

SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY AND ASSOCIATED COUNTIES REGIONAL PLANNING UNIT

REGIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2017 – 2020

The eight local workforce development boards that are party to this plan have a long history of success, both individually and as a region. Nearly forty years ago, Private Industry Councils in the San Joaquin Valley met regularly to coordinate efforts and to secure training grants to serve the region. A decade before being designated as the San Joaquin Valley and Associated Counties Regional Planning Unit (“SJVAC RPU”), the boards formed the Central California Workforce Collaborative (CCWC), recognizing the value of working together for the benefit of businesses and workers across the vast expanse of California that locals simply call “the Central Valley.” The boards have initiated a planning process that will be on-going, recognizing that meaningful change does not just happen. It is the result of thoughtful planning, preparation and hard work. In a word, this Regional Plan is aspirational, setting forth goals and action steps to achieve real collaboration across local geographic boundaries and funding siloes. The boards and their workforce system partners view the Regional Plan not as a destination, but as a beginning – a launch pad for achieving a demand-driven service delivery system that harnesses the region’s human capital to build a world class workforce.

Approach

Given the time available between publication of planning guidance and the date by which Regional Plans must be submitted to the State, the local WDBs determined that support was needed for both the planning process and development of the Plan. Through a competitive process, Merced County, as designated lead of a joint regional collaboration, procured two independent consultants, John Chamberlin and David Shinder, for this purpose.

The consultants immediately began to take advantage of the significant work on regional collaboration, sector initiatives, system alignment and related issues that has already been done in the Central Valley. In addition to reviewing abundant documentation on completed work, the consultants began a process of information gathering by meeting individually with each local board and key stakeholders. To gain the widest possible range of input, the consultants facilitated a series of regional planning forums where hundreds of stakeholders shared their thoughts on strategies and priorities for the workforce system. The Regional Plan, which incorporates eight Local Plans developed by each board, owes a debt of gratitude to the business, education, economic development, labor, community and other stakeholders that gave generously of their time in this process.

Guiding Principles

The plan is built upon five simple principles, which represent the values, vision and commitment of the Central Valley’s workforce stakeholders. They include:

- Support for The Goals of the State Plan: Workforce preparation and economic prosperity are inextricably linked. The State Plan requires approaches that provide opportunities for all Californians to develop in-demand skills, thereby ensuring that industry has the talent it needs to succeed.
- 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 the Best Approach to Meeting Demand: Structured, high-quality education, training and support programs offer the greatest likelihood of success for all those preparing for careers.
- 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 Valley Has Been Very Effective For Many Years: CCWC is a manifestation of a partnership that has existed regionally in the Central Valley for decades. This collaboration

has led to many benefits throughout the Central Valley through the joint efforts of the eight WDBs. This collaboration, alignment and partnerships happen in a variety of ways. Sometimes these efforts will encompass the entire RPU. In other instances, they may involve only a couple of workforce areas or represent coordination across two or three funding streams. Regionalism exists where it can add value and where stakeholders agree to work across boundaries.

A. The Region and Workforce System Stakeholders

The San Joaquin Valley and Associated Counties Regional Planning Unit is comprised of the ten-county area described below. There are no plans to petition for “RPU” modification.

I. RPU Boundaries: The boundaries of the RPU are those defined by the following ten California counties: Fresno, Inyo, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, Mono, San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Tulare. This area comprises approximately 40,760 square miles, roughly 25% of the State. The total population of the region is estimated at 4,079,609, making it more populous than 25 States.¹

II. Regional Stakeholders in Workforce Development: Key workforce stakeholders in the region include local WDBs, education, economic development, public agencies, organized labor and community and non-profit organizations. Following is an overview of partners that contributed to the regional planning process.

Local Workforce Development Board - Parties to the Plan: The parties to the Regional Plan are the eight Local WDBs within the RPU, which include 7 boards representing single counties (Fresno, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Tulare) and 1 consortium board representing three counties (Kern, Inyo and Mono). Through their CCWC network, the WDBs have all been actively involved in the regional planning process by reviewing State guidance, selecting consultants to assist in the process, providing copious resource documents, organizing regional forums, and meeting regularly with the consultants as a group and individually to share insights, make decisions and set goals for regional coordination. As the designated lead for the RPU, this project has been managed by the Merced County WDB.

Businesses: Through the WDBs’ intensive involvement in the regional planning process, private sector members of their boards have been apprised of key issues being addressed in the Regional Plan, thereby providing an opportunity for feedback. Businesses that participated directly in process through interaction with the regional planning consultants or analysts at Applied Development Economics, which provided labor market analysis for the plan, include the following: Adventist Health, ARC Dental, Ball Metal Food Containers, Black Oak Casino Resort, BW Implement Company, California Electric Supply, Clinica Sierra Vista, Conagra, Comcast, Delaware North, Doctors’ Medical Center (Tenet), EJ Gallo, Fast Credit Union, Grimmway Farms, Golden Empire Transit, Hydrite Chemical Co., HR Professional, Jo-Ann Fabric and Craft Stores (corporate), Johasee Rebar, Kern Medical, Leprino Foods, Les Fong and Associates, Del Monte Foods Modesto, Mar Vista Resources, Memorial Medical Center, Mid-state Precast, Nestle, Pitman Family Farms, Silva Dental, Solecon Industrial, Sunsweet/Dryers, TSM Insurance Services, and Warren and Baerg Manufacturing.

Education and Training Institutions and Providers: The education community, from the K-12 system to 4-year universities, was engaged actively in the planning process, largely through participation in the regional forums. The consultants also communicated one on one with leadership from the Community College Regional Consortium, various Community College Deputy Sector Navigators, and some of the leadership from the Adult Education Block Grant consortia in the region.

Economic Development and Business-Serving Organizations: Individual discussions were held with economic development leaders from Kings, Madera, Merced and San Joaquin counties and with the Directors of the Fresno

¹ Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates.

Business Council and the Office of Community and Economic Development at CSU Fresno. Other economic development and chamber of commerce representatives participated in the regional planning forums. Both Kings and San Joaquin counties combine their economic and workforce development staff within a single department.

Public Agencies and Programs: Elected officials, managers, and staff representing Central Valley counties and cities participated in region planning discussions. Representatives from various county welfare agencies were active in the process, as were representatives from the State Department of Rehabilitation (DOR). Individual discussions took place between the consultants and state and regional leadership from DOR. Similar conversations were held with Deputy Division Chiefs from EDD and staff from the State Employment Training Panel.

Organized Labor: Among the region’s union partners joining the planning process, including those directly involved with training and apprenticeships, were IBEW Local 684, UA Plumbing and Pipefitting Local 442, the Carpenters’ Training Committee of Northern California, IBEW Local 100/Fresno Area Electrical Training Center, Carpenters Local 1109, and Sheet Metal Workers Local 104.

Community and Non-Profit Organizations: CBO contributions to the planning process were robust, as dozens of community partners engaged in dialogs with other regional stakeholders. Among the many organizations participating were: Friends Outside (Modesto), H.O.P.E. (Fresno), Mexican American Opportunity Foundation (Bakersfield), Proteus (several Central Valley counties), Puentes (Stockton), Reading and Beyond (Fresno), and the Stanislaus Family Justice Center.

Additional information on the participation of regional partners in the planning process is provided in Section E.

B. Analysis of Key Economic Conditions, In-Demand Sectors and the Workforce

The overall content of this Regional Plan, along with the goals it establishes and the actions its sets in motion, are derived from an intensive review of data and analyses of economic and workforce conditions in the RPU. As indicated by the information that follows, the economy of the San Joaquin Valley defies easy definition. Its lies somewhere between one based on the historical foundations of the region as the nation’s “bread basket” and an emerging viewpoint that sees the Central Valley offering unique promise for an array of burgeoning sectors, given the region’s young, growing population and relative affordability for businesses and workers alike.

With both its economic promise and notable challenges, the San Joaquin Valley, has been, as stakeholders remark without hesitation, “studied to death.” Hyperbole aside, there has indeed been a surprising abundance of research, study and planning concerning the economy, jobs, training and workforce preparedness in the region. Those taking on the task of transforming planning activities into a Regional Plan had to choose from many sources to provide a snapshot of the RPU’s economy, demand sectors and workforce conditions. The following materials proved most useful.

Primary Economic Analysis Resources: Principal sources contributing to the economic and workforce analysis within this section include the following studies that address specific conditions within the RPU boundaries. Most, as noted, provide fairly current data, as they were published within the last six months.

- Regional Economic Sector and Skills Gap Analysis: CCWC Region, Applied Development Economics, Inc. (ADE), October 10, 2016: The eight local WDBs in the RPU, functioning collaboratively as the Central California Workforce Collaborative (CCWC), commissioned ADE, which had previously done analysis for the region, to prepare a report summarizing data concerning industry (providing NAICS references) and job growth and key labor force characteristics, along with information on the relationship of education and experience to projected jobs.
- Supplemental Information and Analysis, ADE Memorandum, December 5, 2016: As regional and local planning guidance had not yet been published by the State at the time the foregoing analysis was commissioned by the

CCWC, ADE management provided a memorandum that used information from the report to respond to the requirements for Regional Plans.

- Regional Planning Unit Summary: San Joaquin Valley and Associated Counties, California Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information Division (EDD LMID), September 1, 2016 – Revised: The information presented by this summary was critical to the region’s analysis, as it provides data aggregated to the region that corresponds precisely to regional planning requirements.
- Regional Economic Analysis Profile, EDD LMID, April 2015: The Profile provides excellent synopsis for the Central Valley’s top 10 industries by size – the number of workers employed in these sectors. Some of the sectors profiled are those that regional stakeholders have selected as targets for the Regional Plan.
- San Joaquin Valley Regional Industry Cluster Analysis and Action Plan, Applied Development Economics, September 2012: While this plan might be considered “out of date” given the date of its publication, it represents a decisive stage in economic and workforce development planning for the region. Under the leadership of ADE, which helmed the most recent economic and sector evaluation for the Central Valley, the report presents an analysis of the San Joaquin Valley economy and the San Joaquin Valley Regional Industry Cluster Action Plan, prepared on behalf of the California Partnership of the San Joaquin Valley out of CSU Fresno. The “Action Plan” identifies emerging opportunities for the region’s comparative advantage industry clusters within the context of global, national, state and regional drivers and conditions.

Supplemental Economic Analysis Resources: As EDD LMID’s recent Economic Analysis Profile did not provide cluster descriptions or data for two of the region’s target sectors (advanced manufacturing or energy), the following served as resources for information on these industries or helped to fill in other gaps.

- California Manufacturing Jobs in Demand, July 2012: Given the fact that job loss has characterized manufacturing throughout the State for decades, data about opportunities for this rapidly changing sector is often harder to come by. This study provided useful information with regarding to where opportunities in the sector exist.
- California’s Green Economy: Summary of Survey Results, EDD LMID, October 2010: In similar fashion to the manufacturing report, this publication helped to fill in the blanks about “green jobs,” particularly as they related to the energy sector.
- Labor Market Overview: Central Valley/Mother Lode Region, California Community Colleges’ Center of Excellence Mother Lode Region, May 2016: This succinct analysis provides information on population characteristics and employment in targeted industries and occupations. Because the community college regions do not mirror those of the workforce system, data from this study was used only as a point of comparison.

Labor Market Intelligence from System Stakeholders: As described in the introduction to this Plan, discussions with business, economic development, education and other system stakeholders have been essential to formulating opinions about and strategies for the Workforce Development Plan in the Central Valley. Stakeholder experiences have provided a powerful lens through which to view and analyze opportunities to support the objectives of industry and workers alike.

I. The Regional Economy: In its 2012 analysis, ADE indicates that the region has had a relatively slow recovery from the Great Recession. Before the recession, total jobs in the region peaked at 1,361,550 in 2007 and did not reach that level again until 2014. The annual average number of jobs for 2015 was estimated at 1,405,122. Through 2008, total jobs in the region were growing at a 1.4 annual percentage rate, while, since 2008, the number of jobs has grown at a much lower 0.5 percent per year. The analysts conclude that, at 1.4 percent a year, jobs in the SJVAC RPU are expected to grow modestly through 2025, although they project a number of sectors (construction, health, logistics, professional, scientific and technical services, administrative support, education, healthcare and food service) to exceed this overall annual growth rate. However, qualified workers are in short supply for certain key job categories and skill areas. ADE’s summary of overall job growth in the region indicates:

- The regional unemployment rate declined to 9.9 percent in 2015, down from the peak of 16.5 percent in 2010, but still well above the low point of 7.9 percent in 2006.
- Before the recession, total jobs in the region peaked at 1,361,550 in 2007 and did not reach that level again until late 2014. Jobs have grown to 1,405,122 (annual average) in 2015.
- Healthcare is projected to see the highest growth in jobs between 2015 and 2025 (51,000 new jobs), followed by Retail (27,400 new jobs) and Food Service (18,000 new jobs).
- The SJVAC region is also expected to see relatively strong growth in Education (16,400 new jobs), and Professional, Scientific and Technical services (8,700 new jobs).
- The Logistics sector, including Wholesale, Warehousing and Transportation, is projected to grow by a combined 22,700 new jobs.
- Manufacturing is projected to increase by 7,000 jobs, but this trend masks considerable turbulence within the sector, with some industries growing while others decline. Wineries (NAICS 312230) are projected to grow by 1,400 new jobs and a number of other food processing industries are projected to grow by at least 500 new jobs each, such as roasted nuts and peanut butter (NAICS 311911), poultry processing (NAICS 311615), animal slaughtering (NAICS 311611), and cheese manufacturing (NAICS 311513). At the same time, dried and dehydrated food manufacturing (NAICS 311423) and fruit and vegetable canning (NAICS 311423) are expected to each decline by more than 600 jobs. Breakfast cereal manufacturing (NAICS 311230) and commercial bakeries (NAICS 311812) are expected to decline by approximately 300 jobs each.
- Construction has recovered more than 12,800 jobs over the past five years, but is projected to continue at less than half that rate of job growth, with 11,200 new jobs created between 2015 and 2025.
- Consistent with the above trends, the Health and Wellness industry cluster is projected to have the highest job growth over the next ten years. The Health and Wellness cluster is projected to add 51,000 jobs by 2025. About 26,700 (52 percent) of the new jobs will occur in the Health Care Delivery sub-cluster. Within this sub-cluster, the number of jobs in hospitals and HMO Centers is projected to increase by 8,500 new jobs. In contrast, services to elderly and disabled persons are projected to increase by 20,800 new jobs.
- The projections of job openings show a concentration in transportation and materials handling (4,900 annual openings), food services and retail (12,600 combined annual openings), office and admin support (5,900 annual openings) and farm occupations (6,300 annual openings).

ADE's analysis corresponds to input from key stakeholders throughout the planning process. A question that workforce, economic development, education and other stakeholders have grappled with during the planning process is how to formulate a systemic response to substantial growth in the retail and food service sectors. The Community College's Deputy Sector Navigator responsible for these industries expressed opinions that many across the system echoed. Both food service and retail, while not directly within the career paths for middle skill jobs in targeted industries, do provide on-ramps for new workers, including youth, immigrants and those returning to work after overcoming employment-related barriers. The system's approach to using employment in these lower wage sectors must include plans for leveraging work readiness and maturity gained through the jobs to transition workers to fields offering greater opportunities to earn family sustaining wages. Approaches will likely require training, both at education/training institutions and on-the-job.

Based on ADE's analysis and discussions with key employers, workforce organizations and training providers, the regional planning process identified specific occupations as potential priorities for additional training efforts, including Medical Technicians, Electricians and Maintenance Mechanics. The planning process also identified specific skills needed by business, such as the ability to use computer-operated processing controls and instruments, supervisory and management skills, business skills, and related English competency.

Major Industry Sectors within the Region: EDD LMID's recent data summary highlights regional economic growth by reporting on the industries with the most employment.

Major Industry Sector	May 2016 (preliminary)	May 2012	Change	Percent	LQ ²
Total All Industries	1,514,200	1,368,720	145,480	10.6%	-
Total Farm	240,000	220,001	19,999	9.1%	5.6
Total Nonfarm	1,274,200	1,148,720	125,480	10.9%	0.9
Mining and Logging	9,930	13,451	-3,521	-26.2%	4.4
Construction	43,130	36,530	6,600	18.1%	0.6
Manufacturing	111,240	102,701	8,539	8.3%	1.0
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	268,450	235,200	33,250	14.1%	1.0
Information	11,840	11,660	180	1.5%	0.3
Financial Activities	42,940	42,540	400	0.9%	0.6
Professional and Business Services	110,120	101,620	8,500	8.4%	0.5
Educational and Health Services	205,460	181,400	24,060	13.3%	0.9
Leisure and Hospitality	126,430	106,960	19,470	18.2%	0.7
Other Services	38,790	35,700	3,090	8.7%	0.8
Government	287,380	266,760	20,620	7.7%	1.3

Notably, agriculture, construction, manufacturing, trade-transportation-utilities and educational and health services (sectors being targeted, as described below) all experienced growth over the 4-year period from May 2012 through May 2016.

Target Sectors for Workforce Development: The RPU partners have selected the following sectors as priorities under the 2017 – 2020 Regional Workforce Development Plan: advanced manufacturing; construction (including public infrastructure); energy (including green energy); healthcare; transportation and logistics; and value-added agriculture. The decision to target these sectors, is based principally on the following factors:

- Each is showing substantial growth and/or post-recession resurgence in the Valley;
- To varying extents, the industries are being transformed by technology, requiring innovative strategies and approaches for training new workers and the current workforce;
- Engagement with businesses, business supporting agencies and economic development organizations all suggest that these sectors will benefit as the result of interventions by the workforce and education system.
- They were selected as targets through the extensive research and planning that culminated in the 2012 San Joaquin Valley Regional Industry Cluster Analysis and Action Plan. According to the Cluster Action Plan, emerging opportunities for these “comparative advantage” industry clusters are the foundation for innovation, competitiveness, and future well-being in the region. They support improved health, sustainability, energy self-sufficiency, and shared prosperity.

EDD LMID’s Regional Economic Analysis Profile, provides clear and concise industry cluster descriptions³ for four of the RPU target sectors. These are summarized below:

Agriculture (particularly, Value-Added Agriculture): The Agriculture, Food, and Beverage Processing industry cluster includes establishments primarily engaged in growing crops, raising animals, and manufacturing food and beverages, as well as support activities for crop and animal production. This cluster employed almost 269,000 people in 2014, almost 21.7 percent of the economic market’s workforce. Top industries in this cluster include: Support Activities for Crop Production; Fruit and Tree Nut Farming; Cattle Ranching and Farming; Other Food Manufacturing; and Beverage Manufacturing. Examples of in demand entry-level and middle skills jobs include agriculture and food

² Location Quotient

³ Distinctions between EDD’s industry cluster titles and the sector titles used by the RPU are considered immaterial.

processing technicians, maintenance mechanics, quality control inspectors, farm machinery mechanics and bi-lingual supervisors. There is a very high degree of cross-over between value-added agriculture and advanced manufacturing.

The RPU is focusing on the economic benefits of “value-added” agriculture. Defined as the transformation of agricultural products to a higher value for the end consumer, examples can be seen when carrots are processed into smaller, “baby” carrots, or used in the production of vegetable juice and when grapes are turned into wine.

Construction (including Public Infrastructure): The Construction Materials and Services industry cluster is comprised of builders of mechanical systems such as electrical, heating, and water; specialty trades outfits such as drywall, flooring, and painting contractors; residential and commercial builders; and contractors who complete foundation and framing work. In 2014, this cluster was comprised of more than 55,000 workers, or 4.5 percent of the economic market’s employment. Expenditures on road, bridge, tunnel, pipeline and other public infrastructure construction in the Central Valley is expected to top \$36 billion in the coming several years. Industries showing the highest projected job openings include: Building Equipment Contractors; Building Finishing Contractors; Foundation, Structure, and Building Exterior Contractors; Residential Building Construction; and Other Specialty Trade Contractors.

Healthcare: The Health Care Services industry cluster includes acute care and outpatient hospitals, nursing homes and rehabilitation centers, adult day care centers, and community service agencies for the elderly. It employed nearly 134,000 people in the economic market 2014, accounting for 10.8 percent of the workforce. Industries in this cluster may include both public and private employment. Top industries within this cluster include: General Medical and Surgical Hospitals; Offices of Physicians; Nursing Care Facilities (Skilled Nursing Facilities); Continuing Care Retirement Communities and Assisted Living Facilities for the Elderly; and Outpatient Care Centers. In demand entry-level and middle skills jobs include: medical assistants, certified nursing assistants, licensed practical and vocational nurses, registered nurses, triage nurses, nurse practitioners, emergency medical technicians and paramedics, medical lab technicians, respiratory therapists, clinical technicians, health diagnosticians, a variety of medical support personnel and dental assistants,

Transportation and Logistics: The Transportation and Logistics cluster is made up of interrelated industries such as refrigerated warehousing, self-storage facilities, freight transporting companies, and overnight delivery businesses. In 2013-2014,* over 50,000 workers were employed in this cluster, making up 4 percent of the economic market’s workforce population. Industries showing the highest projected job openings include: Warehousing and Storage; General Freight Trucking; Specialized Freight Trucking; Couriers and Express Delivery Services; Commercial and Industrial Machinery and Equipment (except Automotive and Electronic); and Repair and Maintenance. In demand entry-level and middle skills jobs include truck drivers, mechanics, supply chain workers for “fulfillment” or on-line ordering businesses, fork lift operators, warehouse workers, bi-lingual supervisors and order takers/route planners.

The following industry descriptions for the advanced manufacturing and energy sectors are based on information provided in the 2012 San Joaquin Valley Regional Industry Cluster Analysis and Action Plan.

Advanced Manufacturing: Manufacturing is a lynchpin cluster in that it is a component of virtually all of the other regional clusters in addition to other “diversified” manufacturing companies. More than 70 percent of manufacturing jobs are associated with one of the five other target sectors. Most of this employment is in food processing and is part of the agriculture value chain. Manufacturing has generally lost employment during the past decade, although this loss occurred more slowly in the Central Valley than it did statewide. It is worth noting, though, that nearly 60 percent of the losses were in non-cluster related diversified manufacturing industries. In demand entry-level and middle skills jobs include entry level and skilled technicians, engineering and drafting specialists, maintenance mechanics, welders, supply chain managers, quality control specialists and bilingual frontline supervisors.

Energy (including Green Energy): The San Joaquin Valley’s growing population and expanding economy will require increased supplies of reliable, diverse, clean energy, which is defined as “increasing the energy use efficiency of our

homes and businesses and other resources; and producing more electricity and fuel in the Valley from renewable energy resources such as solar, wind and biomass.”

It is challenging to find both a consistent definition of the Energy Cluster “value chain” in terms of component groups of industries, and to identify the NAICS codes that comprise the cluster. This is in part because Energy is a rapidly evolving cluster and there are not yet specific NAICS codes for some of the industries, especially in the production of renewable energies. In some cases, such as the solar industry, activities cover many NAICS codes and are difficult to classify. In other cases, activities fall under categories that can involve non-energy-related functions. For example, installation of solar panels on roofs of buildings is classified under a NAICS code for roofing contractors, which is a more encompassing area than solar panel installation. The development of biofuels is sometimes categorized within the agriculture value chain. As a goal of this Regional Plan, the RPU partners will work with EDD LMID to develop a definition for the industry cluster and the jobs it encompasses. In demand entry-level and middle skills jobs include HVAC specialists and insulators, wind and solar farm technicians, energy conservation advisors, natural gas conversion specialists and mechanics specializing in converting and repairing vehicles and devices using alternative fuels.

II. Skill Requirements for a Diverse Region: The in-depth stakeholder engagement process, which included both business representatives and individuals from organizations that serve businesses, pinpointed several key skill areas that companies require of their employees and job candidates. These include:

Foundational skills: Basic literacy and numeracy skills are required in virtually every type of work. Education partners equate the typical minimum requirements of businesses for language and math skills to 8th grade proficiency.

Core competency skills: Over and over again, businesses and those who provide training for their workers expressed that digital literacy is now a core competency. While the ways that technology manifests within a company and in relation to specific jobs are countless, a baseline understanding of computer/microprocessor operations is now essential for virtually all work. Many stakeholders, including businesses themselves, expressed similar thoughts about “customer service” skills, recognizing that strong customer relations, be they external or internal, affect productivity and profitability.

Essential Skills: Punctuality, team work, customer responsiveness, critical thinking, and accepting supervision are among a long list of workplace behaviors, attitudes and knowledge that businesses require. Many businesses, for which specific licensure/certification is not a prerequisite, indicate that these “essential skills” alone can advance a job applicant to the hiring phase and suggest that no candidate be referred without workforce system representatives first verifying that he or she demonstrates competency in these areas.

Job Specific Skills: As indicated various time throughout this Plan, each target industry has described skills needed for workers in a wide range of occupations. Industry engagement will continue to focus on translating skill requirements into training for each target sector. In most cases, this will involve updates to the technical content of curricula, especially as workplace skills are altered by technology and automation. In other cases, as technology and market place conditions create new job classifications or completely new skills requirements for existing classifications, new curricula will need to be developed.

Regional Plan goals and action steps concerning the foregoing demand-driven skill areas are further described in section L.

In its recent analysis of labor market data for the region, ADE reports that more than 51,200 average annual openings are projected between 2015 and 2025 (512,600 total openings), of which approximately 21,000 annual openings would be due to new job growth.

- The minimum educational requirements listed by the Department of Labor for more than three-quarters of the openings do not exceed a high school diploma. However, nearly 4,000 openings per year require more than a high school diploma, though less than a four year BA degree. This includes about 700 openings that require specialized training beyond high school, though not necessarily a certificate or AA degree. Of these jobs, 572 are teaching assistants and 105 are computer support specialists.
- Nearly 1,400 annual openings are for jobs that do require a certificate in a specialized area of training. The largest occupational groups in this category include medical assistants (348 annual openings) and licensed practical and vocational nurses (308 openings per year). Other occupations requiring a certificate with 90-100 annual projected openings include dental assistants, emergency medical technician and paramedics, firefighters, supervisors of production and operating line workers, and heating, air conditioning and refrigeration mechanics.
- About 2,000 projected openings per year would require an AA degree. The largest occupational group in this category is nurse practitioners (560 annual openings), followed by registered nurses (430 annual openings) and preschool teachers (203 annual openings). Another 331 projected annual openings are in other medical occupations, such as clinical technicians, health diagnosing support personnel, and respiratory therapists. The remaining openings in this category include a wide range of technical specialties including engineering and drafting technicians, agriculture and food science technicians and radio and telecommunications equipment installers.

While some of what ADE highlights is outside the focus of the region’s target sectors, it provides important insight with regard to skills for middle skill job and other occupations requiring less than a four year degree.

III. The Regional Workforce: The workforce in the greater San Joaquin Valley region is, consistent with the demographics of the vast majority of California, ethnically and culturally diverse. The region’s vast agricultural footprint has, for more than 150 years, drawn immigrants from around the world to the Central Valley, where they have been quickly able to use their knowledge of farming and ranching, along with the hard labor that they know is required of the industry. Over the past several decades, as the industrial base of the region has expanded beyond agriculture and related sub-sectors, all of those with a stake in economic growth have worked to build a workforce that is as diverse in skills as it is in heritage.

Labor Force Data: The following labor market profile information, providing employment and unemployment data, is excerpted from EDD LMID’s September 2016 LMID Summary⁴ for the ten county area comprising the SJVAC RPU⁵:

	May 2016	May 2015	Change	Percent
Labor Market	1,871,810	1,873,910	-2,100	-0.1%
Employed	1,710,720	1,689,870	20,850	1.2%
Unemployed	160,910	184,240	-23,330	-12.7%
Unemployment Rate	8.6%	9.8%	-1.2%	-

The Summary expresses labor force participation in the following terms:

Labor Force Participation	Population	Percentage
Employed or in Armed Forces	1,562,189	51.7%
Unemployed	261,676	8.6%
Not in labor force	1,196,002	39.6%
Total	3,019,867	100.0%

⁴ For all tables under the “Labor Force Data” sub-heading, the source is U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates.

⁵ Note: LMID advises that numbers may vary from table to table due to rounding and other factors.

Other key labor force and overall regional population characteristics in the summary include: native and foreign born; English learners; veteran status; disability status; and barriers to employment. The tables that follow present this data:

Native and Foreign Born	Population	Percentage
Native	3,192,815	78.3%
Foreign Born	886,794	21.7%
Total	4,079,609	100.0%

English Learners	Population	Percentage
Speaks English Less Than “Very Well”	711,447	19.0%
Speaks English “Very Well”	916,870	24.5%
Speaks Only English	2,117,332	56.5%
Total	3,745,649	100.0%

Veteran Status	Population	Percentage
Male Veterans	179,774	93.2%
Female Veterans	13,092	6.8%
Total	192,866	100.0%

Disability Status	Population	Percentage
With Any Disability	482,044	12.1%
No Disability	3,507,996	87.9%
Total	3,990,040	100.0%

Individuals with Barriers to Employment	Total
Ethnic Minorities	2,627,380
Households with Cash Public Assistance or Food Stamps	227,663
Population 18 and Over with Less Than a 9 th Grade Level Education	383,224
Single Parent Households	299,397
Speak English Less Than “Very Well”	711,447
Youth Ages 10 to 24	977,226

While EDD LMID’s Summary stops short of analysis concerning labor force characteristics, it does make clear that there are a significant number of RPU residents with barriers to employment. These statistics suggest that the region’s workforce system must be responsive to challenges faced by workers and those seekingers to enter the workforce. Growth of key sectors of the Central Valley’s economy will require that large percentages of these individuals become skilled members of workforce. Strategies must include training and other workforce services specially designed to remediate barriers and enable entry to critical, in-demand career paths.

In contrast to the LMID Summary, the October 2016 report by ADE analyzed the labor force, focusing on characteristics including race and ethnicity, gender, veteran status, disability status, citizenship, age, educational attainment and employment status. The report makes note of a number of significant factors and draws some conclusions, about labor force characteristics, the economy and employment. The following information is in largely excerpted from ADE’s Report.

Unemployment: Within the RPU, about 48 percent of the labor force is Latino, at 870,562 persons out of a labor force of 1,814,685. Thirty-eight percent is White. Unemployment for Latino workers 25 and older is 12.4 percent compared to 8.6 percent for Whites. Unemployment is 14.2 percent for workers in other racial and ethnic groups. Unemployment affects workers 25 and older with no college degree much more, at 13.2 percent, than those with a

college degree (6.1 percent). Veterans' unemployment level is at 8.8 percent. Disabled workers have relatively high unemployment, at slightly over 22.0 percent.

Age Demographics: The labor force in the RPU is fairly evenly concentrated among the age groups. Workers in the 16-24 age group are about 16.6 percent of the total, while nearly 25 percent are in the 25-34 age group. The prime working age group of 35-54 has 42 percent of the workforce. Workers over 55 constitute about 16.9 percent of the workforce and a number of employers report that impending retirements are a significant issue for them in terms of anticipated openings in the future.

Underutilized Workforce: ADE examined the part-time and unemployed labor force in terms of how its educational attainment and prior occupational background matches projected annual job openings. The largest numbers of openings identified were in lower skilled occupations such as farming, food service, sales and administrative office occupations. However, significant numbers of openings were also projected in education, production, healthcare practitioners and personal care services, which are followed closely by management and healthcare positions. Comparing these categories to the availability of currently unemployed and part-time workers, there are substantial numbers of workers who would seemingly be available to fill these positions. This may suggest that these unemployed individuals and those working only part-time need training to help upgrade their skills. It might also be the case that they need other services to help them be available for full-time employment.

Labor Market Trends: ADE's 2016 analysis sheds light on labor market trends in the RPU. The authors report that, as expressed in the following table⁶, the San Joaquin Valley has defined a number of regional industry clusters that are significant components of the regional economic base.

NAICS	2015 JOBS	2025 PROJECTED	2015-25 CHANGE	2015-25 ANNUAL GROWTH RATE
Total	1,031,426	1,203,14475	171,718	1.6%
Energy	47,762	53,517	5,755	1.1%
Diversified Manufacturing	30,277	30,777	500	0.2%
Health and Wellness	203,489	254,499	51,010	2.3%
Agriculture	418,394	469,406	51,012	1.2%
Water Flow Technology	9,934	11,480	1,546	1.5%
Logistics	51,436	63,324	11,888	2.1%
Retail	151,397	178,823	27,426	1.7%
Accommodations and Food Services	106,314	125,619	19,305	1.7%
Heavy Construction	12,423	15,699	3,276	2.4%

Industry clusters represent traded sectors in the regional economy, which are typically the source of most of the income and wealth for the region, as well as the areas where innovation occurs most frequently. Agriculture and Healthcare are the two largest industry clusters.

The Agriculture cluster includes not only farm production, but also food processing, related distribution and logistics, and a variety of agricultural services that include fertilizers, irrigation, soil testing, veterinary services, and marketing, among others. Within the broader Agricultural cluster, there continues to be a shift away from jobs employed directly at farms and increased reliance on farm labor contractors. In addition, a number of food processing industries are projected to increase employment, including poultry processing (NAICS 311615), animal slaughtering (NAICS 311611), meat processed from carcasses (NAICS 311612), wineries (NAICS 312130), corrugated and solid fiber box (NAICS 322211), perishable prepared foods (NAICS 311991), and wood containers and pallets (NAICS 321920). In

⁶ ADE Inc., *San Joaquin Valley Regional Industry Cluster Analysis and Action Plan*, prepared for the Office of Community and Economic Development, CSU Fresno, on behalf of the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley. September 2012

addition, the agriculture-related distribution (logistics) sector is projected to add about 3,900 jobs over the next ten years.

The Health and Wellness cluster is projected to add 51,000 jobs by 2025. Of the 51,000 new jobs, almost 26,700 (52 percent) will occur in the Healthcare - Delivery sub-cluster. Within this sub-cluster, the number of jobs in hospitals is projected to increase by 5,400 new jobs, with another 4,200 new jobs projected for services to elderly and disabled persons. In addition to the 4,200 new service-related jobs in the Health Care - Delivery sub-cluster, there is another 20,800 new jobs in the Health Care – Other Services sub-cluster pertaining to services for the elderly and disabled (NAICS 624120). Some of the new jobs will occur in hospital settings but many will be in outpatient facilities and various types of nursing and residential care facilities.

ADE’s analysis also identifies industries that are expected to decline. While food processing generally exhibits strong growth over the next ten years, there are several food processing industries within the Agriculture Cluster that are expected to decline, such as breakfast cereal manufacturing (NAICS 311230), fruit and vegetable canning (NAICS 311421), and dried and dehydrated food manufacturing (NAICS 311423).

Labor force demand is not only affected by new jobs growth, but also by changes in the labor force. As the Baby Boomer generation ages out of the labor force, there will be an increased need for replacement workers. In addition, job turnover occurs for a number of other reasons. More than 51,200 average annual openings are projected between 2015 and 2025 (512,600 total openings), of which approximately 21,000 annual openings would be due to new job growth.

Educational and Skill Levels: The LMID Summary provides the following data on the educational attainment levels of Central Valley residents:

Educational Attainment	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage
Less than 9th grade	198,654	13.8%	184,570	12.8%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	196,833	13.6%	153,414	10.6%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	394,997	27.4%	366,649	25.4%
Some college, no degree	363,871	25.2%	397,218	27.6%
Associate's degree	92,503	6.4%	118,626	8.2%
Bachelor's degree	131,471	9.1%	154,746	10.7%
Graduate or professional degree	65,809	4.6%	65,914	4.6%
Total	1,444,138	100.0%	1,441,137	100.0%

The fact that nearly one quarter of the region’s “job age” residents have not earned a high school diploma or its equivalent is troubling. Even opportunities for which a high school diploma is not required are more readily attainable when the candidate has this credential. As discussed in section D of this Plan, representatives of business, education and virtually every workforce stakeholder group agreed that a high school diploma is the “bedrock” credential for the majority of jobs in the Central Valley, particularly those offering upward career path potential.

ADE’s October 2016 report provides substantive review of education attainment and its effect on workforce conditions. According to this analysis,⁷ Educational attainment in the region is slightly lower than the statewide averages, with 22 percent of workers 25 years and older not holding a high school diploma or equivalent, compared to 18.5 percent for the state as a whole. Statewide, 38.8 percent have a college degree, compared to 28.5 percent for the SJVAC region. However, in the Central Valley there is a stark contrast in the educational attainment levels of the

⁷ The following text is largely excerpted from ADE’s report; edited only for narrative flow and sequence of information within the context of topics to be addressed by the Regional Plan.

labor force when citizenship status is taken into account. Among US citizens in the workforce, only 12 percent do not have a high school diploma or GED and 33.7 percent have a college degree. However, it is important to recognize that many non-citizens have not had the same educational opportunities in their home countries and many have not achieved the equivalent of a high school diploma. 63 percent of the non-citizens 25 and over in the labor force have not obtained a high school diploma or a GED. Twenty percent of non-citizens in the labor force have earned a high school diploma or equivalent, which is five percentage points lower than the rate for citizens (i.e. 25.9 percent). This accounts, in part, for the differences in educational attainment between Latino workers and other workers in the labor force, as the non-citizen group is 87.1 percent Latino; slightly over 39 percent of all Latinos in the workforce have no high school diploma or GED. It is also important to note that Latinos have earned high school diplomas and GEDs at rates slightly surpassing Whites and Others, at 25.9 percent versus 24.5 percent (Whites) and 21.7 percent (Others). However, Whites and Others are over two times more likely than Latinos to have earned a college degree: 14.9 percent of the Latinos in the labor force have earned a college degree versus 40 percent for Whites and 41 percent for Others.

Educational attainment also affects employment status. Persons with no high school diploma exhibit rates of unemployment that more than double unemployment levels for persons with a college degree, or 15.8 percent versus 6.1 percent. Of the persons with a college degree, almost 68 percent work full-time, resulting in a full-time employment rate that is 18 percentage points greater than the rate for persons without a high school diploma (i.e. 68.3 percent versus 50.0 percent).

Veterans in the region tend to have high levels of overall educational attainment, with only 3.5 percent not achieving a high school diploma. For the workforce as a whole, 22.0 percent do not have a high school diploma or equivalent degree. Among workers with disabilities, however, nearly 26.5 percent do not have a high school diploma.

IV. Workforce Development Activities within the Region: From the on-set of recent planning activities that have taken place to support the development of the Regional Workforce Plan, the partners have agreed that there are substantial resources within the RPU to provide workforce development and training. The challenge in moving the needle forward on the development of a more demand-focused system is marshaling these resources so that they become more nimble and able to quickly respond to labor market needs.

Overall, the training assets of the region are abundant and, in the aggregate, are effective at meeting the demands of industry for a variety of skill sets. However, ample room for improvement exists in the following areas:

- Capacity to receive on-going input from industry on its changing needs and support from business in translating workplace skill needs into training content.
- Shortening the turn-around time from when business “sounds the alarm” to the start date of training in new and updated courses.
- Consistency of content from institution to institution and from area to area so that regional businesses can gain confidence that credentials resulting from training reflect agreed upon content.
- Greater collaboration with system stakeholders, particularly economic and workforce development, in the process of engaging industry in regional discussions of current and emerging skill requirements.
- Development of more on-ramps for individuals with barriers to employment to enter training that enables subsequent transition to career pathway programs eventually leading to middle-skill and other self-sustaining employment.

Strategies to address these challenges are described throughout this Regional Plan and are summarized within section L, Regional Collaboration: Goals and Associated Action Steps.

Scope and Capacity of Regional Workforce Development and Training Activities: The eight local WDB’s within the region all operate high-functioning workforce development systems that comply with and fulfill the objectives of WIOA. These systems include a regional network of American Job Centers of California (AJCCs) and youth/young

adult programs, some of which are linked directly to AJCCs, while others are stationed in other locations throughout the community. For many job seekers, these centers provide access to occupational, foundational, employment readiness and remedial skills training offered by a wide variety of providers, including the following.

Community Colleges: There are 14 community colleges in and around the SJVAC RPU, which, to varying degrees, are key contributors to training Central Valley residents in skills for in-demand jobs in target sectors. Coordination between the local WDBs and the community colleges is facilitated and made more effective by the Central Valley/Mother Lode Regional Consortium (CRC), which represents community college's career and technical education faculty, staff and programs in the region. The CRC supports regional economic growth by facilitating development and expansion of college training and educational programs to meet the needs of regional businesses and industries. Working with the CRC are the region's Deputy Sector Navigators (DSNs), which serve as liaisons between local colleges and business. Within the region, DSNs represent the following sectors/areas of focus: Advanced Manufacturing; Health Workforce Initiative; Agriculture, Water and Environmental Technologies; Global Trade & Logistics; ICT/Digital Media; Retail, Hospitality, Tourism; and Small Business. The efforts of the DSNs, combined with those of deans and faculty, have resulted in the updating of courses reflecting the major demand industries in the Central Valley. Community colleges also provide foundational skills training in language and mathematics.

Adult Education: Adult education programs tied to local school systems provide training in a number of areas, both academic and vocational. For students with barriers to employment, learning deficits and lack of a high school diploma, adult schools throughout the region are a critical resource. Adult Basic Education (ABE), which promotes development of literacy and numeracy skills required in the workplace, English-as-a-second language (ESL) and high school completion and equivalency programs are offered by the system. In addition, various adult schools offer career training, much of which is closely aligned to target industries and demand jobs, including welding, construction skills, entry-level healthcare occupations, warehousing, food service and culinary occupations.

Private Vocational Training: According to the State Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education, there are more than 150 approved private training institutions in the San Joaquin Valley. While some institutions in this category have come under scrutiny within the last several years around fee structures and student outcomes, several private postsecondary schools in the Central Valley have proven track records in training job seekers for in-demand entry-level jobs, such as truck driver, medical assistance and technicians for various industries. These schools continue to occupy an important niche within the training community, as, based on their small size and flexible structures, they are often able to train students quickly and place completers into jobs with local businesses.

Others: Other providers also comprise an important, albeit smaller, portion of the training community. These include

- 4-Year Institutions: The Central Valley is home to the University of California, Merced, along with three campuses of the California State University system: Bakersfield, Fresno and Stanislaus. In addition, several notable private universities, such as University of the Pacific, are located in the RPU. While these institutions are well known for awarding baccalaureate and advanced degrees, many of which are required for employment in the region's key sectors, increasingly their "extended education" divisions are providing training and producing certificates that respond to industry demands for particular skills.
- Organized Labor: Unions representing the skilled trades offer a number of pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs that can lead to employment with good wages and benefits.
- Constituent-Focused Training: Programs offered by organizations serving specialized target groups (including WIOA Section 167 and 168 programs serving farmworkers and Native Americans) offer a wide range of vocational programs for jobs ranging from solar panel installation to truck driving, welding and more.
- Community-Based Organizations: An extensive number of community-based agencies provide training and services to support employment. Many such organizations provide "essential skills" training, which emphasize work readiness, along with information on the behaviors, attitudes and work maturity expected by business.

- *Private Industry:* Business itself is a major trainer of workers, mostly using its own resources. Increasingly, workforce development, education and economic development are developing new partnerships with private businesses to make training more responsive to the specialized skill needs of industries and companies. Initiatives include providing financial support for work-based learning and designing customized training programs on behalf of specific businesses.

Addressing the Needs of Limited English Proficient Individuals: With the eight largest counties in the RPU all reporting a workforce that is at least 15 percent limited English proficient and 19% of workers throughout the region self-identifying as speaking English less than “very well,” there is a clear need to provide services to assist these individuals in increasing their prospects for success in the labor market. Stakeholders representing all workforce-related disciplines and every sub-region of the RPU shared insights on the need for services, where they are available and how service delivery can be improved to increase the work readiness of English language learners. With regard to need, while everyone agreed that it exists, the level of need for English language skills was a subject of some debate. After decades of immigration from Mexico and other parts of Latin America, Spanish has become the unofficial second language of the Central Valley. As such, workers can live their daily lives communicating in Spanish and are able to secure jobs where only the most minimal English skills are required. Although jobs requiring little or no English are generally low-paying, some stakeholders indicate that it is often difficult to persuade adult workers of the benefits of studying English to improve career opportunities and increase their earning potential.

ESL training is available through a range of providers and programs. In rural communities, WIOA Section 167 grantees and their partners play a significant role in delivering English skills training through the National Farmworker Jobs Program. Providers for the region include Proteus, Central Valley Opportunity Center and Employers’ Training Resource, which offer some vocational services in tandem with ESL. By far, the region’s largest provider of ESL training is public education, with the Adult Education system at the forefront. Under the leadership of the AEBG consortia throughout the Central Valley and up and down the state, a number of unique practices have been developed by adult schools and community colleges that hold promise for increasing the English language fluency of workers in the region. Among these are: strategies that bring ESL into rural communities, sometimes on a non-credit basis, to make training more accessible; offering training during school hours and in the evening to parents of English language learners and immigrant students; and contextualizing ESL through a co-instruction process, where language teachers and vocational instructors split teaching time and provide English language training in a work-related context.

Improving the capacity and results of the workforce system to build English skills for those with limited fluency is a priority of the regional partners. To this end, workforce and education leadership will convene a workgroup to develop strategies around the following challenges and issues:

- Communicating the value of English language skills acquisition in terms of employment opportunities
- Making services accessible in terms of location, schedule and instructional methods
- Broadcasting the availability of programs and services
- Linking language skills to work requirements
- Offering various on-ramps to beginning, intermediate and advanced English skills training

Associated goals and action steps are summarized within section L of the Plan.

C. Regional Sector Pathways

The SJVAC RPU partners understand and believe in the value of regional sector pathway programs to transform the workforce system into one that is uniquely focused on meeting the skills needs of business, while at the same time preparing new and incumbent workers to gain the skills for in-demand jobs. Over the last several years, at the local level, the WDBs have indeed been focused on target sectors in their areas and a number of sector strategies and

initiatives have taken shape. Some of these involve support for hiring, some for training and some for both. A number of projects have included economic development and/or the community colleges in the process of designing and delivering services. Some have not. Simply put, within any local area, strategies do not necessarily adhere to a particular protocol with regard to identifying need or developing new training responses to that need. Neither is there a standardized process for the partners to come together with industry to assess the need for adjustments to existing programs. From area to local area, processes used for translating the workforce skills needs of industry into career pathways vary. Despite the lack of standard processes within and across local workforce areas, many very promising practices are emerging and industry-responsive services have been and continue to be developed. Some of this work is even being done on a regional level, signaling that the Central Valley is well positioned to develop and implement regional sector pathway programs as envisioned by the State Plan.

In short, what remains to be done is transforming local and less uniform processes into more easily replicated ones based on best practices for the development of regional sector pathways. The partners will develop protocols for working with business to assess regional industry workforce needs and translate these needs into content for training and services to prepare candidates for jobs. The protocol will include strategies to effectively engage with business, economic development, and education in a regional sector pathway planning and development process. As stated above, the good news is that there are indeed sector-focused career pathway programs in the Central Valley, many of which were driven by specific requests from and input by industry. Some of these have the potential to be scaled up to other areas of the RPU. Again, the only things lacking are standard structures, processes and protocols, so that partners throughout the region can develop sector pathway programs that will be replicable in other locations.

The partners' description of regional sector pathways strategies in response to the planning guidance is largely forward thinking and aspirational, indicating where the system currently is in the process of planning and what plans have been devised thus far. In addition, the following responses highlight a number of local career pathway programs that are well positioned for further development and regional replication.

I. Need for Regional Sector Pathway Programs

For several years the local boards within the region have been intensively involved in the development of programs and strategies to respond to the growing demand from key sectors. In addition, significant regional planning began to coalesce in 2011, when the Office of Community and Economic Development (OCED) at CSU Fresno received an Economic Adjustment grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration to prepare a Central Valley-wide industry cluster analysis and a regional strategy: a Cluster Action Plan to catalyze the growth of priority clusters. The resulting San Joaquin Regional Industry Cluster Analysis and Action (described in Section B) set in motion numerous actions that would give shape to sector strategies throughout the Central Valley.

One important outgrowth of the Action Plan was the establishment of the Regional Industry Clusters Initiative (RICI). The goal of the project is to support improved regional economic performance, sustainability, and shared opportunity for Central Valley residents, businesses and communities. RICI got its official start in February 2013, with team members engaging champions for five identified clusters: agriculture, clean energy, health, manufacturing, and water technology. For each of these clusters, industry partners have been identified and advisory committees have been organized. While RICI has not yet focused on two of the region's priority sectors (construction and transportation/logistics), it has the potential to function as a resource for reaching out to and even convening industry on behalf of the workforce system.

Initiating the Regional Sector Pathway Discussion Industry and Stakeholders: During the planning process that preceded the development of this Regional Plan, industry was engaged in discussions (principally through the regional forums) of its workforce needs. The dates and times of these sessions are included as attachments to the Regional Plan. However, these sessions did not drill down to the content level in such a way as to render feedback usable for development of sector pathway programs. That will require the more in-depth process described below.

More Intensive Industry-Led Planning on Regional Sector Pathways: As described in Section D, which follows, the partners plan to organize a series of meetings with key industry leaders regarding industry-valued credentials. These same convenings can be used to review existing career pathway programs to determine opportunities to upscale them throughout the region. The RIC committees as well as the local and regional Economic Development organizations may serve as resources for organizing these meetings. Intensive engagement sessions with industry leaders in all six sectors will be used to:

- Review credentials in terms of value (described in Section D)
- Discuss industry needs for skills in various classifications, including middle skills jobs and entry-level employment that provides a path to these jobs
- Identify new classifications or skills sets for which training is needed and provide direction on content requirements
- Review new and existing career pathway programs (including the one's under Item III, below), which have been developed throughout the region, and provide input on the relevance of content and what changes are necessary to reflect current skill needs of business
- Determine the frequency with which regional sector pathway program content should be reviewed to ensure it remains relevant

II. How Existing Programs Work to Meet Industry Needs: The aforementioned process for initiating more intensive and on-going industry engagement reflects processes currently being piloted under a state-funded SlingShot initiative serving the entire region. The project is focused on several of the SJVAC priority sectors, including: advanced manufacturing, construction, water technology, industrial agriculture, and transportation/logistics. Partners (including community colleges, campuses of the California State University system, the WDBs, organized labor, and business) are working to streamline training curriculum, while ensuring that it meets the skill requirements of industry. Under the project, SlingShot partners are working on:

- Analyzing existing curriculum through the “eyes of businesses”
- Organizing “stackable” credentials
- Standardizing assessment(s) and training
- Aligning existing training resources to meet industry sector needs.
- Creating new apprenticeships
- Replicating “best practices”

The Community College SlingShot consortium has begun to lay the groundwork to establish policies and practices for Prior Learning Assessments and Competency-Based Education in an effort to expedite the rate at which students complete programs and obtain certificates and/or degrees, and eventually enter into the workforce.

III. Promising Practices within the Region: Demand-driven, career pathway programs have been developed throughout the region. The majority of these operate within one or two workforce areas, with some taking place across large portions of the RPU. While, as indicated, there has been various levels of industry engagement on these programs, all reflect skill needs expressed by business. Under the planned industry engagement protocol, these programs will be presented for further review to determine if they remain up to date and suitable as regional pathway programs.

Advanced Manufacturing: Several Central Valley manufacturers including JBT Food Tech, the Ardagh Group and Constellation Brands requested that an accelerated welding/blue print reading training program be established. The Madera County WDB, in conjunction with the Merced Community College Center, Reedley College and Fresno City College developed an accredited, year-long career pathway program which will complete its first cycle in the summer of 2017. The program includes on site apprenticeships at JBT and Ardagh.

Construction (including Public Infrastructure): In connection with this sector, various career pathway programs have been implemented on a regional basis. These include:

Multicraft Construction Training: Under a grant funded by the California Workforce Investment Board and Central Valley Infrastructure Employment Project (CVIEP), this program was implemented to fill critical workforce skills gaps by creating opportunities for job seekers to earn industry-valued credentials and enter into an apprenticeship or direct employment in the energy efficiency or construction sector. Merced WDB has conducted a total of five multi-craft pre-apprenticeship training modules that have taken place in Modesto: two jointly with the Stanislaus WDB, one in partnership with the San Joaquin Valley WDB and two independently. Trainings have also been carried out in other regions of the Central Valley RPU. As candidates graduate, many have been scouted by several solar field businesses; one of which is preparing to construct the largest such field in the Central Valley.

The Pre-Apprenticeship Training Programs in the Crafts trades is coordinated through the Fresno WDB and extends throughout the Central Valley. The curricula includes a six week program of exposure to the varying Craft Trades, industry-recognized OSHA-10 and First Aid/CPR certification, work maturity skills and physical training. Successful completers are allowed to bypass early screening processes when applying for acceptance into the trade unions.

Building Inspector Technology (BIT): The Deputy County Building Official in the Merced County Public Works Building Division communicated to representatives of the Merced County WDB and Merced College that there is need for more trained building inspectors. The final result of that initial conversation is a new program to prepare candidates for the State of California Residential Building Code Certification Exam, which enables individuals to qualify for entry-level jobs. A Certified Inspector has opportunities with the local and State government, private consulting firms and business, as well as, real estate firms and can also work in inspection testing labs and as an entry-level Permit Counter Technician and Plan Checker. The median annual wage for construction and building inspectors was \$57,340 in May 2015 and \$27.57 per hour. Employment of construction and building inspectors is projected to grow 8 percent from 2014 to 2024, about as fast as the average for all occupations. (*US Bureau of Labor Statistics*)

Energy/Green Energy: While high speed rail, solar and wind energy are all hot topics related to energy, the majority of jobs available at present exist within the construction arena. More outreach to and engagement with energy sector leaders will precede planning and development of regional sector pathway programs.

Healthcare: Merced County WDB offers the following examples of demand-driven sector pathway programs:

Health Coaches: Under an Accelerator 2.0 Grant received from the State, more than a year was invested in developing this project. The WDB was approached by the Livingston Community Health Services seeking resources to train Medical Assistants (MAs) to become Health Coaches to respond to emerging needs in the growing health sector. A similar project had taken place in Southern California and successful replication seemed achievable. This training is an excellent example of a “stackable credentials,” building on workers’ knowledge and qualifying them for higher-skilled and higher-paying jobs.

The Merced County Health Coaching and Behavioral Health Career Ladder Project – Medical Assistant to LVN: Under the new Accelerator 4.0 Grant received from the State, this project is a joint effort among the WDB, the Livingston Community Health Services, Merced County Department of Mental Health, and UC-Davis Betty Moore School of Nursing Training. This project aims to create an upward career path for Medical Assistants and also to train LVNs on how to supervise and better incorporate Health Coaches into their teams.

Transportation and Logistics: The San Joaquin County WDB has been at the forefront of developing career pathway programs in the transportation and logistics sector, working closely with large businesses in the county. Existing programs include:

Caterpillar Maintenance Mechanic Program at San Joaquin Delta College: The Caterpillar Maintenance Mechanic Program at San Joaquin Delta College is a public/private regional collaborative training program. Training is provided at San Joaquin Delta College and students are referred by employers throughout the Central Valley. These employers provide the operating vehicles to facilitate the training and the hands-on experience. Additionally, students go through an apprenticeship program, spending time both in the field and in the classroom.

Electric Vehicle Repair and Maintenance - Regional Transportation Center: This program has been developed through a partnership among the San Joaquin Regional Transit District, San Joaquin Delta College, the San Joaquin County WDB and the State Department of Industrial Relations. The Regional Transportation Center will soon become an on-site training facility. San Joaquin Delta College will be conducting the training at the Regional Transportation Center using the state-of-the-art equipment, tools and hybrid and electric vehicles (uses). The site will be a centralized training hub for Northern Transportation Districts and organizations that will refer students and participate in an apprenticeship program currently under development by the State Department of Industrial Relations. The Regional Transportation Center will refer its own job candidates and employees for training. San Joaquin Delta College, the WDB, various transit facilities from the Central Valley and the Bay Area will also refer students.

IV. Support for Existing and Planned Sector Pathway Programs: While the structured regional industry engagement process described above is in its early stages, much work is currently being done by local WDBs and sub-regional groups made up of the WDBs, the community colleges, business, economic development and other partners. This includes activity on the regional SlingShot program.

D. Industry-Valued Credentials

The regional planning guidance requests information about the status of industry-valued and recognized credentials, along with a description of the processes that were used by industry to determine their value. This topic is at the forefront of the Central Valley's regional workforce planning discussions. Industry is being engaged by system partners around this issue, business has begun to provide input and, based on what has been expressed to date, content of various programs and courses is being examined. However, as is the case with regional sector pathway program themselves, the process for industry's leading discussions about credentials has not been standardized in terms of protocol, including processes for review, ranking and results. And, like processes for developing pathway programs, current processes for determining credentials' value vary from one place to the next and based on who is convening business and stakeholders around the discussion.

The importance of determining industry-valued and recognized credentials has become understood by many business and industry leaders and system stakeholders. Discussions on this topic have begun and the issue has been a central topic during the process leading to the development of the Regional Plan. Still, much work remains. While credentials are being earned and individuals with these credentials are being hired in the fields for which they trained, the value of credentials in decisions to hire is not abundantly clear. The information that follows describes how the regional partners are coalescing around this topic, what information from industry and stakeholders has been gathered to date, what plans have been developed for moving forward on determining credentials' value and keeping them current and ensuring their attainment for career candidates and incumbent workers. This is, without doubt, the most aspirational component of the Regional Plan, but one to which the stakeholders are deeply committed.

I. Putting Credentials into Context: As the planning process was initiated, the consultants, local boards and partners relied extensively on the State Plan and state-issued planning guidance to shape the information gathering process. Given the importance being place on industry-valued and recognized credentials, it was decided that the issue would be included as a topic for the regional planning forums, as well as one for individual discussion with businesses. The information that follows summarizes initial discussions.

Initiating the Credential Discussion with Industry and Stakeholders: Three forums were held on this topic: in Madera, Modesto and Visalia. The sessions were attended by representatives of business (including those

representing target industries), economic development, chambers of commerce and individuals from system partners (e.g. education, workforce development) that deal directly with business. The purpose of these sessions was to gather information on industry-valued credentials that currently exist, with the goal of using information as a starting point for subsequent industry-led discussions on how to establish credentials where industry insight is “baked” into the process. While the consultants served as facilitators, every attempt was made for business representatives to lead the discussions. The sessions were enlightening and highlighted the substantial work ahead with regard to the need for deep industry engagement on training content and the basis for awarding credentials. Key input included:

- Credentials are essential for some jobs. In some cases, industry not only values and recognizes credentials, it absolutely requires it. Barbers must be licensed. Truck drivers must be licensed. RNs must have an Associate’s Degree or higher and pass the state registry exam. In fact, business leaders and others identified many occupations (including many “professional” jobs) that require a specific degree, license or certification.
- Credentials are optional in many cases: For other jobs, many indicated that certificates may be required, but they were not universally valued due to inconsistency in performance among workers who held them. Stakeholders commented that inconsistent course content, instructor knowledge and other factors deflate the value of certificates for some businesses. Many agreed that a certificate does not universally equate to skills and competency and that many skilled and competent workers and job candidates do not have certificates.

More Intensive Industry-Led Planning on Post-Secondary Credentials is Needed: The foregoing observations made clear the need for the regional partners (particularly workforce, education and economic development) to implement a structured process for engagement with business on credentialing, which will also serve as a means to discuss key content issues for regional sector pathway programs. The local WDBs will:

- Convene an industry steering committee for each of the region’s six target sectors to discuss work-related credentials. The committees will include a diverse cross section of businesses in terms of company size, location in the region and niches within the industry. Committees may meet on multiple occasions.
- The committees will:
 - ✓ Review and recommend metrics for determining the value of credentials.
 - ✓ Review existing credentials awarded in the region that pertain to their sector and determine their value
 - ✓ Identify credentials that would be desirable for the industry
 - ✓ Develop a process for re-confirming the value of credentials over time
 - ✓ Provide recommendations on course content for regional sector pathway programs and other training that will produce the credentials.

These are enumerated as Regional Plan goals under Section L. Updates to the Regional Plan will include information on industry-valued credentials that result from this engagement process.

II. Existing Industry-Valued and Recognized Postsecondary Credentials and Maintaining their Relevance for Businesses in Key Sectors: As indicated, the partners have not reached a point in the planning process where any specific credential is being officially deemed “industry-valued and recognized.” Presumably, required licenses and degrees will make their way onto this list, but the partners will complete the planned industry engagement meetings described above prior to identifying the list of credentials.

III. Determining the Value of Credentials to Industry: The process that will be used to determine the value that industry places on credentials is described, under Item I, above.

IV. Principal Providers of Credentials with the Region: Section B, Item IV of this Regional Plan provides a description of the principal providers of training and education programs throughout the SJVAC RPU. Given the focus of the Regional Plan on middle-skill jobs (and entry-level employment with a path to middle-skill jobs), the community colleges and adult schools will likely be the providers of training for most credentials. Again, this cannot be definitively stated until the industry engagement on valued credentials is completed.

V. Identifying, Recording and Tracking Credential Attainment within the Region: Because the goal of producing the region's share of the State target of a million industry-recognized credentials over the next ten years applies to the entire system (community colleges, adult schools, 4-year institutions, registered apprenticeships, etc.) and not just the WDBs, the stakeholders will form a workgroup to address the apportionment of goals among local areas and, within each area, the various partners. The stakeholders may look to the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley to reinstate its Higher Education and Workforce Development Work Group to convene discussions around both goals for credentials and the development of a process to track their attainment.

Given the population of the region relative to the state as a whole, it is anticipated that the RPU would be responsible for ten percent of the state goal or 100,000 credentials.

E. Workforce System Accessibility and Inclusiveness

This portion of the plan addresses system accessibility and inclusiveness on two levels. The first concerns the approach used to ensure that a wide range of viewpoints were expressed during the planning process, where the second level describes various ways in which the workforce system makes services accessible to all job seekers, including those with barriers to employment. As with nearly all other features of the plan, information provided represents past accomplishments, the current status of the system and plans for moving forward. Where specific aspirations are described, corresponding statements are found in Section L, which summarizes regional goals.

I. Stakeholder Input on Regional Planning: All stakeholders were invited to and included in planning forums held across the RPU to discuss workforce issues. As described in Section A, individual meetings were also held with representatives of a number of mandatory partners, such as the community colleges, economic development and DOR. The 16 planning forums that were held became a centerpiece of the planning process and intelligence gathering about where opportunities for improvements exist, including increasing system accessibility for individuals with limited English proficiency, the re-entry population, persons with disabilities and others from high need and historically disadvantaged communities. The forums are described in detail below.

Outreach to Stakeholders Representing Target Groups: The planning process has been inclusive by design, with all points of view, experiences and priorities valued and taken into consideration. The eight WDBs reached out (largely through email notices) to community organizations representing target populations. Examples of stakeholders representing the interests of key populations include: Proteus on behalf of farmworkers; Friends Outside for returning offenders; and the Fresno Bridge Academy for disconnected youth. Attachment 8 is a list of all organizations invited to participate in the forums and Attachment 9 indicates all of the individuals who attended.

Insights on System Accessibility: Across the various stakeholder gatherings, many issues were raised and opinions expressed. An unexpected outcome of these sessions was a series of common themes that developed, despite differences in location and composition of participants. Even more interesting is the fact that many of the themes directly reflect or touch upon the needs of those with employment barriers. Themes include:

- The need for English language skills training. While, as noted, opinions varied about levels of need and best training methods, there was widespread agreement about the effects of English fluency on earning potential.
- The value of work experience, internships, job shadowing and other forms of work-based learning for all job seekers, but, particularly, for individuals lacking work history. According to stakeholders, exposure to work not only helps to inform job and career decisions, but has a significant impact on the confidence and performance of individuals in post-training employment.
- Begin career education and exploration early. In fact, according to those working most closely with disadvantaged communities, start it very early. In communities historically disconnected from the labor market, children with insufficient exposure to and understanding of jobs, become adults with the same lack of familiarity. Information about jobs, careers, and key sectors should be contextualized within every aspect of K-12 learning.
- Treat digital literacy as a foundational skill for employment on par with numeracy and literacy.

- Deepen the workforce systems' relationships with CBOs not only as on-ramps, but as partners in removing barriers to employment.

Each of the foregoing approaches is woven into one or more of the goals and action steps that conclude the Regional Plan.

System Stakeholder Forums: Over a six-week period in November and December 2016, a total of 16 forums were conducted, with nearly 400 stakeholders (representing a wide cross-section of partners from business, education, economic development, organized labor, community-based agencies and the workforce system) participating and sharing their knowledge, experiences and opinions. Each forum covered one or more of seven topics addressing critical elements covered by the regional workforce plan: 1) the focus upon priority sectors and career pathways and fostering demand-driven skills attainment; 2) creating opportunities for upward mobility; 3) aligning, coordinating, and integrating programs and services; 4) promoting workers' attainment of industry-valued and recognized post-secondary credentials; 5) focus on quality jobs; 6) leveraging community resources; and 7) system accessibility and inclusiveness.

The forums generally lasted 2 hours and provided participating stakeholders with a brief overview of the regional planning process and background on the session's topic. The consultants acted as facilitators and posed 3 to 5 broad questions to the participants, facilitating discussions to solicit input to inform regional planning efforts. Each of the local boards hosted one or more forums, as outlined in Attachment 7.

The forums were structured around the following five topics:

Sectors and Career Pathways: Participants were introduced to the definition of career pathways as a combination of education, training and other employment-supporting services. Questions posed to individuals attending the forums included:

- What are the "hard-to-fill" jobs and occupations in demand sectors?
- Where are the skill gaps?
- What career pathways exist to help workers enter and succeed in these jobs and occupations?
- What can we do as a community to improve career pathway opportunities?

Pathways to the Middle Class: The facilitators started off these sessions by introducing stakeholders to a key objective of the State Plan - enabling upward mobility for all Californians, including populations with barriers to employment. The emphasis that the State Plan places on job quality was also discussed. Those attending the forums provided responses to these questions:

- What is a "mid-level" or "middle class" job in our community?
- Which "mid-level" jobs are hard to fill due to local skills shortages?
- What skills and prior experience do these jobs require?
- What is the career pathway to land and succeed in these jobs?
- What can we do as a community to see that local people who have major barriers to employment can get on and succeed in these career pathways?

Aligning and Leveraging Workforce and Education Resources: The focus of these forums was on the full range of workforce and training resources, with training being defined in the broadest terms to cover foundational skills, academic skills, job skills (hard skills) and essential skills (work readiness and work maturity skills). Participants shared their thoughts on:

- What education, training and workforce resources does our community currently have?
- Do these resources provide trainees the skills needed for in-demand jobs in key sectors?
- How can we improve the ways in which these educational and workforce resources are used to help all jobseekers (including youth and those with barriers to employment) succeed in the identified, highest priority career pathways?

- How can we ensure that youth and job seekers with serious barriers to employment have access to and succeed on these career pathways?

Industry-Valued Credentials: Building upon the proposition that only industry can determine what credentials it values, the facilitators described content from the State Plan concerning the attainment of credentials by those participating in regional sector pathway programs. Stakeholders provided their responses to several questions including:

- What credentials are currently available that fit the critical career pathways?
 - Do these credentials meet business/industry expectations? How could they be improved?
 - Are methods to get these credentials reasonably accessible to potential members of our workforce with significant barriers to employment? English Language Learners? People with minimum wage jobs? Others?
- How can we improve access to credentials along career pathways?

System Accessibility: For context, sessions on this topic opened with a discussion of populations likely to face one or more barriers to employment and with description of various services they most often need to prepare for work. Stakeholders were asked to consider the following in terms of building a more accessible, inclusive and responsive workforce system throughout the Central Valley:

- Are basic skills training and other pre-vocational services available in sufficient quantity to meet the demands for these services?
- How can workforce and education services be made more accessible to all job seekers?
- What groups are most at risk of being left behind?
- For foreign born individuals and English Language Learners, what workforce and education services are available to address workforce challenges?
- What role do community-based organizations play in providing accessibility to the system?

The forums became a focal point of the regional planning process and a milestone in developing broader and more inclusive regional partnerships. They yielded substantive input both from individuals and organizations that are integral to the daily operations of the system and from those who have little familiarity with it. While commentary expectedly varied from session to session, common themes emerged across the region. Several of these are summarized under Item I, above.

II. Adult Education Block Grant (“AEBG”) Consortia in the SJVAC RPU: There are eight AEBG consortia, representing 81 distinct education agencies, linked to the SJVAC RPU. Some of the districts and institutions within these consortia lie outside the RPU, their boundaries stretching into adjacent workforce regions. The consortia aligned to the regions are: Delta Sierra Regional Alliance, Gateway Adult Education Network, Kern AEBG Consortium, Sequoias Adult Education Consortium, State Center Adult Education Consortium, West Hills College Consortium, West Kern Consortium, and Yosemite (Stanislaus Mother Lode) Consortium.

Participation of AEBG Leadership and Representatives: Leadership from six of the AEBG consortia participated in one or more of the regional planning forums. For the two consortia whose leaders did not attend, member institutions sent representatives. The consultants met one on one with Executive Directors of two consortia: Sequoias Adult Education Consortium and State Center Adult Education Consortium. Input from AEBG representatives was extremely valuable, especially with regard to the capacity of the adult education system to provide vital training for English language learners and job seekers needing basic skills remediation or support to earn a high school diploma or equivalency. Participation of consortia representatives also shed light on the substantial capacity of some adult education programs to provide skills training for high-demand sectors including construction, healthcare and manufacturing.

Review of Consortia Plans: Among the eight consortia, planning documents are voluminous. The SJVAC’s regional planning consultants have reviewed some of the consortia plans (which include AB 86 Plans, Consortium 3-Year Plans and Annual Plans) and have reported that there is significant alignment with the Regional Workforce in terms

of priorities, such as the need for resources and effective strategies for ESL and basic skills instruction. As described in Section J, Exhibit 2 of this Regional Plan includes a list of links to the web page where the plans for all eight consortia can be found.

III. Need for and Availability of Basic Skills Education: Information on the need for basic skills education services is principally available from two sources: demographic data and system stakeholders, including educators and those representing public agencies and community programs that work most closely with individuals needing basic skills training. Data available for the SJVAC RPU indicates that nearly one in five Central Valley residents speaks English “less than very well.” In addition, the US Census Bureau’s American Community Survey data for 2010 – 2014 indicates that 12.8% of the adult population has less than a 9th grade education with an additional 10.6% that have an education levels between 9th and 12th grade, but no diploma. Together these numbers suggest that there is substantial need for services. Those in the field provided mixed input. According to many, structural capacity exists among the network of providers to deliver all the basic education services needed, but financial resources were too few to meet a 100% of the need. Still others reported that some education programs had to publicize their programs to get enough student participation to spend their allocations. While no one would estimate the number of individuals receiving basic skills services in the region (due largely to definition issues), information suggests that programs in some communities have developed very strong reputations and are, therefore, able to attract learners to the basic skills training they need to participate effectively in career pathway training and in the workplace. The partners need to further examine this issue to determine what regional strategies could be developed to ensure programs and resources are aligned with need.

Demography and Languages Spoken in the RPU: The Central Valley is home to a variety of ethnic groups. Non-Hispanic whites accounted for just over half of the valley’s population, and Latinos were the largest minority group. With regard to languages spoken in the Central Valley, although Spanish is the most common language after English, the Central Valley is host to dozens of languages such as Hmong, Romanian, Farsi and Punjabi.

IV. Contextualizing Basic Skills into Regional Sector Pathway Strategies: As indicated earlier, a number of models exist for building basic skills into vocational training programs, and some work-based learning models. One such strategy is Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST), which pairs Adult Basic Education and/or English Language Acquisition instructors with professional-technical instructors in the classroom to provide students with literacy education and workforce skills at the same time. I-BEST challenges the traditional notion that students must first complete all levels of basic education before they can begin workforce training. As new career pathway programs are developed and existing ones are assessed for improvement, the partners will evaluate options to effectively integrate basic skills training into pathway programs.

Strategies to Address Limited English Proficiency (LEP): In the same way that basic skills can be integrated into sector pathway programs, so can English language skills training. A September 2014 Brookings Institution report examined the effect of being non-English speaking on Central Valley residents and offered a number of suggestions for addressing a lack of English fluency. According to the report’s author, English proficiency is the most essential means of opening doors to economic opportunity for immigrant workers. The report’s recommendations for reducing limited English proficiency include:

- Employer-initiated English education programs, particularly in industries such as agriculture, accommodations and food service, and manufacturing, where the percentage of LEP workers is highest.
- Targeting outreach based on the LEP population size, growth and period of arrival, as well as knowledge of languages spoken.
- Instructional innovation enabling LEP adults to access educational tools online and by mobile device.
- The most effective classes and programs combine English education with community integration and vocational training

In working to develop and expand sector pathway programs, the partners will work to identify strategies and opportunities to test their effectiveness. As discussed, stakeholders participating in the planning process remarked

repeatedly on difficulties in recruiting many LEP individuals to English skills training. By implementing more accessible methods of training delivery, some of these obstacles can likely be overcome.

V. Streamlining Access to Foundational Skills: Making basic and foundational skills training easily accessible is a system priority in the San Joaquin Valley. Opportunity abounds and businesses, especially those in high growth sectors, are looking for employees ready to take on the challenges of the workplace. To meet such challenges, workers must have basic reading/communications, math and digital literacy skills. The local boards in the SJVAC RPU will develop a regional protocol to ensure expediency in making basic skills training referrals for those needing these services to accelerate their participation in vocational skills and work readiness training.

Intake and Assessment Process: WIOA is uniquely prescriptive concerning intake and assessment. Programs and funding streams governing system partner programs are much less so. The partners are committed to minimizing and, where possible, completely removing barriers to participation. The Central Valley WDBs will work with partners to identify and adopt strategies to promote rapid access to services for all job seekers, particularly those with barriers to employment.

VI. Ensuring System Accessibility for People with Disabilities: All major system partners providing training (local WDBs, the community colleges, AEBG institutions, etc.) are subject to federal requirements under the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) and provisions of the California Civil code ensuring access for persons with disabilities. All surveyed reported no compliance issues with physical accessibility. Each of the eight local boards is required by WIOA to form a "disability accessibility" workgroup or committee. These workgroups will share concerns, "best practices" and solutions across the RPU.

Access to Training and Regional Sector Pathway Program: Program accessibility is governed by many of the same statutes protecting physical accessibility. However, the partners are committed to more than access. The goal is inclusiveness. WIOA defines career pathways to include counseling to support an individual in achieving his/her education and career goals and indicates that such programs should organize education, training and other services to meet the particular needs of the individual. Under the Regional Plan, this definition will serve the partners well to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to services, that partners will seek to expand programs and strategies such as the use of Disability Resource Coordinators (DRC) who coordinate training and education for staff, organize and facilitate collaborations with local, state, and federal agencies, as well as non-local areas and organizations. The DRC develop strategies to create systemic change to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities. They are currently in place in Madera and Merced counties.

VII. Promoting Regional Sector Pathway Participation among CalWORKS Participants: Each of the local boards works closely with its corresponding county welfare agency(cies). CalWORKS participants are indeed an appropriate target group for regional sector pathway programs. As discussed throughout Section B, which describes both the regional economy and key characteristics of the labor force, the region's growth sectors need talent! No worker is disposable. CalWORKS participants are, almost by definition, reliable. They are parents, which suggests that many are accustomed to managing multiple priorities, operating with limited resources, and making quick decisions – all traits used every day in the workplace and coveted by employers. CalWORKS participants also typically lack extensive resumes. Therefore, they need to bring especially strong workforce preparation to the table in order to compete successfully for jobs. Regionally, the boards will develop and deploy uniform recruitment messaging to broadcast to county welfare agencies to promote the benefits of CalWORKS participants enrolling in sector pathway training. As applicable, local workforce boards will "flag" case files for these participants as being likely to benefit from assistance by a workforce system navigator (see Item IX, below).

VIII. Regional Collaboration to Ensure Support for System Customers: The regional partners are committed to ensuring that a full range of services are available to support every trainee's/participant's completion of his/her services plan, including regional sector pathway programs. In a geographic area as large as the San Joaquin Valley, support services are likely to be managed and delivered by local providers. But across the region, the partners can

agree to a protocol under which comprehensive support is provided to participants enrolled in sector pathway programs. The need for services is typically identified following assessment, when a service plan is developed. At this time, resources are identified to address comprehensive need, including significant barriers to employment. The partners have no expectation that all job seekers will progress at the same pace through services. Some, for instance, will need assistance with basic education services prior to training and others may require the use of assistive technology throughout participation. Under WIOA, participants enrolled in training are assigned a case manager to monitor their progress toward completion of services and to intervene with additional support as obstacles arise.

IX. Incorporating Community-Based Organizations into the Network of Regional Workforce System

Providers: One of the major themes arising during over 30 hours of intensive engagement with nearly 400 stakeholders throughout the Central Valley was the belief that community-based organizations need to play a greater role in the overall workforce system. Several stakeholders have commented on the importance of CBOs to the communities they serve and have highlighted the fact that most community-based agencies were established to address unmet needs. Based on stakeholder input during the planning process, the RPU partners will explore opportunities to better integrate local and regional non-profits into the workforce development system. These opportunities may include:

- Expanding the role of CBOs as on-ramps to the workforce system by enabling individuals to access a full range of workforce information at their sites
- Holding orientations to workforce system services at CBO facilities
- Bringing classes (basic skills, ESL, employment readiness, etc.) to community locations
- Utilizing CBO representatives as workforce system navigators for the populations they represent

X. Creating Pathways to the Middle Class: The system is made up of partner organizations that provide services to respond to a wide range of needs, including basic skills education, demand-driven skills training, support services, referrals to jobs and much more. Most individuals seeking career preparation and employment assistance come to the system for one or more particular services that culminate in the best job opportunity that their new skills and work history can leverage. For some, this will be a middle skill job paying family supporting wages. For many more, including those who are entering the job market for the first time, it will be an entry-level job that will serve as a stepping stone to better opportunities that will become available with experience and the acquisition of more advanced skills. Job seekers will disengage with training programs to concentrate more on gaining or maintaining employment to fulfill short term economic needs. Many people will carry more than one part time job to fulfill basic needs.

While a particular service may have a beginning and an end date, the availability of the system to those who need it is constant. The system's best tool for ensuring that individuals remain connected to the system as they progress from entry-level jobs to better jobs is to heavily promote the multiple on-and-off ramps to additional training and services. Some individuals will enter and exit services many times. The workforce system cannot expect to retain individuals in programs once they secure a job, but can work to ensure that participants are aware of services that are available to support their progress toward higher wages and career goals. A goal of this Regional Plan is for the system partners to develop a protocol for promoting career pathway opportunities for upskilling and stackable credentials.

F. Regional Focus on Job Quality

Job quality and quality jobs have dominated several discussions during the regional planning process. Of interest has been the universal decision by stakeholders not to define quality jobs more precisely than the State Plan and regional planning guidance. Based on California statute, this "definition" advises the workforce system to emphasize "placement in a job providing economic security or job placement in an entry-level job that has a well-articulated career pathway or career ladder to providing economic security." As described below, the partners embraced this notion and recognized that starter jobs must represent a means to an end rather than a dead end. The strategy of the

RPU's workforce system with respect to job quality is directly connected to the region's emphasis on high-demand sectors. These sectors have not only the greatest likelihood of offering career advancement leading to higher wages, companies in these sectors have the capability to grow and expand, enabling them to use revenues, in part, to offer good wages and benefits to employees. Following is a discussion of entry-level and middle skill wages associated with jobs in priority sectors, along with plans to target business where quality jobs are available. In addition, the regional partners have identified incumbent worker training strategies with great potential to be replicated throughout the SJVAC RPU, likely in partnership with the community colleges.

I. Employment and Earnings Potential Associated with Target Sectors and Regional Sector Pathways: As discussed in Section C of this plan, the partners have begun a process to work with system stakeholders on the development of career pathway programs that will be implemented regionally. With the next two years, partners expect to have one or more demand-driven sector pathway programs designed for each of the region's six target sectors. Some of these regional sector programs will be based on existing efforts, both regional and locally, such as advanced manufacturing training that is currently under design as part of the SlingShot initiative and the multi-craft core curriculum and pre-apprenticeship training currently in use within several local areas. Other regional sector pathway programs will be those for which planning is only conceptual at this point. Nevertheless, given industry input to date, the partners anticipate implementing training programs that will prepare completers for employment in a variety of entry-level and middle skill jobs including the following.

Earning for Occupations Directly Related to Regional Sector Pathway Programs

Advanced Manufacturing		
Entry Level Occupations		
Job Title	Employed in 2016	Median Wage
Team Assemblers	2,614	\$ 13.07
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	2,078	\$ 21.33
Middle Skill Occupations		
Job Title	Employed in 2016	Median Wage
Electrical and Electronics Engineering Technicians	220	\$ 37.74
Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	503	\$ 17.90
Agriculture (particularly, Value-Added Agriculture)		
Entry Level Occupations		
Job Title	Employed in 2016	Median Wage
Packaging and Filling Machine Operators and Tenders	6,495	\$ 13.63
Farmworkers, Farm, Ranch, and Aquacultural Animals	5,087	\$ 12.88
Middle Skill Occupations		
Job Title	Employed in 2016	Median Wage
Agricultural and Food Science Technicians	719	\$ 17.33
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	71	\$ 21.54
Construction (including Public Infrastructure)		
Entry Level Occupations		
Job Title	Employed in 2016	Median Wage
Construction Laborers	6,702	\$ 16.39

Carpenters	4,698	\$ 21.35
Middle Skill Occupations		
Job Title	Employed in 2016	Median Wage
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	1,719	\$ 21.54
Telecommunications Equipment Installers and Repairers, Except Line Installers	387	\$ 25.78
Healthcare		
Entry Level Occupations		
Job Title	Employed in 2016	Median Wage
Medical Secretaries	5,512	\$ 15.81
Office Clerks, General	5,121	\$ 14.52
Middle Skill Occupations		
Job Title	Employed in 2016	Median Wage
Nursing Assistants	10,291	\$ 12.75
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	5,134	\$ 24.48
Transportation and Logistics		
Entry Level Occupations		
Job Title	Employed in 2016	Median Wage
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	8,101	\$ 12.35
Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	3,688	\$ 15.87
Middle Skill Occupations		
Job Title	Employed in 2016	Median Wage
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	14,868	\$ 18.85
Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians	535	\$ 28.63
Energy (including Green Energy)		
Entry Level Occupations		
Job Title	Employed in 2016	Median Wage
Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers	279	\$ 46.34
Control and Valve Installers and Repairers, Except Mechanical Door	225	\$ 22.58
Middle Skill Occupations		
Job Title	Employed in 2016	Median Wage
Wind Turbine Service Technicians	144	\$ 23.44
Electrical and Electronics Repairers, Powerhouse, Substation, and Relay	61	\$ 38.73

II. Regional Wages: EDD LMID's September 2016 Labor Market Data Summary does not provide aggregate median wage data for the RPU, but does provide the following "median household income" data for each of the ten associated counties.

Median Household Income by County	Median Household Income
Fresno	\$45,201
Inyo	\$45,625
Kern	\$48,574
Kings	\$47,341
Madera	\$45,490
Merced	\$43,066
Mono	\$61,814
San Joaquin	\$53,253
Stanislaus	\$49,573
Tulare	\$42,863

The data does not indicate the number of wage earners in a given household.

III. Emphasis on Quality Jobs: All boards within the region prioritize training and employment preparation activities leading to jobs in high-growth and other demand industries. This reflects a commitment to quality jobs, as the target industries each boast career paths to well-paid middle skill jobs, which have entry-level employment opportunities that serve as on-ramps. Plans to emphasize quality jobs are described below.

Reaching Regional Consensus on a Quality Jobs Focus: Stakeholders engaged in the planning process, including those representing individuals with barriers to employment, generally agreed with the language of the state statute pertaining to “good jobs.” They did offer a number of suggestions that helped frame the issue toward the development of regional goals. As a baseline, there was broad agreement that jobs into which partners place participants should pay a self-sufficiency wage, even for first time workers. Generally, the job characteristics that stakeholders believe speak to quality are: good wages (family supporting); benefits; flexibility; stability; advancement potential; and fulfillment/likeability. Acknowledging that job quality is not a fixed concept, there was significant agreement that entry-level jobs demonstrate quality when there are discernable next steps for training and skills acquisition that enable workers to move up and earn better wages.

Current Efforts by Local Boards to Focus on Quality Jobs: The system partners, including local WDB’s, community colleges and other workforce and training providers currently have relationships with business (including many large employers and business where workers are represented under collective bargaining agreements) that offer good wages and career opportunities. Jobs with such companies are the most competitive and workers with a combination of the best experience, most training, recognized credentials, and demonstrable skills are those who are hired. Specific actions the partner will take with regard to prioritizing jobs with good wages and benefits and increase opportunities for all job seekers include:

- Providing training that produces workers with high demand skills
- Working with organized labor, industry associations and others to identify companies that pay competitive wages, provide benefits and offer opportunities for career advancement.
- Building relationships with identified companies to promote their understanding of the value of training and credentials that the system’s candidates possess. Also, work with these businesses to understand where entry-level on-ramps exist to position workers for advancement to higher paying jobs.

IV. Incumbent Worker and Career Pathway Strategies: Many of the partners have substantial experience in working with employed individuals to retrain in new skills or otherwise upgrade their skill sets. Expanded use of these strategies within the region will bolster the system’s ability to move workers from entry positions to middle-skill jobs paying higher wages. Progress in this area and plans to increase incumbent worker training are described below.

Current Regional Initiatives: Several of the local boards are working with incumbent workers on a project-by-project basis. However, Tulare County has implemented an incumbent worker initiative that is gaining momentum and holds

promise for creating opportunities for new hires, as current workers upgrade skills and move to higher positions. UpSkill Tulare County builds upon the Aspen Institute’s “UpSkill America” vision, encouraging businesses to invest in the existing workforce, which, in turn, is likely to improve internal career ladders and makes career pathways more visible. UpSkill represents a shift from the typical WIOA strategy of trying to fill higher skilled openings (“good jobs”) with recently trained unemployed individuals to filling these positions with entry-level workers currently employed by the business. A benefit of this approach, as workers move up, is often the creation of entry-level openings that require little or no training for new workers. UpSkill is gaining traction with Tulare County businesses that have expressed that they prefer to hire from within for skilled positions, as current workers have generally demonstrated their value and are familiar with company culture.

Under the UpSkill initiative, Tulare County is currently focusing on 3 priority sectors: Health Care; Logistics; and Manufacturing. At present, training for incumbent workers is being provided in cohort format by the Training Resource Center at College of the Sequoias and includes: Essential Workplace Skills: First Line Supervisor Training, and Advanced Technical Skills (customized by industry need). Additional training options for incumbent workers, including work-based learning, may soon be offered to broaden the interest of businesses in the UpSkill initiative. Tulare County is using a combination of WIOA Incumbent Worker Training (IWT), ETP, and other specialized funding to pilot the UpSkill initiative.

Expanding Regional Capacity for Incumbent Worker Training: All other local boards have expressed interest in the UpSkill model. Working through the CCWC structure the boards are committed to developing a protocol for rolling out the initiative throughout the region, and to develop common processes that would enable the initiative to be marketed under a uniform message across the entire Central Valley.

G. Recording and Tracking Training-Related Employment
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Within federally-funded workforce development programs, identifying, recording, tracking and reporting of training-related placements has long been a practice at the local level no matter the requirements of U.S. DOL performance measures or statewide reporting systems. Determining whether jobs secured by participants are within the field for which they trained, provides workforce administrators and staff critical information in several areas, including the value of training provided, true labor market demand and the effectiveness of career exploration/preparedness participants received prior to training. It also speaks to return on investment, indicating the relative worth of a particular program in terms of producing job ready candidates. As part of the RPU stakeholder’s commitment to a demand-driven training system, the local WDBs will lead a process to examine how training-related employment can be determined for individuals trained by all education and workforce partners, including those not funded by WIOA.

Tracking Training-Related Placement under WIOA: The local boards with the SJVAC RPU currently track and record training-related placements. Within CalJOBS, when an individual enters employment at closure or follow-up, WDBs and their agents are able document employment within the Entered Employment Form. As job information is recorded, the system will confirm if the job is considered “Training Related Employment.” This information is based on Occupation Codes.

Working with Stakeholders to Track Training-Related Placement throughout the Region: The State Plan requires regional partners to determine the extent to which individuals receiving sector-focused and demand-driven training are actually securing jobs in fields and sectors directly related to their programs of study. As stated, this is currently being identified and tracked for those receiving training funded by the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (“WIOA”). As a goal of this plan, the CCWC, in cooperation with the CPSJV, will convene representatives from training and education providers across the region (including 4-year institutions, community colleges, adult education, private vocational, institutions and others) to discuss options for establishing a “denominator” of trainees, the basis for determining training-relatedness and methods for tracking and recording training activities and placement outcomes. The CalJOBS system holds promise for scalability and application to this issue and will likely serve as a jumping off point for dialog among the partners.

H. Adherence to Federal Requirements for Regional Planning

The RPU's Regional Workforce Plan addresses WIOA's "regional coordination" requirements by adopting the goals of California's Strategic Workforce Development Plan and via the following approaches:

Development of a Regional Plan: The SJVAC RPU's Plan complies with WIOA Section 106(c)(2), by describing the partners' approach to the A-H activities and by incorporating the Local Plans developed by the eight local boards as of the Regional Plan.

Regional Service Strategies: Much of the regional planning process has focused on opportunities for implementing strategies across two or more local areas or throughout the entire region. Various regional strategies and approaches being piloted, in development, or under consideration are discussed throughout this plan. These include options for incumbent worker training, industry engagement, training for English language learners, courses for emerging skill areas and more. Goals pertaining to various regional service strategies are indicated in Section L, below.

Development and Implementation of Sector Initiatives: Sector initiatives are underway at the regional level for manufacturing under the RPU's SlingShot initiative. Various local construction, manufacturing and healthcare career pathway programs have crossed boundaries and are being scaled up among multiple boards. Local boards have focused training resources nearly exclusively on targeted demand sectors. New levels of collaboration with the community colleges (arising from SlingShot, long-term cooperation on numerous projects, and this planning process) will result in more demand-driven training for the RPU's six target sectors. The regional goals established in this plan will accelerate development and implementation of regional sector pathway programs and related initiatives.

Collection and Analysis of Regional Labor Market Data: While EDD's LMID has unrivaled capacity with regard to data about the labor market and the workforce, SJVAC's regional planning process serves as testimony to the ability of the regional partners to gather intelligence from the field, including information about industries, businesses, and workers and those seeking employment. As a goal of the Plan, we will explore opportunities to share information with LMID, with the hope that such information will help to inform the data collection and analysis it performs on behalf of the Central Valley. In addition, the RPU will request support from LMID with regard to defining the green energy sector.

Administrative Collaboration: At this stage of regional planning, local boards have agreed that opportunities may exist for collaboration on administrative functions, such as monitoring. Further review is planned.

Collaboration on Supportive Services: Given the vastness of the region and the fact that many support services providers (both public and private) are place-based, regional coordination of support activities and services is a daunting task. However, this matter will remain on the "regional radar" and will be included in on discussions among the partners.

Coordination with Regional Economic Development: Locally, the eight WBDs work closely with their economic development counterparts and, through county-level economic development agencies, connect to the California Central Valley Economic Development Corporation, which serves the RPU counties (absent Inyo and Mono). As the California Partnership for the Central Valley has responsibility for the Regional Industry Cluster Action Plan, it is situated as an ideal platform for furthering discussion on regional economic development. As the manager of a countywide Economic Development Corporation; the Kings County WDB Director serves as the local EDC President, and is the conduit for exchange between the regional EDC and the RPU.

Agreement on Performance Measures: The local boards have completed joint negotiations with the State on performance measures.

In addition, as expressed throughout this narrative, the Regional Plan meets State Plan requirements pertaining to the partners' development of regional sector pathways.

I. Regional Agreements Among RPU Partners

For nearly a decade, the boards that comprise the SJVAC have had a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in place that create a framework for collaboration among the local workforce areas and opportunities to coordinate, especially with regard to special projects and initiatives that cross the boundaries that define the local area. This agreement is currently being reviewed and updated, confirming the value that the boards place on cooperation and bringing greater capacity and resources to the region.

Central Valley Workforce Collaborative Regional Agreement: The purpose of the current MOU among the eight San Joaquin Valley WDBs is to maintain cooperative and mutually beneficial relationships. In 2007, an original MOU created the Central California Workforce Collaborative as “a confederation of equals,” that 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 the 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 level; conduct formal and informal meetings with members present under the CCWC name to discuss best practices; utilize the CCWC name in sponsorship materials for third party organizations; and, project by project, designate local workforce development boards as the “lead agency” for 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.

Having the CCWC MOU in place has not only resulted in the award of numerous special grants and cross-county collaborations in the Central Valley, it has provided a huge head start in the regional planning process.

Expansion of Existing MOU: The current CCWC MOU provides clear parameters under which the local boards collaborate, communicate and work in unison on particular projects and activities. As the WDBs and RPU partners work toward the system goals outlined under section L (below), it is possible that adoption of new procedures and strategies across the region, such as consolidating “Eligible Training Provider List” administration or the use of joint incumbent worker training protocols, could result in the development of one or more separate cooperative agreements among the eight boards.

Other Agreements among Local Workforce Development Boards and System Stakeholders: Each of the eight local boards within the RPU maintains various MOUs and agreements between partner organizations, including the one-stop MOUs prescribed by WIOA. As planning for regional coordination and system alignment continues across the Central Valley, the WDBs will consider the value of scaling up local partnership/collaborative agreements across the region. Discussions around such opportunities may be led by CCWC, CPSJV or other system partners that identify prospects for structured agreements to support enhanced regional coordination.

J. Related Plans and Analyses

The following items are included as exhibits to the SJVAC Regional Plan:

Community College Strong Workforce Program Plan for the Central Valley/Mother Lode Region: The Plan, completed on January 17, 2017 is included as Exhibit 1.

Adult Education Block Grant Consortium: The Plans for the eight AEBG consortia are too voluminous to attach to the plan. However, included as Exhibit 2, is a list of links to the web page where AB 86 Plans, Consortium 3-Year Plans and Annual Plans can be located.

K. Attachments

In addition to the above mentioned reports from education partners, the following materials are included as attachments to supplement information provided within the narrative.

I. Principal Resources for Economic Analysis

- a. Regional Economic Sector and Skills Gap Analysis: CCWC Region, Applied Development Economics, Inc. (ADE), October 10, 2016 (Attachment 1)
- b. Supplemental Information and Analysis, ADE Memorandum, December 5, 2016 (Attachment 2)
- c. *Regional Planning Unit Summary: San Joaquin Valley and Associated Counties*, California Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information Division (EDD LMID), September 1, 2016 – Revised (Attachment 3)
- d. Regional Economic Analysis Profile, EDD LMID, April 2015 (Attachment 4)
- e. *Labor Market Overview: Central Valley/Mother Lode Region*, California Community Colleges’ Center of Excellence Mother Lode Region, May 2016 (Attachment 5)
- f. San Joaquin Valley Regional Industry Cluster Analysis and Action Plan, Applied Development Economics, September 2012 (Attachment 6)

II. Workforce System Stakeholder Forums

- a. List of Forums – Dates, Topics, Locations (Attachment 7)
- b. List of Individuals/Organizations Invited to Forums (Attachment 8)
- c. List of Individuals/Organizations that Attended Forums (Attachment 9)

III. Regional Agreements

Central California Workforce Collaborative Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (Attachment 10)

L. Regional Collaboration: Goals and Associated Action Steps

Throughout the foregoing narrative, numerous strategies, approaches and processes are described as “aspirational” or are represented as planned or “in progress.” On behalf of the myriad of regional stakeholders that have contributed to the Plan by providing recommendation and sharing both resources and insights, the eight LWDBs comprising the SJVAC RPU have established the following 2017–2020 goals for the regional workforce system.

I. Economic Analysis

- a. Collaborate with EDD LMID to develop a clear industry cluster description for the energy sector, including green energy
- b. Establish a protocol for to share “intelligence” about demand industries and other high growth sectors with EDD LMID for the purpose of data analysis to support regional sector pathway programs.

II. Engagement with Economic Development

- a. Revisit Regional Industry Cluster Action Plan
- b. Explore opportunities for stronger regional coordination with economic development

III. Regional Sector Pathway Programs

- a. Implement intensive industry engagement processes to: discuss industry needs for skills in various classifications, including middle skills jobs and entry-level employment that provides a path to these jobs; identify new classifications or skills sets for which training is needed and provide direction on content requirements; review new and existing career pathway programs (including the one's under Item III, below), which have been developed throughout the region, and provide input on the relevance of content and what changes are necessary to reflect current skill needs of business; and determine the frequency with which regional sector pathway program content should be reviewed to ensure it remains relevant
- b. Following intensive engagement processes, update the Regional Plan to include priority regional sector pathway programs.

IV. Industry-Valued Credential Attainment

- a. Implement intensive industry engagement processes to: review and recommend metrics for determining the value of credentials; review existing credentials awarded in the region and determine their value; identify credentials that would be desirable for each target industry; and develop a process for re-confirming the value of credentials.
- b. Following the intensive engagement process, update the Regional Plan to include industry-valued credentials linked to regional sector pathway programs
- c. Credential attainment: Form a workgroup to address the apportionment of goals among local areas and, within each area, the various partners.

V. System Accessibility and Inclusiveness

- a. English language skills training: convene a workgroup to develop strategies around the following challenges and issues: communicating the value of English language skills acquisition in terms of employment opportunities; making services accessible in terms of location, schedule and instructional methods; broadcasting the availability of programs and services; linking language skills to work requirements, and; offering various on-ramps to beginning, intermediate and advanced English skills training.
- b. Develop a regional protocol: Expand use of work experience, internships, job shadowing and other forms of work-based learning.
- c. Develop a regional protocol: Promote early career education and exploration via K-12 system.
- d. Develop a regional protocol: Treat digital literacy as a foundational skill for employment on par with numeracy and literacy.
- e. Survey workforce system partners regarding the availability of resources to support needed levels of basic skills training.
- f. Work with education partners to evaluate options for integrating basic skills training (including ESL) into regional sector pathway programs.
- g. Develop a regional protocol: Ensure expediency on referrals to basic skills training.
- h. Develop a regional protocol: Ensure rapid access to services.
- i. Examine opportunities to enhance the role of CBOs in the workforce development system.

VI. Focus on Job Quality

- a. Provide training that produces workers with high demand skills.
- b. Work with organized labor, industry associations and others to identify companies that pay competitive wages, provide benefits and offer opportunities for career advancement.
- c. Build relationships with identified companies to promote their understanding of the value of training and credentials that the system's candidates possess.

- d. Work with these businesses to understand where entry-level on-ramps exist to position workers for advancement to higher paying jobs.
- e. Develop a regional protocol for the roll-out of the UpSkill model throughout the region.

VII. Tracking Training-Related Placements: Convene representatives from training and education providers across the region (including 4-year institutions, community colleges, adult education, private vocational, institutions and others) to discuss options for establishing a “denominator” of trainees, the basis for determining training-relatedness and methods for tracking and recording training activities and placement outcomes.

VIII. Administrative and Operational Coordination

- a. Hold periodic regional convening across disciplines, perhaps using a neutral convener.
- b. Explore opportunities for coordination of functions.

IX. Workforce System Development and Collaboration with System Partners: Work with education partners to identify strategies to improve: capacity to receive on-going input from industry; turn-around time to implement new and updated courses; consistency of training content from institution to institution; collaboration with system stakeholders in engaging industry; and, on-ramps for individuals with barriers to employment.