplace, changing behaviors among workers, an insufficient pool of applicants for many essential positions, and rising costs of goods and services, commercial enterprises may require more support than ever before. The workforce development system is ideally positioned to consult with businesses and to develop solutions in the areas of sourcing, hiring, training, and managing talent. Local boards and partners should adopt a more consultative posture in supporting their business customers.

### **3. Engage Business in the Design and Delivery of Training**

While businesses are a clear end-user of the full range of workforce development services provided by local boards and many system partners, too often career services, training, and even direct services for businesses are designed without their input. Business leaders should be the “managing partners” in the design of workforce services and, especially, programs that train candidates for employment in the skills companies need most. WDBs and system partners should consider opportunities to expand existing sector partnerships and to develop new ones as a structure for securing business intelligence and direction on services and training. At the same time, system partners should develop strategies that encourage businesses to become more active as trainers of new and current workers, using models such as customized training, on-the-job training, and apprenticeships.

### **4. Address Climate Impacts on Economy and Work**

While approaches to addressing climate and environmental sustainability issues are a new element of Regional Plans, these challenges are not new concerns for workforce system stakeholders. Air pollution, a transition from fossil fuels, preemptive control of forest fires, and, especially, water management are areas in which stakeholders are providing training and are continuing to assess needs for new programs and curricula. The approaches outlined in Section VI of the Regional Plan aligns with priorities of system partners and local stakeholders.

### **5. Identify and Train the Workforce in Core Employability Skills**

There are skills that are widely desired by businesses across many industries, and some skills are often considered universally needed for all jobs. System stakeholders call out foundational skills (i.e., so-called “soft skills,” such as promptness, team work, acceptance of supervision, critical thinking, problem solving); basic skills (English and math skills); communication skills (verbal, written, and appropriate to the workplace); digital literacy (ability to use basic technology tools and systems); financial literacy; and job retention skills as among the general skills most valued by companies of all types and sizes. Business and industry leaders continue to stress that individuals with these skills are the most desirable, are the easiest to train, and are, generally, the best fit. Workforce system partners throughout the region should work to identify a full complement of core employability skills and devise strategies for assessing and training in these skills areas.

### **6. Prepare Youth and Young Adults for Careers**

An array of strategies and approaches are needed to prepare youth and young adults for a lifetime of employment and for career advancement that enables self-

sufficiency, provides a family-supporting income, and creates opportunities for stability and prosperity. Information on jobs and careers should be available to children at an early age and more detailed information should be available to them as they progress through grade school, middle schools, and high school. WDBs and system partners should work closely with schools to provide information that supports career exploration and students' decisions on career-related programs and content available at the middle and high school levels. Opportunities for youth employment are critical, as first jobs, whether subsidized or not, provide important hands-on learning experiences that will stay with workers throughout their careers. Workforce programs should also continue to provide opportunities for disconnected youth and young adults to re-engage with education, training, and work.

## **7. Recognize Changes in Worker Priorities**

Business leaders, educators, workforce development professionals, social services providers, and other stakeholders continue to describe shifts in attitudes, behaviors, preferences, and priorities among workers and candidates for employment. Many indicate that, while these changes have been evolving over the last decade or even longer, such shifts were accelerated by circumstances surrounding the pandemic. For many individuals, particularly younger workers with less experience and attachment to the workforce, factors such as work-life balance, “meaningful” or “purpose-driven” work, flexibility, and opportunity to be part of decision-making are more important than factors like pay, stability, and promotional opportunities. Many businesses describe workers' lack of punctuality, adherence to work schedules, and short tenure as challenges to business operations. System partners need to recognize and respond to changes in worker priorities by developing corresponding career services and training. Such services may acknowledge that employment and career decisions are individual choices, but highlight advantages of employment retention, including stability, wage increases, and opportunities for advancement. Support for businesses may include strategies that encourage worker retention.

## **8. Leverage Under-Resourced Workers**

With the need for talent continuing to outstrip supply, local boards and system partners must develop strategies to expand the pool of available workers. Stakeholders cite individuals from various under-resourced populations as strong candidates for jobs, even in positions for which they have not traditionally been hired in large numbers. These populations include, but are not limited to, individuals with disabilities, older workers, justice-involved individuals, English language learners, and young workers. Business and workforce leaders should work together to identify the training and services that will best prepare such individuals to be strong candidates for in-demand jobs.

**9. Bring Services to Communities**

The Valley is expansive and, while most of its population is located in urban centers and adjacent suburban communities, many individuals live in rural areas where access to services is limited and transportation to brick-and-mortar facilities, such as AJCCs, is challenging. The workforce system partners should continue to collaborate on strategies to bring services to remote communities. Such strategies could include virtual service delivery, mobile services, pop-up locations, and part-time or periodic sharing of partner facilities.

**10. Expand Collaboration**

WIOA prescribes specific partner relationships for the public workforce system that include complementary federally funded programs. Local boards throughout the Valley have expanded their partnerships to include many state and locally funded programs and organizations, as well as community partners. Workforce systems may benefit from collaborations with a wide range of organizations that have not traditionally been viewed as partners. Stakeholders suggest that partnerships that could enhance the system and add significant value for customers include public health and behavioral health agencies, early childhood education providers, industry associations, organized labor, and various population-based service providers.

**X. ATTACHMENTS**

The following items are Included as part of the Regional Plan.

Attachment 1: Stakeholder and Community Engagement Summary

Attachment 2: Public Comments Received that Disagree with the Local Plan

Attachment 3: Signature Page

**Stakeholder and Community Engagement Summary**

To facilitate the engagement of stakeholders in regional planning for the workforce development delivery system and the development of the original PY 2021-24 Regional Plan, the SJVAC RPU hosted a series of ten community and stakeholder forums focused on topics affecting strategies and services across the system. These forums included:

Opportunities and Challenges for the Workforce Development System:

Questions/topics addressed include, but were not limited to:

- Considering the regional economy and industries that are contributing to growth and prosperity, what opportunities exist to help workers develop necessary skills and otherwise prepare for jobs with current and projected demand?
- What strategies should workforce system agencies employ to better understand generational and evolving needs of workers?
- What are the greatest obstacles for individuals looking to prepare for “good jobs?” Are there strategies that the workforce system could use to minimize or eliminate these obstacles?
- As businesses continue to face recruitment and hiring challenges, are there strategies that the workforce system could implement to lessen these difficulties?
- Other input on workforce development opportunities and challenges.

This forum was held in-person on two occasions:

- October 22, 2024.
- November 18, 2024.

The Changing landscape of Jobs and the Economy:

Questions/topics addressed include, but were not limited to:

- Compared to a decade ago or even more recently, what changes are most prevalent in the regional economy?
- How are changes in local industries and businesses affecting the types and availability of jobs?
- What impact are economic changes having on workers and individuals looking for work?
- What changes do economic trends suggest for workforce development and skills training programs?
- Other input on workforce development opportunities and challenges.

This forum was held via Zoom on December 5, 2024.

**Regional Plan Stakeholder and Community Engagement Outreach**

Mode of Outreach	Target of Outreach	Summary of Attendance	Comments
Published on department website, email, and Social media posts on LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram.	General Public and regional primary points of contact.	A total of 13 attendees attended the South sub regional forum	
Published on department website, email, and Social media posts on LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram.	General Public and regional primary points of contact.	A total of 17 attendees attended the North sub regional forum. Attendees included the following businesses and agencies: Merced Worknet, Stanislaus County Workforce Development, West Modesto Community Collaborative, Modesto Junior College, Central Valley Opportunity Center, Merced College, Paradigm, OE3, Go Educate	
Published on department website, email, and Social media posts on LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram.	General Public and regional primary points of contact.	A total of 80 attendees attended the online forum that took place on Zoom. Attendees included the following businesses and agencies: San Joaquin County, Madera County Workforce Investment Corporation, CAPK, Proteus, Inc, Teamsters Local 87, Garden Pathways, EDD, Department of Rehabilitation, The Wonderful Company, Employers' Training Resource, Bakersfield College, Bakersfield Adult School, Kern Health Systems, Kern County Department of Human Services, Kern Workforce and Economic Development, SER SCSEP Project, Wasco, Union High School District, California Indian Manpower Consortium, Inc, PCL Industrial Services, Inc., Social Vocational Services.	

<b>PUBLIC COMMENTS THAT DISAGREE WITH THE Program Year 2021-24 REGIONAL PLAN</b>
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1.	<i>From:</i>	<i>Date:</i>
<i>Comment:</i>		

2.	<i>From:</i>	<i>Date:</i>
<i>Comment:</i>		

**SIGNATURE PAGE**

The following signatures represent approval of the San Joaquin Valley Regional Planning Unit's Program Year 2025-28 Regional Plan by the eight Workforce Development Boards that comprise the region.

For the **Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board:**

<b>Name, Chairperson</b>	Date

For the **Kern, Inyo, Mono Workforce Development Board:**

<b>Name, Title</b>	Date

For the **Kings County Workforce Development Board:**

<b>Name, Title</b>	Date

For the **Madera County Workforce Development Board:**

<b>Name, Title</b>	Date

**SIGNATURE PAGE (cont.)**

For the **Merced County Workforce Development Board:**

<b>Name, Title</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Date</b></span>

For the **San Joaquin County Workforce Development Board:**

<b>Name, Title</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Date</b></span>

For the **Stanislaus County Workforce Development Board:**

<b>Name, Title</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Date</b></span>

For the **Tulare County Workforce Development Board:**

<b>Name, Title</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Date</b></span>