

AGENDA

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE SPECIAL SESSION APRIL 20, 2021 2:00 p.m.





Conference ID: 953 279 466#



AGENDA KERN, INYO AND MONO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE SPECIAL SESSION APRIL 20, 2021

Location: Microsoft Teams

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Dial In: (831) 296-3421 **Access Code:** 953 279 466#

Members: Alissa Reed, Chair Karen King John Spaulding

Leo Bautista Brenda Mendivel Todd Yepez

Teresa Hitchcock Norma Rojas-Mora

Page No.

I. Introductions

II. New Business

A. Local and Regional Plans – Action Item

III. Committee Member Comments

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April 20, 2021

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

LOCAL AND REGIONAL PLANS

Dear Committee Member:

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA") requires the Local Workforce Development Area, which is the Kern, Inyo, Mono (KIM) Counties Consortium, to prepare a Local Plan and the Regional Planning Unit (RPU), which is the San Joaquin Valley and Associated Counties, to prepare a Regional Plan. The San Joaquin Valley and Associated Counties include the counties of Kern, Inyo, Mono, Fresno, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Tulare. Each plan covers Program Years 2021 – 2024 (July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2025) and will be submitted to the California Workforce Development Board (State Board) on or before the deadline of April 30, 2021.

The Local and Regional Draft Plans, including summaries thereof, were available for review online at www.etronline.com and www.americasjobcenterofkern.com. Furthermore, paper copies of the plans were available at ETR and the America's Job Center of California (AJCC) of Inyo County and Mono County. Individuals who did not own computers were able to gain access to the plans by using public computers through an appointment at any of the twelve public libraries located in Kern County, six in Inyo County and seven in Mono County. The websites were easily usable by the public and the public had been provided identifiable public comment links to both the Local Plan and Regional Plan.

The public comment period started on March 16, 2021, and ended at 5:00 p.m. on April 15, 2021. Persons who wished to comment on the draft plans were able to do so during the public comment period by any of the following methods:

Email: WIOALocalPlan@kerncounty.com and WIOARegionalPlan@kerncounty.com

In writing to: Jeremy Shumaker, Administrative Services Officer Administrative Division, Employers' Training Resource 1600 East Belle Terrace, Bakersfield, CA 93307 By telephone to: Jeremy Shumaker at (661) 325-4473

In person by attending a public forum which was held during the KIM Workforce Development Board's meeting on Wednesday, March 17, 2021 at 7:00 a.m. through Microsoft Teams. American Sign Language and Spanish interpreters were available at the meeting.

There were no public comments made to either the Local Plan or Regional Plan.

Therefore, IT IS RECOMMENDED that your Committee approve the 2021 - 2024 Local Plan and 2021 - 2024 Regional Plan on behalf of the Kern, Inyo and Mono Workforce Development Board and further recommend the Chair sign the 2021 - 2024 Local and Regional Plans for submittal to the State Board.

Sincerely,

Teresa Hitchcock

Assistant County Administrative Officer

TH:ms

Attachments

Kern, Inyo and Mono Workforce Development Board

Local Plan Program Years 2021 – 2024



Contact:	Teresa Hitchcock	
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Kern, Inyo and Mono WDB

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I. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 and guidance published by California Workforce Development Board and Employment Development Department, the Kern, Inyo and Mono Workforce Development Board (WDB) has developed a four-year Local Plan covering program years 2021-24. Upon approval by state officials representing the Governor, the plan will be effective from July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2025. This plan replaces the WDB's PY 2017-20 Local Plan and its 2019 modification. While this plan carries forward some of the strategies that have made local services effective and programs successful, it expresses the intention of the WDB to examine and embrace opportunities for improvement over the life of the plan.

The Kern, Inyo and Mono (KIM) Counties Consortium was established by a joint powers agreement among the three jurisdictions. Workforce development activities of the Consortium are administered by Employers' Training Resource (ETR) of Kern County. In accordance with WIOA, ETR's workforce development activities are overseen by the WDB, as outlined in its agreement with the Chief Local Elected Official, the Kern County Board of Supervisors.

For ease of review, this plan generally uses the abbreviation "ETR" when describing the agent leading the workforce system and providing WIOA services. The abbreviation "WDB" is used only where technical distinctions between ETR and the WDB are required. The abbreviation "KIM" is also used in reference to the local workforce development area.

The Local Board's Vision for the PY 21-24 Local Plan

The Kern, Inyo, and Mono WDB will lead the continuous improvement of a local workforce development system that meets the myriad needs of job seekers, workers and businesses. These efforts will be business-led, market-driven, and results-oriented. Through the involvement of community leaders from business, government, education, economic development, and social services, workforce development activities will prepare talent (the workforce) for the labor market (business) demand. Training and other talent development activities will focus on:

- Pre-employment strategies: helping unemployed persons prepare for jobs.
- Employment strategies: helping job seekers secure jobs.
- Post-employment strategies: providing workers will skills to retain employment, pursue advanced skills development and move farther on their chosen career paths.

The activities for businesses will focus on:

- Strengthening partnerships with employers through work-based learning strategies, including on-the-job training, training for incumbent workers, and other customized training models that will help businesses meet their workforce needs.
- Hosting recruitment events, conducting job fairs, and other services to match talent to demand.
- Increased business awareness of the workforce system thorough various forms of marketing.

The local board has identified the following as some of its strengths: board engagement; diverse funding; staff capacity and competency; community partnerships; and availability of a variety of training programs linked to business needs. Challenges include: a limited number of local providers for some services; limits on youth spending; lengths of some training programs; lack of awareness about workforce programs by some in community; and geographic size of region.

The local board believes that it has the capacity to utilize its strengths over the course of this Local Plan to increase training and education opportunities to reduce skill, wage, and education gap for members of the community with barriers to employment.

Linking Workforce to a Larger Regional Agenda

The local Board has made a significant investment in B3K, a regional economic prosperity project that has been coordinated by the Brookings Institute. The Better Bakersfield Boundless Kern (B3K) Regional Action for Economic Prosperity initiative is unique in that it creates a common agenda to identify opportunities for regional prosperity, simultaneously aligning diverse efforts, including workforce development. Rather than focusing economic development solely on traditional metrics, B3K Prosperity prioritizes job quality and access to ensure inclusive economic development and regional prosperity.

<u>The Premise</u>: Despite years of steady job creation based on energy, agriculture, and population growth, the Bakersfield-Kern region lags the nation and peers on productivity, wages, new businesses, and other measures of competitiveness and faces serious challenges to its future vitality, which include:

- Extreme pressure from regulators and market forces on the industries that historically drive the region's economy.
- A lack of quality jobs, and access to them, that enable residents to be self-sufficient and reach the middle class.
- The absence of regional unity, as well as fragmented public-private efforts and investment undermining the region's economic competitiveness.
- Strategies are needed to respond to economic disruptions and regional competitiveness challenges; improve job quality and access for broader prosperity; and organize efforts to attract investments and maximize return.

Key Components: The B3K Prosperity initiative includes:

- New shared principles and objectives for economic development in Kern County.
- Enhanced collaboration among diverse, cross-sectoral stakeholders so the region can collaborate to compete.
- A framework for joint problem-solving, sustained beyond publishing a strategy.
- Tactics, governance, and operational commitments to hold partners accountable.
- Enduring local capacity-building and external network-solving conversations.

Project Outcomes: Anticipated results of the initiative include, but are not limited to:

- An evidence-based market assessment to guide informed decisions and foster problem-solving conversations.
- A detailed roadmap with goals and tactics created by community stakeholders in response to data, filling gaps and aligning individual efforts.
- An operational and investment plan with local commitments to implementation, and near-term priorities to jointly pursue investment from a variety of federal, state and private sources.
- A strengthened community infrastructure and capacity to track progress and proactively address an evolving economic environment.

Role for the Kern, Inyo and Mono WDB: A central feature of B3K are the broad based contributions of many economic stakeholders. The WDB's role in promoting the economic competitiveness envisioned by B3K, like those of many others, is significant and includes:

- Continuing to tie the local board's jobs agenda to larger economic priorities.
- Focus training and skills preparation on demand and emerging sectors that create a pathway to jobs paying middle class wages.
- · Develop and promote career pathways for growth industries.
- Collaborate with business to develop innovation training programs, including workbased training models.
- Expand the partnership with education and other system partners to increase foundational skills, work readiness skills, digital literacy skills, and job-specific skills of all worker through region.

Developing the WDB's PY 2021-24 Four-Year Plan

Development of the Local Plan was the result of ETR's significant engagement with organizations and individuals throughout Kern, Inyo and Mono counties who guide, contribute to, and benefit from workforce system services. A series of community and stakeholders forums were held, as were several "agency-to-agency" discussions with local partners. Developing the plan also involved a process of reviewing and evaluating existing partnerships, services, and systems and identifying areas that can be strengthened. ETR's executive leadership led the planning process on behalf of the local board.

ETR secured support from independent consultants with substantial experiencing guiding local and regional planning efforts. These individuals supported the stakeholder

engagement process and assisted in crafting the content of the plan. Completing the plan took nearly five months, after which it was made available for public review and comment, prior to being forwarded to the California Workforce Development Board for review.

Impact of COVID-19 on The PY 2021-24 Plan

Development of the PY 2021-24 Four-Year Local Plan was affected on several levels by the onset of the pandemic. In preparing preceding plans, ETR representatives, board members, system partners, and other stakeholders have previously gathered in person to discuss and share ideas. These gatherings were replaced by virtual sessions, which, over time, became a familiar means of meeting for all involved. The planning process, which requires extensive dialogue and information, became a bit more arduous given restrictions brought about by the pandemic. Still, all parties met the challenges and contributed to the development of a plan that will guide the KIM workforce system from mid-2021 through mid-2025.

While the content of this plan frequently references the pandemic, most descriptions of activities and services, are described in a "non-pandemic" context. The WDB and ETR recognize that effects of COVID-19 will likely shape our work over the next several years, particularly during the first half of the four-year period. However, describing services as they are typically delivered represents the operational environment that the local workforce system envisions for the next four years as the coronavirus is contained and the economy fully reopens.

II. WIOA CORE AND REQUIRED PARTNER COORDINATION

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

Coordination with AJCC Partners and WIOA Memoranda of Understanding

Over the last five decades, ETR (under various names) has built strong and effective relationships with state and local agencies that represent the one-stop partner programs. Over the next four years, ETR looks forward to further enhancing coordination with each of the workforce system partners.

Overview of Local One-Stop System Partners

Following is a summary of the local/regional organizations representing the nineteen (19) federal one-stop partner programs, with which the Kern, Inyo and Mono WDB has developed MOUs.

Federal Partner Programs	MOU Partner	
Title I Adult	Employer's Training Resource	
Title I Dislocated Worker	Inyo County Department of Health and Human Services	
Title I Youth	Mono County Social Services Department	
Title II Adult Education and Literacy	Farmworker Institute for Education and Leadership Development Kern High Scholl District	
	Delano Joint Union High School District	
Title III Wagner-Peyser Unemployment Insurance (UI)	Employment Development Department (EDD)	
Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation	California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR)	
Carl Perkins Career Technical Education	Bakersfield College, Cerro Coso Community College, Kern Community College District	
Title V Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)	SER – Jobs for Progress, Inc.	
Job Corps	Inland Empire Job Corps Center	
Native American Programs (WIOA Section 166)	California Indian Manpower, Inc.	
Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers (WIOA Section 167)	Employer's Training Resource	
Jobs for Veterans State Grants	Employment Development Department (EDD)	

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

Memoranda of Understanding with System Partners

The most recent MOU between the one-stop partners serving the Kern, Inyo, and Mono Counties Workforce Development Area and the Kern, Inyo, and Mono Counties Workforce Development Board was signed in 2019. The purpose of the MOU is described as:

The AJCC is the local One-Stop Center within the KIM WDA which serves as the recruitment center and training access for local employers and job seekers. The AJCC is the cornerstone of Kern, Inyo and Mono counties workforce development system, and its partners are jointly responsible for the workforce and economic development, education, and other resource service programs.

WIOA emphasizes customer choice, job-driven training, provider performance, and continuous improvement. The quality and selection of providers and programs of training services is vital to achieving these core principles.

The parties to this agreement recognize the many benefits to our customers in the collaboration and integration of seamless service and have participated in the development and operation of a one-stop system doing business as the AJCC.

The administrators of the participating AJCC Partners have been granted general authority from their governing boards to work with other agencies in the community and to define their roles in the delivery of services as reflected herein.

It is understood that full implementation of the proposed system may require further approvals from governing boards and/or legal counsel for contracts, leases and/or sub-grant agreements.

With regard to a vision for the partnership, the MOU states:

The partners are committed to a locally-driven system which develops partnerships, and provides programs and services to achieve three main policy objectives established by the California Workforce Development Strategic Plan, which includes the following:

- Foster demand-driven skills attainment;
- · Enable upward mobility for all Californians; and
- Align, coordinate, and integrate programs and services.

These objectives will be accomplished by ensuring access to high-quality AJCC that provide the full range of services available in the community for all customers seeking the following: Looking to find a job; building basic educational or occupational skills; earning a postsecondary certificate or degree; obtaining guidance on how to make career choices; and seeking to identify and hire skilled workers.

Coordination with AJCC Partner Programs

The following information summarizes the ways in which the ETR and the local workforce system collaborate with organizations managing the federally mandated one-stop partner programs. Opportunities for further enhancing the workforce system's collaboration with the partners are summarized in Section V of this plan.

<u>WIOA Title I – Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs</u>: The three formula-funded programs are administered by ETR and overseen by the WDB. Services are delivered through an extensive network of comprehensive, affiliate, and specialized America's Job Centers of California (AJCCs).

WIOA Title II – Adult Education and Literacy: The Kern Adult Education Consortium operates WIOA Title II programs. The consortium includes: Kern Community College District, Kern County Office of Education (Superintendent of Schools), Kern High School District-Adult School, Porterville Adult School, Delano Adult School, Mojave Adult School, McFarland Adult School, Wasco Adult School, Tehachapi Adult School, Muroc Joint Unified School District, Sierra Sands Unified School District, Inyo County Office of Education, and Mono County Office of Education. ETR attends the monthly Adult Education Consortium meetings and provides regular WIOA program updates. Kern Community College District, Kern County Superintendent of Schools and the Kern High School District have representation on the WDB and provide input on coordination with workforce development activities. Title II programs focus on helping adults to increase their basic education skills; gain support in attaining a secondary school diploma or prepare for an equivalency exam; and, for English language learners, improving reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension skills in English.

<u>WIOA Title III – Wagner-Peyser</u>: The California Employment Development Department (EDD) administers and staffs the Wagner-Peyser Program, which is a key partner program, providing connections to jobs, support for AJCC operations and workshops for participants. EDD staff are co-located at the AJCCs providing a wide range of functions, including providing staffing for the Resource Room. EDD leads various a job club and workshops for AJCC customers including sessions providing instruction on developing resumes and preparing for interviews.

<u>WIOA Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation</u>: The California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) has staff co-located at the three comprehensive AJCCs. Coordination between Title I, Title IV, and other workforce system partners and programs includes: cross referrals of applicants and participants between ETR and DOR staff when an individual with a disability is determined to need the services of one of both organizations; coenrollment and co-case management of participants; collaboration in efforts to increase the availability of competitive integrated employment (CIE) opportunities for individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities, as outlined in the CIE local partnership agreement in which the ETR's AJCCs are listed as a community partner; DOR advises the ETR on accommodation issues and assistive technology; DOR has provided various training sessions for ETR staff and system partners.

<u>Carl Perkins Career Technical Education</u>: receives Perkins funds to support development and delivery of career technical education programs, which includes Bakersfield College and Cerro Coso Community College, as represented by Kern Community College District and Taft College.

<u>Title V Older Americans Act</u>: The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is operated by SER – Jobs for Progress, AJCC staff and system partners refer individuals 55 years and older to the program when subsidized employment opportunities through SCSEP appear to be a good option for an individual's transition back into the labor market.

<u>Job Corps</u>: Job Corps is the largest nationwide residential career training program in the country. The program helps eligible young people ages 16 through 24 complete their high school education, trains them for meaningful careers, and assists them with obtaining employment. ETR collaborates directly with the Inland Empire Job Corps Center.

Native American Programs (WIOA Section 166): ETR has a long history of working with California Indian Manpower Consortium (CIMC) to assist Indians and Native Americans in accessing workforce development services and employment opportunities. CIMC offers job search, OJT, classroom training programs, work experience, career planning, supportive services, occupational and literacy skills, and entrepreneurial skills training. Native American customers seeking services through the AJCCs may be referred to CIMC for additional assistance.

Migrant Seasonal Farmworker Program (WIOA Section 167): ETR is the WIOA Section 167 grantee for the local area and, in 2020, successfully competed for the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grant for another four years. The NFJP grant is well-integrated into the One-Stop delivery system in Kern County. Additionally, due to ETR's unique position as the recipient of WIOA Title I funding expanded services, leveraged funding, and increased opportunities are available for farmworkers. ETR has bilingual staff, including many with farmworker backgrounds, that work on this program and assist clients.

<u>Veterans</u>: EDD administers this program and designated Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER) Specialists are stationed at the comprehensive AJCC in Bakersfield to assist veterans seeking employment.

Youth Build: There is no Youth Build Program in the local workforce development area.

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

<u>Community Services Block Grant</u>: CSBG programs are administered by the Community Action Partnership of Kern (CAPK). The organization provides an integrated network of services as the official anti-poverty agency for Kern County.

Housing and Urban Development Employment and Training Program: ETR collaborates with the Housing Authority of the County of Kern to provide its customers with access to workforce development services. The Housing Authority is an independent, local government agency providing safe, affordable housing to thousands of Kern County residents through special programs serving families, individuals, senior citizens, Veterans, the disabled, homeless persons, farm workers and emancipated foster youth.

<u>Unemployment Compensation</u>: Many unemployed customers visit the centers to file unemployment insurance (UI) claims using the Resource Room. ETR and other partners support EDD staff in sharing information with customers about applying for UI. AJCC customers are currently referred to a phone number or online unemployment insurance (UI) assistance. ETR is working with EDD to expand services for UI customers at the AJCC. EDD intends to provide a UI Navigator at the comprehensive center in Bakersfield.

<u>Second Chance</u>: Latino Coalition for Community Leaderships operates a Reentry Employment Opportunities program that is authorized under the Second Chance Act.

<u>Temporary Assistance for Needy Families/CalWORKs</u>: ETR and the Kern County Department of Human Services work closely together in providing workforce develop and employment services for CalWORKs recipients. Collaboration on the CalFresh Employment and Training Program is described in Section II.A of this Plan.

Partners' Efforts to Collaborate on Co-Enrollment and Case Management

WIOA and state guidance encourage delivery of services across multiple partner programs. Co-enrollment enables local workforce systems to leverage resources from various fund streams to address the needs of participants. ETR works with one-stop

system partners and other local stakeholders to identify resources best suited to participants needs. Job seekers may receive assistance from various providers to achieve their training, employment and career goals.

Co-Enrollment of Job Seekers Across Programs

ETR and one-stop system partners, including those co-located at the AJCCs, often coenroll customers in two or more programs. While WIOA participants have been coenrolled with virtually all partners, programs with which job seekers are most frequently co-enrolled include:

<u>WIOA Title II AEFLA</u>: Participants in WIOA Title I programs who need basic skills training and other forms of educational support are referred to local education agencies operating Title II programs.

WIOA Title IV Rehabilitation Act: For many individuals co-enrolled under the WIOA Title I and Rehabilitation programs, WIOA supports career services and training while DOR addresses needs for support services and accommodations.

<u>Trade Adjustment Assistance</u>: Many individuals receiving training funded by TAA are coenrolled in WIOA for case management and job placement assistance.

<u>Carl Perkins</u>: WIOA participants may receive Perkins-funded training from community college partners.

<u>Unemployment Insurance</u>: Individuals connecting with the AJCCs to register for UI often become aware of and enroll in WIOA services.

Co-Case Managing Co-Enrolled Customers

Case management is integral to participant success and that of the overall one-stop system. When participants are co-enrolled, partners ensure that that their component of service delivery and case management are coordinated with the those of other partners and that a process for effective communication has been established. All partners serving a single participant must work to ensure that services being provided are non-duplicative and that appropriate progress against the participant's goals are being met.

Cross Training

Over the last four years, ETR has devoted significant time and resources to organizing and facilitating cross training among all local one-stop system partners, including frontline staff who work directly with clients. Knowledge of services, funding, eligibility criteria, and other features of partner programs makes ETR staff better able to identify where coenrollment with other programs may provide crucial benefits to clients.

Using Technology to Manage Cross Referrals

ETR is now a local partner in the use of the Unite US, a technology solution which streamlines referrals for social needs to organizations providing direct services. By electronically linking an individual's entire "care team" to coordinate services, the burden is removed from the individual to navigate much needed services for themselves. Unite Us has been adopted by the Kern Community Care Network to create efficient linkages among healthcare providers, social services agencies, and local community organizations throughout Kern County that provide services vital to underserved populations

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

ETR administers a network of comprehensive, affiliate and specialized AJCC locations which are spread out to cover the KIM Consortium's 21,522 square miles. Given the vastness of the service area and the importance of reaching individuals and businesses in remote locations, ETR uses various strategies to connect customers with WIOA and other one-stop system services.

Remote Services Locations

For ETR, remote locations are considered communities that are not within reasonable commuting distance of Bakersfield and other population centers of Kern County. Through one comprehensive and 8 affiliate AJCCs, the WDB ensures that services are available throughout the region. Remote AJCCs include:

<u>In Kern County</u>: Ridgecrest AJCC (a comprehensive center) and Lake Isabella, Tehachapi, Mojave, Taft, and Shafter affiliate AJCCs.

In Inyo County: Bishop affiliate AJCC.

In Mono County: Mammoth Lakes and Walker affiliate AJCCs.

Another means of reaching individuals in remote areas, including those living in agricultural communities, is a mobile unit owned and operated by ETR's contractor Proteus, Inc. The Mobile Unit is equipped with computers, printers and Internet (wi-fi) to assist all AJCC partners, particularly those who serve residents in rural areas.

Current Use of Technology to Enhance Service Delivery to Remote Locations

AJCC resource rooms at all remote locations are equipped with computers, printers and internet. Online services available from any location include orientation, employment-related workshops, and training videos. Video conferencing services enable customers to communicate with staff and to participate in training, workshops, and other presentations.

Kern, Inyo and Mono WDB

Other electronic systems used to support communications with remote locations include CalJOBs, the Unite Us electronic community referral system (described above), and distance learning through approved programs. ETR's website includes job listings, descriptions of all WIOA services, links to partners services, and access to various social media postings on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn.

As outlined in Section V of the Local Plan, ETR and the system partners have prioritized efforts to enhance the availability of online services to improve access for all current and potential customers, including those in remote communities.

Coordination of Workforce Activities and Support Services

Supportive services are provided to WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker Program participants as necessary to enable them to participate in career services and/or training. WIOA funds may be used for supportive services when such services are not available from other programs.

Determining Participants' Needs for Support Services

At the intake/eligibility appointment, supportive services needs are addressed and documented on the WIOA initial assessment form. Supportive services needs are again addressed as participants begin training and as they begin job search, since needs may change. Any adjustments are noted on the supportive service referral form. ETR has published a Supportive Services policy explaining types of support services that are available and the maximum costs allowed. Pre-requisites for supportive services include:

- A Readiness Assessment is completed.
- Completion of training program requirements are verified.
- Case Managers assess participant needs on a case by case basis once they are in job search.
- Once employed, job placement needs are assessed.

Service Available to Address Participants Needs and Barriers

Services that are frequently provided using WIOA Title I or special project funds include:

<u>Transportation</u>: Clients may be eligible for transportation assistance to enable their participation in WIOA activities. Transportation expenses available to eligible WIOA clients are limited to usual and customary public/community transportation, such as a bus line or personal vehicle. Additionally, transportation services may include, but are not limited to, cooperative arrangements with any public transit providers, including school districts, churches, and community centers.

Personal Care/Hygiene: Small hygiene kits are made available to give to clients, as needed.

<u>Clothing</u>: Clients requiring clothing must first be referred to the Clothes Closet, unless specific attire, such as a uniform, is required. Clothing required by clients for work and not paid for by the employer (e.g., steel toe boots, uniforms, etc.) may be provided through WIOA-fund supportive services.

<u>Health-Related Issues</u>: Medical expenses related to a condition of employment or training, such as testing for communicable diseases, eye exams, glasses/safety glasses, and drug screens may be provided. Support concerning broader health and medical-related issues is described below.

<u>Tools</u>: Tools required for employment may be authorized upon receipt of a letter from the employer on company letterhead. Clients are referred to pre-selected vendors for tools.

<u>Certifications and License Fees</u>: Allowable costs include union dues for training and employment, and fees for examinations such as High School Diploma, GED, or CBEST.

<u>Miscellaneous Training Expenses</u>: Payments may be made for items such as books, supplies, background checks, and other costs necessary to participate in training/job search activities that are not otherwise included in contracted training costs.

<u>Relocation Assistance</u>: The form of support is available for Dislocated Worker Program participants only. To be considered for relocation assistance, a dislocated worker must be currently enrolled into a WIOA activity and have a written confirmation from an employer of a bona fide job offer.

Services that are generally made through referrals to community-based organizations or public agencies include:

<u>Childcare</u>: Participants are referred to community agencies for childcare services, which may include pre-school and other early education programs.

<u>Legal Services</u>: Clients will be referred to Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance.

<u>Food</u>: Clients are referred to community food banks and similar resources.

<u>Health Services</u>: Uninsured clients with medical problems should be referred to Kern Medical Center or Clinica Sierra Vista and encouraged to apply for the Medical Indigent Adult program (MIA) or other health service programs, such as those that are available under the Affordable Care Act/Covered California.

<u>Housing</u>: Clients requiring housing assistance are referred to the public housing agencies and community-based programs providing emergency and transitional housing.

<u>Utilities</u>: Customers requiring support are referred to their utility provider for enrollment in assistance programs for which they qualify, and to other social service agencies

All supportive service referrals are documented. There is no maximum amount for WIOA-funded supportive services that may be provided during training, except for transportation, which is limited \$400. Up to \$800 in WIOA supportive services may be provided while customers are participating in individualized career services in addition to the amount provided during training. Supportive services are not available during follow-up. When a participant has reached the maximum amount, no further supportive services may be provided without the management approval.

Specialized Grant Resources for Support

In addition to services available through WIOA Title I funding, support resources are available to those who are enrolled in specialized grant activities including the following:

- AB 109 Grant: Allowable services are the same as WIOA Title I formula programs.
- <u>Prison to Employment (P2E) Grant</u>: Allowable services are the same as WIOA Title I formula programs.
- <u>National Health Emergency Dislocated Worker Grant</u>: Allowable services are the same as WIOA Title I formula programs.
- <u>DEA Veterans Grant</u>: Allowable services are the same as WIOA Title I formula programs.
- Rapid Response Grant: Allowable services are the same as WIOA Title I formula programs.
- <u>Disaster Recovery COVID-19 Temporary Jobs Grant</u>: Allowable services are the same as WIOA Title I formula programs.
- <u>Dislocated Worker COVID-19 Grant</u>: Can be used to purchase laptops and for temporary rent and utilities assistance
- <u>La Cooperativa Campesina de California</u>: Provides Housing Grant rental assistance or utilities support up to \$650.00
- <u>CalFresh Employment and Training Program</u>: Allowable services are the same as WIOA Title I formula programs and are available only to individuals enrolled in OJT or Paid Work Experience.

As indicated above, many forms of support are provided through partner resources; federal, state and local government agencies; and community-based organizations.

Physical and Programmatic Accessibility for Individuals with Disabilities

ETR is committed to providing services that offer maximum accessibility for customers with disabilities. By implementing and monitoring the services described below, ETR ensures compliance with WIOA Section 188, applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), and state-issued policy guidance regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology and materials for individuals with disabilities.

Facilities, Technology and Services Supporting Accessibility

All comprehensive and specialized AJCC locations are ADA compliant. Universally-accessible workstations are located at the Southeast and Delano comprehensive AJCCs, as well as the Oildale affiliate AJCC. The stations feature technology to support job seekers with mobility, hearing, and visual barriers. The universally-accessible computer has Windows-based software with assistive technology including:

Screen Magnifier: Magnifies the computer screen up to a maximum of 1500%.

<u>Narrator</u>: Requires the use of headphones and has the ability to read a selection of words or paragraphs.

<u>Speech Recognition</u>: Uses an external microphone for speech-to-text. The built-in MS Windows software works in all applications, including the MS Office Suite, Google Chrome, and Internet Explorer.

<u>Flatbed Scanner</u>: Compatible peripheral device connected to the workstation with capability for individuals with mobility, hearing and visual barriers.

ETR contracts with an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter service. Spanish bilingual staff can translate documents, as needed, and services in other languages are available upon request.

Special Grants to Support Job Seekers with Disabilities

ETR has received several special grants to enhance services for our customers with disabilities, including Disability Employment Accelerator (DEA) grants to help individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to transition into the workforce. With one such DEA grant, ETR was able to prepare participants for employment and place them in jobs in the healthcare and manufacturing industries, using assistive technology. Under another grant, ETR provides employment and training services to 30 veterans with intellectual disabilities; mental health disabilities; and/or physical disabilities, including, but not limited to, being deaf/hearing impaired and/or blind/visually impaired.

Staff Training

ETR staff participates in annual training to improve and coordinate agency services to customers with disabilities. AJCC staff has been trained on the following topics by DOR:

- Windmills Training (Disability Awareness and Etiquette Training)
- Working with Individuals with Hidden Disabilities, Including Mental Health Disabilities;
 and
- · Consumer Self-Disclosure and Related Barriers, How to Address.

In addition, DOR representatives have assisted ETR by identifying the assistive technology needed for each AJCC site located in Kern, Inyo and Mono Counties.

III. STATE STRATEGIC PARTNER COORDINATION

In 2018, the State completed and published a biennial modification to California's Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan for Program Years 2016-19. Within this modification, the California Workforce Development Board identified several new strategic partnerships with state-level agencies and initiatives. Guidance issued by the State Board in 2018 to Local Boards regarding two-year modifications to their PY 17-20 Plans required that WDBs pursue these partnerships within their jurisdictions. In our 2019 modification to the Local Plan, Kern, Inyo and mono WDB described these local level relationships, some of which were in an early stage of development. Following is a summary of the evolution of these strategic partnerships as well as approaches under consideration to further strengthen collaboration with local providers and programs.

Coordination with County Human Services Agency and Other Local Partners That Serve Individuals Accessing CalFresh Employment and Training Services

ETR collaborates with the Kern County Department of Human Services (DHS) to identify ways to increase communication and reduce barriers with shared customers. In addition, ETR w to work with community based organizations (CBOs), service providers, community colleges, and representatives of DHS to increase rates of employment and wage gains for all individuals receiving CalFresh. The partners have the common goal of supporting low-skilled, low-income or low-wage individuals to prepare for and secure sustainable employment.

In 2020, ETR and DHS entered into an MOU describing collaboration between the WIOA Title I programs and CalFresh Employment and Training Services. The MOU defines the responsibilities of ETR to serve CalFresh clients referred by DHS and provides funding to serve these clients. Services include orientation, assessment, supervised job search, workshops, and related activities. ETR monitors participation and provides monthly report to DHS. Unpaid work experience is available to help clients either gain basic job skills or enhance existing job skills. Due to COVID-19, flexibility in service delivery content and structure has been approved.

Under the MOU, ETR responsibilities for the program are to:

- · Accept all referrals from DHS for CalFresh Employment and Training Services;
- Enroll participants in the CalFresh E&T Program, conduct an orientation, and provide DHS a participation report/log monthly;
- · Provide supervised job search services for a minimum 12 hours per month;
- Evaluate CalFresh participants for potential placement in appropriate non-paid work experience programs;
- Provide CalFresh services to participants assigned to the DHS District offices of Lake Isabella, Lamont, Mojave, Taft, Ridgecrest, Delano and Shafter. These are in addition to those provided in Bakersfield;
- Review and verify participants CalFresh program eligibility each month, utilizing the C-IV system;

- Notify DHS by email is a participant is not complying with the CalFresh E&T program activities:
- Refer participants to DHS for questions regarding transportation supportive services, as needed;
- Ensure ETR makes contact with and tracks all registered CalFresh E&T participants;
 and
- Meet monthly with DHS to discuss policy, procedures, and program issues.

While COVID-19 has slowed participation rates in the CalFresh E&T Program, the partners remain fully committed to achieving the objectives of the MOU. DHS and ETR anticipate that participation will increase substantially as in-person services become available and the labor market significantly re-opens.

Coordination with Local Child Support Agency and Other Local Partners That Serving Individuals Who Are Non-Custodial Parents

In 2019, KIM WDB entered into an MOU to establish a collaborate relationship with Kern County Department of Child Support Services (KCDCSS) to support the provision of workforce development services for non-custodial parents (NCPs). Under the agreement, the partners seek to increase communication and reduce barriers to employment for NCPs by installing video-conferencing equipment in kiosks located in certain AJCCs. The purpose of this effort is to:

- Provide a means for face-to-face interviews between child support case managers and ETR customers who are NCPs to discuss specific information pertaining to their child support cases;
- Inform the NCP about what to expect once he or she is employed;
- Review the NCP's case to ensure the child support order accurately reflects his/her current earning situation; and
- Make every attempt to remove any potential barriers that would prevent the NCP from successfully preparing for and securing sustainable employment with the assistance of ETR.

The partnership between ETR and KCDCSS builds on a model described in the California State Workforce Plan. Structured collaboration between local workforce development systems and child support agencies can result in employment for many individuals who are in arrears on child support payments and have enforcement orders. Employed individuals with a steady source of income have a much greater likelihood of meeting child support obligations.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the above referenced MOU has been placed on hold and there plans for installing kiosks have been pushed back to 2021.

Coordination with Local Partnership Agreement Partners Established in Alignment with the Competitive Integrated Employment Blueprint and Other

Local Partners That Serve Individuals with Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities.

The Kern-Inyo-Mono Local Partnership Agreement (LPA) was signed in 2019. In accordance with the State Blueprint for expanding the use of competitive integrated employment (CIE) for persons with intellectual disabilities (ID) or developmental disabilities (DD), the three core partners are the California Department of Rehabilitation (through its local operations), the Regional Center, and special education programs of local education partners. Core partners for the KIM LPA are:

<u>Local Education Agencies</u>: Bishop Unified School District; Delano Joint Union High School District; Kern High School District; Mammoth Unified School District; Sierra Sands Unified School District; and Tehachapi Unified School District.

Department of Rehabilitation: DOR - Bakersfield Southwest Branch Office

Regional Center: Kern Regional Center

Several community partners (which are not party to the agreement) are also named, including KIM AJCCs.

The LPA outlines a process for collaboration in pursuit of Competitive Integrated Employment opportunities. CIE is a setting in which individuals with disabilities, including those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, are employed alongside non-disabled peers and earning at least minimum wage.

ETR participates in quarterly meetings with the LPA partners to discuss coordination of services outlined in the agreement. Core and community partners have worked to identify strategies to better utilize resources to produce improved employment outcomes for individuals with ID/DD using CIE.

Coordination with Community-Based Organizations and Other Local Partners That Serve Individuals Who are English Language Learners, Foreign Born, and/or Refugees

ETR's most strategic partners is serving English language learners (ELLs), foreign born individuals and refugees are local education agencies. The Kern County Adult Education Program Consortium (Kern AEP) coordinates service delivery with ETR and other local workforce system stakeholders. The Kern AEP serves ELLs and other targeted individuals who are in need of adult education services, including English as a Second Language (ESL). The Kern AEP provides needed adult education services to support students' progression toward livable wage jobs and careers in regional sector pathways. The Kern AEP has adopted many of the following retention strategies at Kern AEP members' locations: child care, transportation, tutors, career and college counselors, post-secondary transition specialists, and other individualized supports. Kern AEP consortium members will continue to work with KIM WDB' stakeholders' service and

employment plans when the information is provided by the client/student at the time of enrollment in adult education program services. The client/student also provides the KIM WDB or stakeholders with Kern AEP enrollment information.

ETR is the grantee for the WIOA Section 167 programs serving Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers. Information on these services is described in Section II.A of this Plan.

IV. WIOA TITLE I COORDINATION

The following narrative addresses services, activities, and administrative requirements of the Kern, Inyo and Mono WDB under the WIOA Title I formula programs, along with strategies for staff preparation, training, and ongoing professional development to effectively respond to participant needs.

Staff Training and Professional Development to Increase Digital Technology Skills

Over the last several years, ETR has engaged staff in various training activities that are aimed at improving awareness of and skill in using technology tools and applications. Training and professional development in which staff have participated includes, but is not limited to:

<u>LinkedIn Learning</u>: Multiple topics, including use of various software applications and web-based platforms.

<u>CalJOBS Training</u>: Training has been offered with respect to the wide range of system uses, including data management, case management, job development, use of labor market information, producing reports and more.

<u>Training on EconoVue</u>: This service is utilized by Administrative Analysts and the Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion team for labor market information.

<u>Training on Career Hub's Virtual Service Model (VSM):</u> VSM permits staff to communicate more effectively and efficiently with clients by texting information to their mobile devices. This will allow staff to provide job seekers in the targeted populations with assistance through the use of innovative service delivery methods.

In-house training by lead staff and peer-to-peer trainings sessions have also been utilized to increase the effectiveness of staff in using various software and online tools. The need for and usefulness of in-house training was evident during the early stages of the pandemic when it was critical that all staff, contractors and system partners acquired knowledge and skills to communicate via virtual platforms, such a Microsoft Teams.

As technology is consistently changing and at a more rapid pace than ever before, ETR will assess staff's technology training needs semiannually and implement training based on the outcomes of the assessment. There are abundant resources available for training of this type, including many that are provided online.

Frontline Staff Training and Professional Development to Increase Cultural Competency and Effectiveness in Working with Individuals and Groups that Have Been Exposed to Trauma

ETR and the workforce system partners are committed to promoting equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in all workforce programs and services. Training in cultural competence skills and in working effectively with individuals having experienced trauma would enhance the workforce system staff's skills.

Training in Cultural Competence Skills

While ETR has regularly makes a wide range of training available to staff, extensive training that is specifically designed to increase staff's skills in cultural competence has not been offered. Training that may benefit staff and partners to increase cultural competence includes, but is not limited to the following topics:

<u>Cultural Competence</u> refers to an ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures. Cultural competence comprises four components: awareness of one's own cultural worldview; attitude towards cultural differences; knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews; and cross-cultural skills. Developing cultural competence results in an ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures and leads to a decrease in miscommunication. Cultural competence has a fundamental importance in every aspect of work.

Training in the following areas may also be useful for workforce system staff and partners:

<u>Cultural Sensitivity</u>: To attain the goal of cultural competence, cultural sensitivity must be understood. Cultural sensitivity is the knowledge, awareness, and acceptance of other cultures, and includes "the willingness, ability and sensitivity required to understand people with different backgrounds", and acceptance of diversity. Crucially, it "refers to being aware that cultural differences and similarities between people exist without assigning them a value."

<u>Cultural Identity</u>: When defining the ideas that surround cultural competence training, defining what culture is can help one understand the ideas that shape the concept. Culture is defined as the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization. When looking at culture in terms of cultural competence training, certain groups of individuals should be focused on because of their relevance to society. There are many groups that are marginalized and underrepresented; a few examples of concepts that make up one's cultural identity include: race, religion, nationality, and LGBT. Including identity helps to shape the ideas and themes that go into cultural competence training.

As indicated in Section V, the partners are considering the establishment of one or more workgroups to examine opportunities for improving the ways in which the workforce system promotes equity. These workgroups will likely provide valuable input on both training topics and potential trainers.

Training to Enhance Skills in Working with Individuals Dealing with Trauma

All ETR youth staff are trauma-informed trained and are provided on-going training to assist with their case management skills and customer services skills. Other ETR and workforce system staff, including contractors, may have received some training in this area. As we have considered training that could benefit staff, ETR has identified the following topics as holding promise: understanding and recognizing participants dealing with trauma; types of trauma; causes and impacts of trauma; recovery; and trauma-informed service delivery.

Some training and professional development sessions that ETR has identified that deal with this subject matter include:

- Trauma Informed and Beyond, Engaging Youth in a Trauma Organized Culture
- Bridges out of Poverty
- · Employing the Justice Involved
- Our Journey Together: A Trauma-Informed Approach for Youth and the Workforce System (U.S. DOL-sponsored presentation on Workforce GPS)

Identifying and Securing Training

As the Local Plan is implemented, ETR will continue to work to identify specific training that is available and trainers that are experienced and qualified to provide instruction on these important subjects. Given the California Workforce Development Board's interest in local boards' addressing these topics, it is likely that the California Workforce Association and others will be developing and/or sponsoring training.

Coordination of Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion Activities

ETR has designed and implemented an effective approach to addressing the needs of distressed businesses and workers affected by potential or actual company closures or layoffs. Working with system partners, ETR provides effective rapid response services, which include efforts to avert closures and downsizing and displacement of workers.

Approach to Rapid Response Activities and Layoff Aversion

ETR takes a unified approach to providing rapid response and layoff aversion activities. State guidance suggests that layoff aversion is an integral component of rapid response and anticipates that local workforce development delivery systems will implement strategies that incorporate the two activities when dealing with struggling businesses. The purpose of rapid response under WIOA is to assist workers to quickly re-enter the workforce or to prevent layoffs all together. The intent of layoff aversion is to prevent or minimize the duration of unemployment. ETR will address these areas proactively by following industry trends, identifying sign of businesses in distress, and working closely with employers to identify and implement solutions.

Rapid response and layoff aversion services are provided through ETR's Back to Work/Business Center in Bakersfield, where staff specialize in assisting businesses using

WIOA services and those of the one-stop partners and other stakeholders that provide business services. Business engagement is the primary focus of the center, with rapid response and layoff aversion being ancillary activities, as needs for these services are identified.

The Rapid Response Team is comprised of ETR, EDD and Child Support Services staff, who conduct outreach to businesses and provide Rapid Response/Layoff Aversion workshops and services to affected individuals. The Team uses EconoVue (including the Dun and Bradstreet wellness scale) and specialized business data systems (e.g., JobsEQ) available through the local economic development agencies to identify businesses or sectors experiencing challenges or that are expanding. The team also coordinates with the Economic Development Corporation and the Small Business Development Center to identify and provide specific information on services and solutions that could help a business stabilize, such as Small Business Administration (SBA) Loans, GoBiz programs, reduced utility rates offered by PG&E, and earn and learn training programs available through the AJCC.

A Business Hotline has been established to assist businesses with emergency assistance.

Coordination with Key Partners to Respond to Dislocation Events

ETR and Business Services staff rely on WARN notices, media, and word of mouth for notification of layoffs. Upon notification, the Rapid Response Team contacts businesses to set up a planning meeting where information is provided to the company about services of the Kern Economic Development Corporation, Greater Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce, CSUB Small Business Development Center, the City of Bakersfield and the local workforce development system. Arrangements are made to provide onsite or offsite rapid response orientations to affected workers. Orientation sessions are led by the Rapid Response team. Sessions address Unemployment Insurance benefits, Trade Adjustment Assistance services, WIOA training and career services, and other resources and programs.

Services and Activities Available under WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs

which the local workforce development delivery system operates. These formula programs provide the administrative funding that supports the WDB and the program funds that are foundational to one-stop service delivery. ETR has built a strong network of AJCCs to serve the vast geography of the three-county service area and has implemented services that prepare job seekers for job and careers that are in demand within the local labor market area.

One-Stop Delivery System

Delivery of WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker Program services is coordinated within the fourteen (14) KIM comprehensive, affiliate and specialized AJCCs, which include:

<u>Comprehensive Centers</u>: There are three comprehensive AJCCs: the Southeast Center in Bakersfield; the Delano Center; and the Ridgecrest Center. All are located in Kern County.

Affiliate Centers: The nine affiliate AJCCs include six in Kern County (the Oildale, Taft, Shafter, Lake Isabella, Lamont and Mojave centers); two in Mono County (the Mammoth Lakes and Walker centers) and one in Inyo County (the Bishop Center).

<u>Specialized Centers</u>: The are two specialized centers operating in Bakersfield: the Back to Work Center, which concentrates on employer outreach, rapid response, layoff aversion, and services for displaced workers; and the EPIC Center, which is home to full service workforce development programs for youth and young adults.

WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker Services

ETR's WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and services are employment-focused and targeted to industries in which there is significant demand for talent. While ETR strives to continuously improve services, the local workforce system is highly effective in meeting the needs of business and jobs seekers, offering the full range of services and supports available under WIOA.

<u>Basic Career Services</u>: Basic career services are made available to all individuals, and include:

- Determinations of eligibility;
- · Outreach, intake, and orientation;
- Initial assessment:
- Labor exchange services;
- Referrals:
- Workforce and labor market employment information;
- Performance information and program cost information;
- Information on performance accountability measures;
- Information on the availability of supportive services or assistance;
- Assistance in establishing eligibility for programs of financial aid assistance for training and education programs not provided under WIOA; and
- Information and assistance regarding filing claims under UI programs.

<u>Individualized Career Services</u>: Individualized career services are provided when they are needed for an individual to obtain or retain employment. AJCC staff rely principally on assessments to determine the need for and appropriateness of individualized career services. These services include:

Comprehensive and specialized assessments;

- · Development of an individual employment plan;
- · Group and/or individual counseling and mentoring;
- Career planning (e.g., case management);
- Short-term pre-vocational services;
- Internships and work experiences that are linked to careers;
- Workforce preparation activities;
- · Financial literacy services;
- · Out-of-area job search assistance and relocation assistance; and
- English language acquisition and integrated education and training programs.

Among the most frequently utilized career services provided through the AJCC network are typing test/certificates; job clubs; resume and interviewing skills workshops; mock interviews; training in the use of social media for job search; and basic computer skills tutorials/support.

<u>Training Services</u>: ETR makes available a wide range of training, including off-the-shelf courses from approved providers that have been placed on our Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), which includes 235 vocational training programs through 26 training providers. Also available are work-based learning programs, which our staff customize to job seekers skills development needs and the talent needs of local businesses. On-the-job training (OJT) has become an increasingly popular option. In Program Year 2019-2020, 236 OJT contracts were developed and, in Program Year 2020-2021, approximately 100 contracts have been written to date.

Job seekers can attend in-person or online orientations to become familiar with and receive information about training programs. Once customers complete intake, they must attend a Career Path Workshop and Work Keys assessment, if they are interested in receiving training. The Career Path workshop provides career information, an interest inventory (using a Traitify assessment), and labor market information to ensure that customers make an informed choice about training programs. Training is offered for indemand occupations that meet the needs of local and regional employers. Staff place an emphasis on programs offering industry-recognized credentials, career paths, and connections to work-based learning. Customers select a program based on their interests and qualifications. Most "classroom" training (some of which are delivered through distance learning) are accessed through qualified vendors on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) using Individual Training Accounts (ITAs).

A few training programs are available through contracted classes with providers that meet the WIOA exceptions for use of contract training by specialized local providers. However, under this Plan, ETR is moving away from the use of reimbursement contracts for training services. The last remaining reimbursement contracts for adult training services are being phased out with short-term agreements intended to cover the costs of participants enrolled prior to converting those programs to an ITA reimbursement format.

ETR has published an Individual Training Account policy. Training activities are assessed by ETR using various tools and benchmarks to measure performance. Annually, staff visits selected programs and monitors all training programs for WIOA compliance.

Priority of Service

Local AJCCs prioritize services for Adult Program participants that meet criteria prescribed by federal and state guidance and local policy.

Compliance with Federal and State Requirements: These are the levels/tiers of priority:

- Veterans and eligible spouses who are also recipients of public assistance, other lowincome individuals, or individuals who are basic skills deficient.
- 2. Individuals who are the recipient of public assistance, other low-income individuals, or individuals who are basic skills deficient.
- 3. Veterans and eligible spouses who are not included in WIOA's priority groups.
- 4. Other individuals not included in WIOA's priority groups.

During the WIOA intake process, customers will be assessed for basic skills proficiency, low income, public assistance and veteran status to determine their level of priority.

<u>Local Policy:</u> ETR has established the following local procedures for implementing the priority of service requirement.

When training funds are determined to be limited or there is a waiting list for training, veterans and eligible spouses have priority for WIOA funded training if they meet Adult priority guidelines. If they do not, they will be in the third tier group for priority.

Services and Activities Available under WIOA Title I Youth Program

ETR funds a wide array of providers, programs and services for youth and young adults under the WIOA Title I Youth Program. Together programs for in-school youth (ISY) and out-of-school youth (OSY) comprise a comprehensive and effective approach to exposing youth to the world to work and setting them on a path to prepare for fulfilling careers in demand sectors that will ultimately afford them economic self-reliance.

WIOA Youth Programs and Providers

The centerpiece of local youth programs in the Envision-Plan-Innovate-Connect (EPIC) Program for young adults ages 18-25. The program is operated directly by ETR at the Beale Memorial Library in Bakersfield, which functions as a youth-oriented AJCC. A new stand-alone location is opening in 2021, which will enable the program to expand.

<u>Contracted In-School Youth Programs</u>: There are currently four contracts with local education agencies that operate ISY Programs.

Kern, Inyo and Mono WDB

- Delano Joint Union High School District: WIOA In-School Youth Program
- Kern County Superintendent of School: Jobs Plus! Program
- Kern High School District (KHSD): Quest 4 Success Program
- Tehachapi Unified School District: Comprehensive ISY Program

<u>Contracted Out-of-School Youth Program</u>: There are also four contracted OSY programs, including the following:

- Kern Community College District Bakersfield College: Student Outreach and Academic Reintegration (SOAR) Program
- Kern High School District: KernWorks! Program
- Tehachapi Unified School District: WIOA Out of School Youth Program
- West Kern Adult Education Network Joint Powers Authority: West Kern Youth at Work Program

In addition, ETR contracts with KHSD to provide the work experience component for young adults enrolled in the EPIC program.

Over the active period of the Kern, Inyo, Mono WDB PY 21-24 Local Plan, ETR will competitively procure WIOA Youth Program Services. Issuance of a competitive Request for Proposals is expected in 2022.

Youth Services

WIOA Youth Programs in the KIM Local Workforce Area provide all 14 of the following WIOA-required youth elements:

- Tutoring, study skills training and instruction leading to secondary school completion or attainment of an equivalency credential
- Alternative education
- Paid work experience
- Occupational skills training
- Education offered concurrently with workforce preparation
- Leadership development opportunities
- Supportive services
- Adult mentoring
- Follow-up services
- · Comprehensive guidance and counseling
- Financial literacy education
- Entrepreneurial skills training
- Services that provide labor market information
- Postsecondary preparation and transition activities

WIOA Youth Program contractors directly provide services for most of the 14 elements, while some services are provided via referrals to program partners that have been

approved by ETR. Contractors are required to offer work experience and follow-up services. All programs comply with local WIOA Youth Program policies, such as those addressing supportive services, work experience, incentives, and follow-up.

The EPIC Program features services that prepare young adults for jobs, advanced education, and careers. Services are customized to meet the needs of each participant through the development of flexible individual service strategies. Broadly, EPIC services include:

<u>Career Exploration and Training</u>: Career assessments, workforce preparation, vocational and technical training, educational planning, and financial literacy training.

Internships and Paid Work Experience: On-the-job training, earn while you learn, and entrepreneurial development.

<u>Opportunities to Network with Employers</u>: Referrals to job openings, job fairs and employer recruitments, work-readiness workshops, resume and interviewing preparation, and assistance on completing applications.

Other Services to Increase Job Readiness: Online high school diploma program, peer-to-peer support, counseling and mentoring, computer lab access, typing certificates and GED testing lab.

EPIC has developed strategies and partnerships to promote the program to local youth, and regularly hosts orientation events for students that will be graduating within 60 days. Staff has designed an "EPIC" flyer to be placed in each graduate's diploma holder. EPIC has a strong partnership with the Dream Center, which provides services for youth in or who have aged out of the foster care system. This partnership has resulted in many direct referrals to the program. EPIC also continues to work closely with the Department of Child Support Services to accept direct referrals for parenting youth who are in need of career and educational planning services. EPIC staff is working with the Arel Moody Group, which features an international motivational speaker that supports disenfranchised youth is seeing barriers as assets and "launch pads" to a vibrant and successful future.

Services to Increase the Digital Skills of Youth

The WIOA Youth Program offers a variety of experiences for participants to gain proficiency with 21st Century skills, including digital technology skills. Examples include:

- KHSD currently offers courses that provide instruction in the use of email, Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Microsoft Access. Additional courses are being added that address technology literacy and how it relates to skills required in the workplace.
- Bakersfield College offers non-credit, free-of-cost courses in basic office skills that cover digital literacy topics. Laptops/computers, hotspots, printers, and other technology assistance are available as supportive services.

LinkedIn Learning courses that are being used by Youth Programs to increase youth's digital literacy include: Building Digital Literacy Skills; Computer Basics; and Google Drive Essential Training.

Through ETR's current technology assistance policy, EPIC clients may be eligible to receive laptops and printers. Due to COVID-19, all enrolled youth have had to adapt to the more regular use of technology, as EPIC is has offered services both in person (when permissible) and through virtual platforms. Clients needing a laptop were provided a new Chromebook. In addition to providing a means of participating in training, workshops and other services, this has enabled participants to stay connected to their case managers and peers during group activities. All youth are also oriented to the use of CareerHUB, an internet-based case management tool that allows clients to text and or email their case managers.

Many youth require some training in digital technology skills, while others exhibit strong digital skills based on extensive exposure in school and other environments. More than training, securing hardware and internet access are problems for youth and others in our three-county workforce area. While the pandemic has created some options, as described above, for making hardware available to participants, the need for these resources will exist long after the virus is controlled. Increasing digital access for WIOA and other local workforce system customers will remain be a priority under this four-year Local Plan.

Serving Youth with Disabilities

Youth with disabilities have access to the same range of WIOA activities and services as all other youth and young adult participants. During the Youth Program procurement process, priority is given to programs that are able to effectively serve participants with barriers, such as individuals with disabilities. Such programs and services include:

<u>Bakersfield College</u>: A wide range of services are provided through the college's Disabled Students Programs and Services. The college's Workability III program supports students with disabilities are receiving CalWorks.

<u>Local Education Agencies</u>: School districts operating WIOA Youth programs provide services in accordance with requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which ensure accommodations are provided to participants, when needed.

ETR's EPIC Program collaborates with DOR in serving in-school youth to ensure that they have an effective transition plan following graduation, which includes familiarity with EPIC. EPIC and DOR staff regularly make cross referrals. All EPIC staff attend DOR-sponsored training described in Section II.E. The EPIC site has a universal access workstation that is equipped with assistive technology to support clients that may have visual and or hearing impairments. Reasonable accommodations are made to reflect participants' needs in training and on the job.

Entity Responsible for Disbursal of Grant Funds and the Competitive Process Used to Award Contracts for WIOA Title I Activities

The Kern, Inyo, Mono Workforce Development Board (WDB) is responsible for the distribution of grant funds through ETR, its fiscal agent. The WDB is granted this authority under its agreement with the Kern County Board of Supervisors.

Award of Contracts

WIOA Title I programs for which contracts are awarded are Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth. The local board conducts competitive procurement for WIOA programs and services no less frequently than every four years. In the interim years, the WDB may utilize Request for Proposals (RFP), Request for Refunding (RFR), or sole source procurement processes to award sub-grants and contracts for WIOA Title I activities. The issuance of RFP's are announced through public notice in the local newspaper, the AJCC's website, ETR's website, and the County of Kern's website. Separate RFP's may be sent for specific programs or services (for example, Youth programs), in which case both the format of the RFP itself and the review forms used for that procurement may be specific to that program or service. In addition to publishing the notice as described above, RFP packets are sent to agencies on the local board's Bidders/Mailing list. For each funding opportunity, ETR may hold bidder's conference.

How the Local Board Fulfills the Duties of the AJCC Operator and/or the Career Services Provider or Selection of AJCC Operators and Career Services Providers

The WDB fulfills the WIOA-prescribed One-Stop/AJCC Operator and Adult and Dislocated Workers Career Services Provider functions in accordance with federal and state requirements and guidance.

AJCC Operator

The WDB is required to select a One-Stop/AJCC Operator (hereafter OSO) to support continuous improvement of the system and to competitively procure the operator every four years. In 2017, the Kern, Inyo and Mono WDB approved ProPath, Inc. (ProPath) to be the OSO for local area's comprehensive AJCCs.

As OSO, ProPath's services include:

- In conjunction with the oversight and designated administrative staff of ETR, the OSO coordinates the implementation of a negotiated Memorandum of Understanding and Infrastructure Funding Agreements with all mandated partners;
- The convening and facilitation of quarterly WIOA partner meetings that focus on system alignment, process improvement, and building value-added collaboration among system partners;

- 3. The OSO acts as a liaison between the WDB and the WIOA partners and, as such, is required to submit a written report to the ETR's Director identifying the services being provided and progress made a minimum of ten (10) business days prior to your Board's quarterly Executive Committee meetings and board meetings, and to attend the meetings in order to present the content contained in each written report;
- 4. On a quarterly basis, perform customer satisfaction surveys for all WIOA partners co-located at each of the comprehensive AJCC one-stop centers, and submit a written report detailing the results of the surveys to the ETR's Director a minimum of ten (10) days prior to the Board's Executive Committee meetings and board meetings, and attend the board meetings in order to present the content contained in the written report; and
- 5. Any other assigned duties consistent with WIOA and related regulations, directives, policies procedures and amendments issued pursuant thereto.

Career Services Provider

ETR has served as the principal career services for the local workforce development delivery system since the early 1970s. While WIOA envisions that local boards will competitively procure a provider of career services (as described in the foregoing description of local Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs), boards have the option to fulfill this function using its own staff, as is the case for the KIM local workforce development area. The WDB and the Chief Local Elected Official have submitted a request to the State to continue in this capacity effective for four years, beginning July 1, 2021. ETR provided the following evidence of its capacity to continue to fulfill the career services provider function.

Significant Experience: ETR began providing career services in Kern, Inyo and Mono counties under the federal Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) and has continued to provide them through every subsequent iteration of federal workforce legislation up to the present. With nearly half a century of experience serving the residents of the three counties, the WDB and the Chief Local Elected Official agree that ETR should continue to be a provider of career services. Under their Joint Powers Agreement, the Kern County Board of Supervisors (Chief Local Elected Official) authorized the KIM Career Services Provider application to the State which was approved for the four Program Years 2017-2021. The CLEO is requesting that the local area continue this designation for another four years. Successful performance over the last program years provides the basis for approval to continue to operate as a Career Services Provider.

<u>Effective Partnerships</u>: Over the years providing career services, ETR has built strong relationships with the local community, workforce system partners, and businesses. Having established these relationships helps us to coordinate efforts and, thereby, avoid duplication of services. We are also able to leverage funding from other sources to provide

additional services to system customers. In fact, for the last 38 years, we have been the only local workforce area in California to directly receive the DOL National Farmworker Jobs Program funding.

Qualified Staff: ETR has highly qualified staff in place to provide career services. As County employees, hiring policies require application screening, testing, background checking, and interviewing. Vacancies are posted on each county's website, and only applicants who meet the minimum job requirements are considered for employment. Since 2017, all career services provider staff have been cross-trained on services provided by our local WIOA partners, which enables staff to better serve their clients and meet their needs with additional services available outside of WIOA. The cross-training of the 20 local WIOA partners was recorded and added to our YouTube video library in order to make the videos available to new employees to learn about the various services partners provide and as a reference for established employees to refer to when needed before referring clients to other services.

<u>Strong Performance</u>: Operationally and fiscally, KIM continues to meet performance and monitoring compliance measures. The local area has consistently met or exceeded performance goals for many years. Finally, in February 2015, KIM was qualified as a High Performing Board. KIM WDB was renewed as a High Performing Board in 2020.

V. CONSIDERATIONS FOR PROGRAM YEARS 2021 - 24

Based on discussions held throughout the planning process, the following topics have been identified as priorities for further exploration, development, and/or enhancement as the WDB, ETR and the partners implement the Local Plan.

Partnership-Focused Strategies

- The WIOA core programs partners (Titles I through IV) and other one-stop system
 partners should meet on a scheduled basis to discuss strategies for pursuing grant
 funding focused target populations and priority sectors.
- Assess the feasibility of using the Unite Us platform as the referral system among all partners.

Training and Skills Development

- Identify the interest of businesses (particularly in priority sectors) in training incumbent workers and opportunities to backfill positions as workers are promoted.
- Develop a plan to more effectively use work-based learning strategies for priority and emerging sectors, including logistics, construction and manufacturing.
- Leverage the power of distance learning to provide more diverse and robust skills development opportunities to individuals living and seeking employment in remote communities.
- Increase the availability of entrepreneurial training to reflect increased opportunities that are anticipated with the re-opening of the economy.

Job Seeker Services

- Consider using mentors, job coaches, and navigators to increase participation by and success of individuals from underserved populations.
- Provide AJCC and workforce system services on a more flexible schedule, including Saturdays.
- Make more walk-in and on-demand services and resources available at the AJCCs.
- Use staff-of-the-day to guide and answer questions from customers about the AJCCs and workforce system services.
- Assess the feasibility of conducting more marketing and providing more services in Spanish to reach underserved communities.

Services for Business Customers

- Identify methods to better promote workforce services to businesses.
- Survey business customers on a regular basis regarding skill sets needed by workers to track emerging needs.
- For each priority sector, business, education and workforce development partners should identify goals for the development of career pathway programs.

Use of Technology to Support System Services

- Increase the availability of digital skills training, hardware, and internet access throughout the local workforce area.
- Building on gains in virtual service delivery that have been made during the pandemic, develop a plan for enhancing on-line service and maintaining a hybrid strategy.
- Determine how virtual platforms and online services can improve access for individuals in Inyo and Mono counties and remote communities.
- Develop a social media toolbox as a resource for system partners and stakeholders in outreaching to customers and potential customers.
- Develop AJCC-based workshops that provides instruction in basic computer operations
- Identify web-based services that could be delivered via mobile apps to increase usage.

Other Priorities

- Development strategies to track outcomes for priority target populations.
- Identify strategies to increase career information and exploration to youth in middle school and high school.
- Using one or more workgroup, consider engaging the partners in discussions on equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility.
- Assign ETR managers and staff to follow-up on priorities outlined in this section of the Local Plan.

VI. APPENDICES

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

Attachment 1: Stakeholder and Community Engagement Summary

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

Attachment 3: Signature Page

Attachment 1

Stakeholder and Community Engagement Summary

To facilitate the engagement of stakeholders in planning for the local workforce development delivery system and in the development of the PY 2021-24 Local Plan, the Kern, Inyo and Mono WDB hosted a series of three community and stakeholder forums focused on topics affecting strategies and services across the system. These forums included:

<u>Vision for the Local Workforce System:</u> How can workforce system partners and other stakeholders create a system that is more equitable, accessible, and effective?

This forum was held via Zoom on January 21. 2021.

<u>Strengthening the Role of the AJCC as an Access Point for all System Partners and Programs:</u> How can the AJCC be more effectively promoted and used as a central access point for all local workforce system services?

This forum was held via Zoom on January 27, 2021.

<u>Improving Workforce System Services:</u> How can workforce system services be made more effective and relevant for all customers, including vulnerable populations that have been underserved by traditional programs?

This forum was held via Zoom on February 3, 2021.

Where necessary, agency-to-agency discussions were held with various partners and stakeholders to collaboration between their programs and those of the Kern, Inyo and Mono WDB. Such discussions were conducted via Zoom and included meetings with:

- California Department of Rehabilitation on February 4. 2021
- California Employment Development Department on February 9, 2021
- California Indian Manpower Consortium, Inc. on February 3, 2021
- Kern Community College District on February 9, 2021
- Kern County Department of Child Support Services on January 28, 2021
- Kern County Department of Human Services on February 12, 2021
- CIE Local Partnership Agreement Core Partners on February 5, 2021

Mode of Outreach	Target of Outreach	Summary of Attendance	Comments		
Email and telephone	CA Employment Development Department	-Attended forumsParticipated in 1-to-1 discussions with WDB	Engaged in planning process.		
Email and telephone	CA Department of Rehabilitation	-Attended forumsParticipated in 1-to-1 discussions with WDB	Engaged in planning process.		

Kern, Inyo and Mono WDB

Email and telephone	California Indian Manpower Consortium, Inc.	-Attended forumsParticipated in 1-to-1 discussions with WDB	Engaged in planning process.
Email and telephone	Kern Community College District	-Attended forumsParticipated in 1-to-1 discussions with WDB	Engaged in planning process.
Email and telephone	Kern County Department of Child Support Services	-Attended forumsParticipated in 1-to-1 discussions with WDB	Engaged in planning process.
Email and telephone	Kern County Department of Human Services	-Attended forumsParticipated in 1-to-1 discussions with WDB	Engaged in planning process.
Email and telephone	Kern High School District	-Attended forumsParticipated in 1-to-1 discussions with WDB	Engaged in planning process.

Attachment 2

F	PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIV	ED THAT DISAGREE WITH THE LOCAL PLAN
1.	From:	Date:
Cor	mment:	
2.	From:	Date:
Cor	nment:	

	Attachment 3
SIGNATURE PAGE	
The following signatures represent approval of the Loc Workforce Development Board and the Chief Elected Local Workforce Development Area.	
For the Kern, Inyo and Mono Workforce Developme	ent Board:
Name, Chairperson	Date
For the Kern, Inyo and Mono Counties Local Work	force Development Area:
Name, Title	Date

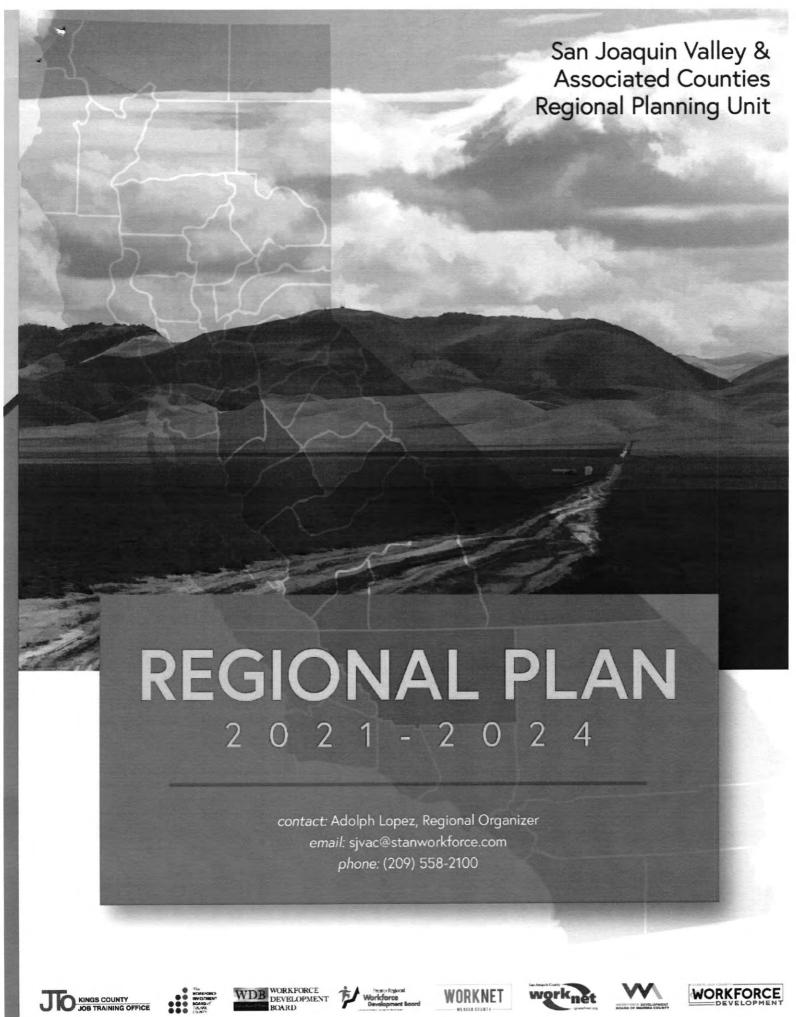




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I. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

With its passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014. Congress moved the national workforce system in a new direction in terms of how to approach economic and labor market demands. While establishment of local workforce areas over the last four decades has always taken into account local labor markets, WIOA recognizes that economies tend to be regional, spilling easily over jurisdictional boundaries that commerce finds inconsequential. WIOA's recognition of regional economies gave rise to California's establishment of Regional Planning Units (RPUs), which represent groups of local workforce areas that work collaboratively to develop strategies reflecting regional economic needs of business and the workforce. In accordance with federal and state guidance, the San Joaquin Valley and Associated Counties RPU has developed this four-year Regional Plan to guide strategic initiatives throughout Program Years (PY) 2021-24, which covers June 1, 2021 through June 30, 2025. This Plan replaces the RPU's PY 2017-20 Regional Plan and subsequent 2019 Biennial Plan Modification. However, foundational principles and many of the overarching strategies expressed by the prior plans are carried forward and will continue to affect the RPU's approach to addressing economic and workforce priorities of the region.

Overview of the SJVAC RPU and the Region

The parties to the Regional Plan are the eight local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) within the RPU, which include seven boards representing single counties (Fresno, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Tulare) and one consortium board representing three counties (Kern, Inyo and Mono). Through their Central California Workforce Collaborative (CCWC) network, the WBDs have all been actively involved in the regional planning process by reviewing State guidance, selecting consultants to assist in the process, providing resource documents, organizing regional forums, and meeting regularly with the consultants as a group and individually to share insights, make decisions, and establish priorities for regional coordination. As the designated lead for the RPU, development of the PY 2021-24 Regional Plan has been managed by the Stanislaus County WDB.

The boundaries of the RPU are those defined by the ten counties referred to above. The area comprises approximately 40,760 square miles, roughly 25% of the State. With a population quickly approaching nearly 4.2 million, the region is more populous than 25 States.

Guiding Principles

The SJVAC Regional Plan acknowledges and supports the vision for workforce system that is described in California's PY 2020-23 Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan, the overarching state policy document. The State Plan's policy objectives have been developed in collaboration with local boards and WIOA partners and communicate

SJVAC RPU

California's intention to create a comprehensive system that impacts poverty, promotes income mobility, and embeds equity as a cornerstone of service-delivery.

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

<u>Support for the Goals of the State Plan</u>: 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.

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

Regional Sector Pathways are an Effective Approach to Meeting Demand: Structured, high-quality education, training, and support programs offer opportunities for success for all those preparing for careers.

<u>The Workforce System Encompasses All Stakeholders</u>: 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.

<u>Long-Term Regional Collaboration</u>: The Central California Workforce Collaborative (CCWC) is a manifestation of a partnership that has existed for nearly 40 years. This collaboration has led to many benefits through the joint efforts of the eight WDBs.

Economic Recovery is a Regional Workforce System Priority: In many ways, this fouryear plan is a Recovery Plan. The region, and the local boards it represents, have never faced a task more daunting or more important. Agility, innovation, and perseverance will be required to ensure that businesses and job seekers thrive during what is likely to be an undulating economic recovery. The workforce development boards of the Central Valley are committed to this goal.

Approach to and Context for Plan Development

To support plan development, the region contracted with experienced consultants to design the stakeholder engagement process, analyze labor market and workforce data, facilitate community forums, and craft the language of the plan. Local board directors, managers, and staff were active during every stage of the plan development.

<u>The Pall of the Pandemic</u>: The onset of COVID-19 was not merely a factor in the development of this plan. It was <u>the</u> factor, as it profoundly impacted workforce system operations, staffing, communications, and relationships, along with the overall capacity of workforce professionals, system stakeholders, businesses and residents to easily

contribute to the plan. Still, as the region faced the prospect of developing a new fouryear plan for the region, workforce leaders proceeded with purpose, recognizing their obligation to chart a course forward.

The development of the Regional Plan at this unique moment in history has led Central Valley workforce system leaders to take stock of projections for recovery from authorities such as Dr. Nicholas Christakis of Yale University, a renowned physician and social scientist who has studied the course of pandemics throughout history. Dr. Christakis suggests that pandemics are experienced across three phases: immediate, intermediate and post-pandemic. In the case of COVID-19, the immediate phase began in the U.S. last March. It is where we experience the biological shock of the virus and where shutdowns occur. With the availability of vaccines and progression toward herd immunity, this phase is expected to last through 2021. The intermediate phase, which may last through 2023, is where recovery begins to take hold and where communities, labor markets, and individuals continue to experience lingering psychological, social, and economic effects of the virus. The post-pandemic phase, which Dr. Christakis expects by 2024, will signal a return to "normal," with the caveat that pandemics often result in profound and lasting changes. While we remain hopeful that the region's businesses and workers will experience full economic recovery as quickly as possible, RPU leadership recognizes that the timeframe outlined above is possible and workforce programs will be ready to respond to regional and local needs under any circumstances.

Extensive Engagement with Stakeholders and the Community: The region relied heavily on input from workforce system stakeholders during the development of the SJVAC RPU PY 2017-20 Plan and its 2019 modification. Because of the sweeping effects of the public health crisis brought on by COVID-19, engagement with system partners, other stakeholders, and the community took on even greater significance than it has in the past. In collaboration with Local Board leadership, our consultants held a series of "forums" that engaged participants in discussions on topics about which they had unique insights. The forums posed questions aimed at eliciting responses to inform the content of this plan and the direction of regional strategies over the next four years. Questions posed to stakeholders, included, but were not limited to, the following:

- What Central Valley industries have been most affected by the pandemic?
- Which worker groups have been most impacted by the effects of pandemic inexperienced/new workers, older workers, English language learners, others?
- For Valley residents, what are the main barriers to securing employment in jobs that pay middle class wages?
- What services are needed to put job seekers on a path to the middle class?
- · Are some populations underserved by the workforce and education systems?
- What strategies or approaches could we pursue to make services more accessible and more appropriate for underserved populations?
- How could system partners better collaborate on improving services for vulnerable populations?

 What roles should the workforce system partners (business, education, workforce development boards and others) play in ensuring that career pathway training is developed and implemented?

Responses were remarkable in their depth, insight, and ingenuity. The RPU's PY 2021-24 Plan concludes with a series of regional "priority considerations" for the next four years, the majority of which were recommended by stakeholders during the community engagement process.

Coupling Data Analysis with Anecdotal Information: The regional partners believe that the labor market and workforce data analysis presented in this plan is sound. However, the onset of the pandemic has created many uncertainties with regard to projection that the data would typically suggest. Therefore, the content of this plan (particularly the priorities presented in Section VI and the "forecasting" narrative below), draws extensively from not just data analysis, but information, largely anecdotal, provided by system stakeholders.

Forecasting the Work Ahead

The Central Valley, along with the nation and the world as a whole, is likely to experience an unprecedented number of economic, labor market, workforce, social, and cultural changes that will affect every aspect of life, including the activities and focus of the workforce system. While precise changes are unknown, global experts, national leaders in the field of workforce development, and regional system stakeholders have suggested that they may include the following shifts¹ that the region should be prepared to address:

<u>How We Work</u>: A recent report from the McKinsey Global Institute predicts that 20 percent of workers (1 in 5) could end up working from home indefinitely. How this affects commercial real estate, work hours, teamwork, hiring, and a range of other factors remains to be seen.

Where We Live: If it is not necessary for workers to be within a commutable distance to an office or other workplace, they could, essentially, live anywhere. For the workforce system this raises myriad questions. Should job developers in Madera be outreaching to tech businesses in Palo Alto? Should West Hills College in Coalinga be ramping up new IT courses?

<u>How We Learn</u>: With thousands of Central Valley residents having participated in and warmed to distance learning over the past year, what are the implications for training that should be available through the workforce system? If online education is now an acceptable option for WIOA participants, is there a legitimate reason to exclude a virtual course offered by Eastern Maine Community College in Bangor in favor of one offered by Modesto Junior College?

¹ Many of the references within this sub-section are excerpted or draw inspiration from the Heather Long's February 16, 2021 article for the Washington Post "Millions of jobs probably aren't coming back, even after the pandemic end – The United States needs to invest more in retraining workers, economists warn."

Need for Cross-Cutting Skills: While many economists believe that, over time, the U.S. will probably employ the same overall number of people that the nation had prepandemic, they predict that specific jobs people do are likely to change. Under that scenario, an emphasis on skills used across sectors and jobs (e.g., information technology, verbal and written communication, math and accounting, critical thinking) is more important than ever.

A Race to End the Digital Divide: With services of all kinds having become increasing virtual during the pandemic, spending a significant part of our daily lives online is likely here to stay. To ensure that all individuals from all communities are able to participate, government, business, philanthropy and others must devise strategies to ensure access to broadband, hardware, and digital literacy skills.

Rapid Automation of Jobs: David Autor of MIT indicates that business automation is accelerating during the pandemic and that "once robots are in place, we won't go back." In October 2020, Chewy, an online pet food and supply company, opened its first fully automated fulfillment center in Archbald, PA. The facility employs approximately 10% of those working at other Chewy warehouses.

<u>Shuttered Businesses/Lost Jobs</u>: Economists warn that millions of jobs lost during the pandemic, including those at hotels and restaurants, are unlikely to come back.

Main Street in Peril: Small businesses have been hit especially hard by the pandemic, as they generally have fewer resources to take them through hard times. Minority-owned businesses have experienced significant losses in the Central Valley, as their customer bases have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

<u>Decline in Business Travel</u>: In November 2020, Microsoft founder-turned-philanthropist Bill Gates predicted that half of business travel would go away forever. Studies published since that time do not entirely disagree. What will this mean to jobs at airports, hotels, car rental companies, and other businesses throughout the Valley that cater to business travelers?

<u>Less Brick-and-Mortar Retail</u>: Online retail has boomed during the pandemic and inperson retail businesses (which were already in decline) throughout the region have closed in record numbers. Beyond store employees, people in security, maintenance, real estate and other occupations have lost their jobs as the result of store closures.

<u>Lost Skills</u>: Will the thousands of Central Valley workers who have been unemployed for months experience a loss of skills while away from work? What retraining might such workers need?

<u>A Stalled Generation</u>: Some high school and college students who were forced to quickly shift to online learning during the pandemic report learning at a slower pace with less rigorous curriculum than in traditional classrooms, resulting in possibly higher GPA's for

doing less work. Are these individuals prepared to enter the workforce? Will they be as prepared as necessary?

A Competitive Labor Market: In the months leading up to the pandemic, the need for talent by Valley businesses was so strong that individuals who traditionally had more difficulty securing employment (e.g., the re-entry population, mature workers, English language learners) were being hired more quickly than ever before. As employment slowly returns to pre-pandemic levels, it is likely that individuals with barriers will find the labor market much more competitive.

<u>Just-in-Time Expectations</u>: Businesses will slowly feel their way back during recovery. As opportunities for growth become available, many companies will find themselves in need of employees on short notice. The workforce system will need to implement strategies to quickly and efficiently source talent to these businesses. Can we respond fast enough to meet the needs of Business?

<u>A Growing Equity Consciousness</u>: The expectations of the nation are that all endeavors will commit to equity, diversity, inclusion and access for everyone. Will a changing and, possibly, unstable labor market make this commitment more challenging?

<u>Impact of Climate Initiatives on Jobs</u>: As government and business attempt to minimize the impacts of climate change on the environment, will some traditional jobs be lost as a result?

<u>A Field Day for Entrepreneurship</u>: Some economists predict that the re-opening of the economy will create opportunities for entrepreneurs seeking to start new businesses. Is the workforce system prepared to support these efforts?

<u>A Massive Jobs Bill</u>: The Biden administration's \$1.9 trillion relief package does not include funds specifically for retraining. However, many lawmakers are hoping to include retraining spending in legislation later in 2021. Are local workforce systems in the region prepared for a sudden and substantial influx of funding?

<u>Lingering Effects of the Pandemic</u>: We simply do not know what lies ahead. What will be the ongoing effects of the pandemic on workers, businesses and the economy? The workforce system is likely to be in a constant state of planning and pivoting over the course of this Regional Plan.

While the foregoing list of possible changes is far from comprehensive, these issues highlight the need for local workforce systems and regional initiatives to be agile, prepared to quickly change course, and capable of taking on challenges both familiar and never before seen. Priorities for consideration by regional workforce leaders and system stakeholders are summarized in Section VI of this plan.

II. ANALYTICAL OVERVIEW OF THE REGION

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

In the Fall of 2020, shortly after the State issued preliminary guidance on the development of PY 2021-24 Regional and Local Plans, Stanislaus County WDB, on behalf of the region, competitively procured the services of Resource Development Associates (RDA), a company specializing in research and analysis, particularly for the public sector, to conduct labor market and workforce analysis in areas required for regional planning. In February 2021, RDA published the results of this analysis in its "San Joaquin Valley Regional Planning Unit Data Analysis". As this report includes dozens of charts, tables, and other graphics illustrating the results of RDA's analysis, it is lengthy. Key portions of RDA's narrative and graphics are excepted and comprise much of the analytic content of SJVAC RPU's four-year plan. The analysis in its entirety is accessible through the hyperlink above.

Focus and Organization of RDA Analysis

RDA conducted its analysis and organized findings within its report in alignment with preliminary State guidance, as follows:

- Analysis of the industries and occupations for which there is existing demand.
- Analysis of industries and occupations for which demand is emerging.
- Assessment of the employment needs of business, including knowledge, skills, and abilities required.
- Analysis of current employment and unemployment data, including labor force participation rates and trends in the region.
- Analysis of key labor market trends, including across existing industries and occupations.
- Analysis of the educational and skill levels of the workforce.

Based on final guidance published by the State Employment Development Department and the California Workforce Development Board, the above-listed analysis and assessment is sequenced in the order represented in the Table of Contents.

Data Analysis Tools and Source Data

To conduct its analysis, RDA utilized JobsEQ, a software that provides access to labor market data through various data sources, including, but not limited to, the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the Census Bureau. JobsEQ allowed RDA to collect data specifically for the SJVAC RPU. We also supplemented

JobsEQ reports with data from the American Community Survey through the Census Bureau. The final section of RDA's analysis report provides a demographic portrait of the SJVAC RPU to provide further context to the data presented.

RDA Statement on Data Analysis Limitations Resulting from COVID-19

In acknowledgement of the effects of the pandemic, RDA provided the following summary of limitations on available data and the analysis presented in its report.

Since March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent shutdowns have caused major disruptions to California's and the Central Valley's economic activity, industry growth and output, and employment. The impacts of the pandemic were felt swiftly across the state, where unemployment climbed to a height of 16.2% by April 2020.² Throughout most of 2020, the economy has slowly improved across the SJVAC RPU, but continues to experience elevated levels of unemployment and labor market volatility due to the loosening and tightening of restrictions in response to changes in the pandemic.

Typically, during a recession, economic models look to past recessions with similar characteristics to forecast the recession's impact on employment, labor market and industry trends, and economic impacts. The COVID-19 recession is unprecedented in many regards. First, this recession itself is unique in that it is driven by a public health crisis rather than typical market drivers. Secondly, characteristics of this recession are somewhat unprecedented in terms of its unforeseen and sudden onset, the near immediate erasure of historically high employment levels and economic growth across the state, the depth of the impact on specific occupations and industries, and the uneven effect it has had across all industries and occupations. Lastly, the shift of the nearly two-thirds of the U.S. workforce to remote settings has also resulted in unevenly distributed impacts across workers, employers, industries, and regions³.

These factors have made typical economic models less reliable and, as such, forecasts of industry, occupational, and employment growth are less certain. The forecasts provided in this document do include COVID-19 recession as a variable and align with the general consensus that economic growth will accelerate over 2021 and the GDP will likely return to pre-COVID-19 levels by 2022⁴. That is not to say that the SJVAC RPU's economic data fully depicts the challenges regions have experienced since March 2020 or can predict with absolute certainty how the recovery across the SJVAC RPU will play out. It will likely take years to fully understand how this pandemic has impacted and transformed the local, regional, and state labor markets and workforce.

² Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information Division, Report 400 C Monthly Labor Force Data for Counties April 2020, Revised. Data is not seasonally adjusted.

³ Bloom, N. 2020. "How Working from Home Works Out". Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research. Policy Brief. June 2020.

⁴ Congressional Budget Office. 2021. An Overview of the Economic Outlook: 2021 to 2031. Retrieved February 2, 2021 from https://www.cbo.gov/publication/56965

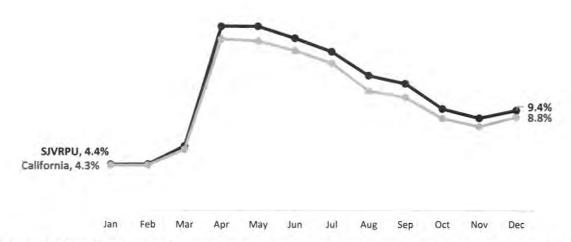
Recommendations Accompanying RDA Analysis

Although the next few years are expected to bring recovery and growth across the state and the SJVAC RPU, there are still levels of uncertainty and change that may impact the region's industry and workforce. COVID-19 aside, the future of work is expected to experience dramatic changes over the next decade with growing trends towards remote work, shifting consumer demands, technological innovations, and automation of key occupations. The SJVAC RPU and the affiliated local workforce boards should continue to monitor micro and macro industry and occupational trends and look for opportunities to strengthen existing workforce investments, bolster career education pipelines, and develop a modern and in-demand workforce.

Analysis of Employment and Unemployment Data

In the beginning of 2020, unemployment rates were relatively low in the SJVAC RPU, on par with the unemployment rate across the State. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a sharp increase in the rate of unemployment at the regional and state levels in April 2020. The unemployment rate has decreased steadily since June 2020, although there was a slight uptick at the end of the year in December 2020.

Figure 1. SJVAC RPU Monthly Unemployment Rate, 2020



Source: California Employment Development Department, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, 2020. Data for December 2020 is preliminary. The data present is not adjusted for seasonality.

Table 1 provides an overview of unemployment rates by each of the SJVAC RPU's local workforce development areas as of October 2020. Unemployment is highest in Tulare County and lowest in Madera County.

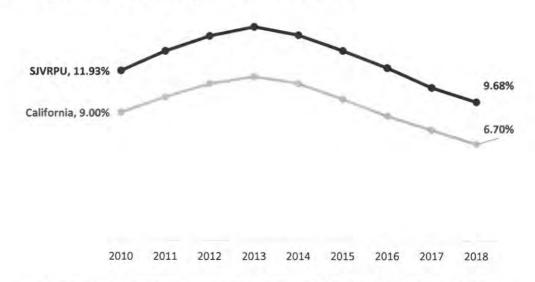
Table 1. SJVAC RPU Unemployment Totals and Rates by Region

SJVAC RPU Local Region	Total Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
Tulare County	21,182	10.9%
Kern/Inyo/Mono Counties	41,592	10.5%
San Joaquin County	32,945	10.0%
Fresno County	41,673	9.3%
Kings County	5,257	9.3%
Merced County	10,852	9.3%
Stanislaus County	21,885	9.1%
Madera County	5,235	8.5%

Source: JobsEQ Labor & Wage Trends. Data as of October 2020.

SJVAC RPU currently and historically has a higher unemployment rate than the overall state. Often recessions have larger impacts on the region and the region takes longer to recover. The non-seasonally adjusted unemployment rate is likely higher due to the seasonality of work in the agriculture industry.

Figure 2. SJVAC RPU Unemployment Rate 2010-2018



Source: JobsEQ Demographic Profile Unemployed, ACS 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018.

Figure 3, below, depicts labor force participation and unemployment rates by age groups in 2019. Labor force participation and unemployment by age groups follows the typical bell curve where employment is expectedly low among youth (16 -19) and young adults (20-24). Employment levels peak from ages 25 to 54 then begin to taper off at 55 with a considerable drop after age 64. Similar to state and national trends, unemployment rates are highest among youth and young adults and decline as age increases.

79% 77% 76% 75% 69% 66% 52% 28% 26% 22% 13% 9% 7% 6% 6% 5% 4% 16 to 19 20 to 24 25 to 29 30 to 34 35 to 44 45 to 54 55 to 59 60 to 64 65 to 74 years

Figure 3. SJVAC RPU Labor Force Participation and Unemployment by Age Group

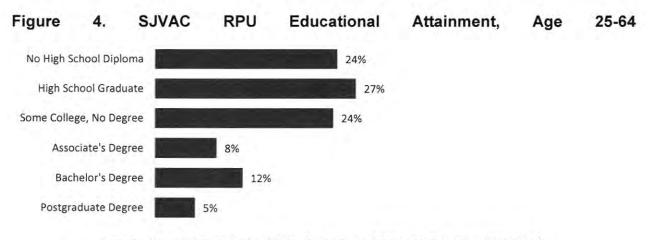
Source: ACS 1-Year Estimates 2019. Data unavailable for Inyo and Mono Counties.

Analysis of the Educational and Skill Levels of the Workforce, the Current Needs of Employers in the Region, and Relevant Skill Gaps

The analysis conducted by RDA includes both an assessment of education and skills levels of the regional workforce and an assessment of employment needs.

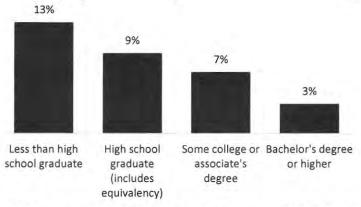
Education and Skills Levels of the Central Valley Workforce

To assess the education and skill level of the workers in the SJVAC RPU, RDA utilized demographic data from the American Community Survey, five-year estimates (2014-18) and examined awards and skill gaps data provided by JobsEQ. The majority of the region's population age 25-64 have not been awarded a college degree (75%). Only 8% of the region's population aged 25-64 has earned an associate degree, while 12% has earned a bachelor's degree and 5% has been awarded a postgraduate degree (see Figure 4). The unemployment rate is highest among those who have less than a high school degree (13%) and lowest among those who have earned a bachelor's degree or higher (3%, see Figure 5). Of the traditional college-aged population, those 18-24 years old, 60% are not enrolled in college or graduate school, 36% are enrolled in public school, and 4% are enrolled in private school (Figure 6).



Source: JobsEQ Demographic Profile Summary, ACS 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018.

Figure 5. SJVAC RPU Unemployment Rate by Educational Attainment, Age 25-64



Source: JobsEQ Demographic Profile Unemployed, ACS 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018.

Figure 6. SJVAC RPU College/Graduate School Enrollment by Type, 18-24 Years



Source: ACS 1-Year Estimates 2019. Data unavailable for Inyo and Mono Counties.

Assessment of Employment Needs within the Region

To assess employment needs, RDA measured occupational, skill, and awards gaps projected to across the SJVAC RPU's industries and occupations.

<u>Occupational gaps</u> are occupations where labor supply shortages are expected to occur. Gaps are calculated based on a forecast comparing occupation demand growth to the local population growth and the projected educational attainment of those residents.

Employers across the SJVAC RPU are anticipated to experience gaps in workers for specific occupations as shown in Table 2. For example, healthcare practitioners and individuals with skills in other technical healthcare occupations will be particularly hard to hire given existing shortages in this occupations and the level of education, training, certification, and licensure required for these roles. One of the largest awards gaps in the region is for registered nurses and seven of the top ten skills gaps are in health-related certifications.

Management roles also represent a large occupational gap and may also be difficult roles for employers to fill given that management roles are generally considered mid-career positions. Community and social services occupations, and education instruction and library occupations, are also occupational gaps that may be difficult to fill given the training and education required for these roles. Computer and mathematical occupations are expected to have a modest occupational gap. However, gaps in this occupational area may be easier to fill as technological occupations offer a wide range of roles across various levels of skills and experience.

Table 2. SJVAC RPU Potential Average Annual Occupation Gaps Over 5 years

soc	Occupation	Annual Supply Gap	Current Employ ment	Annual Growth Demand	Annual Sep Demand	Total Annual Demand	Proj. Employ ment	Acc. Supply 2025	Acc. Demand 2025
29- 0000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	(957)	82,933	1,073	4,959	6,032	93,661	16,435	21,219
11- 0000	Management Occupations	(803)	99,769	817	8,960	9,777	107,944	27,388	31,401
13- 0000	Business and Financial Operations Occupations	(399)	62,974	481	6,174	6,656	67,787	19,765	21,758
21- 0000	Community and Social Service Occupations	(244)	32,343	580	3,687	4,267	38,142	12,310	13,528
15- 0000	Computer and Mathematical Occupations	(163)	20,642	195	1,599	1,794	22,592	5,150	5,967
17- 0000	Architecture and Engineering Occupations	(104)	16,171	91	1,307	1,398	17,078	4,206	4,728
19- 0000	Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	(88)	12,066	109	1,172	1,281	13,152	3,628	4,069
31- 0000	Healthcare Support Occupations	(50)	83,552	2,523	11,861	14,384	108,786	40,527	40,776
23- 0000	Legal Occupations	(42)	8,405	65	550	615	9,051	1,906	2,114
27- 0000	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	7	16,675	76	1,877	1,953	17,435	6,025	5,989
49- 0000	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	34	53,558	317	5,374	5,691	56,723	19,301	19,130
25- 0000	Educational Instruction and Library Occupations	74	111,418	343	10,217	10,560	114,849	36,677	36,304
33- 0000	Protective Service Occupations	150	37,498	92	4,093	4,185	38,416	14,388	13,636

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47- 0000	Construction and Extraction Occupations	369	66,898	788	7,810	8,598	74,780	27,992	26,145
37- 0000	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	403	47,154	364	6,356	6,721	50,797	22,631	20,618
39- 0000	Personal Care and Service Occupations	529	37,399	354	5,883	6,237	40,942	20,863	18,218
51- 0000	Production Occupations	839	81,810	-40	9,737	9,696	81,408	36,442	32,246
43- 0000	Office and Administrative Support Occupations	905	161,596	-124	18,438	18,314	160,355	65,587	61,063
53- 0000	Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	1,390	162,135	1,146	21,339	22,485	173,600	76,809	69,859
41- 0000	Sales and Related Occupations	1,734	133,587	77	19,245	19,322	134,356	69,496	60,826
35- 0000	Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	2,416	115,243	1,367	20,733	22,101	128,915	74,311	62,230
45- 0000	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	2,827	160,837	1,378	27,239	28,617	174,620	94,149	80,016

<u>Skills gaps</u> are defined as the difference between the supply and demand for a skill. Positive gaps are surpluses of a skill and negative gaps represent a shortage of a skill. Skill supply is collected by JobsEQ from resume data; demand (openings) is collected from job ads.

Many of the in-demand skills in the SJVAC RPU are aligned to occupations where there is both current and forecasted demand. For instance, power tools and heavy equipment operation are skills valued in the construction and extraction industries and related occupations. Other skills, such as Microsoft Office and Excel, are in high demand because they are valued in multiple industries and occupational sectors (Table 3).

Table 3. SJVAC RPU Gaps in Hard Skills for All Occupations

Skill	Number of Candidates	Number of Openings	Gap
Mathematics	3,940	5,818	-1,878
Spanish	8,927	10,548	-1,621
Microsoft Office	9,788	11,319	-1,531
Microsoft Excel	12,900	13,874	-974
Teaching/Training, Job	2,415	3,325	-910
Mechanical	2,535	3,389	-853
Teaching/Training, School	5,167	5,997	-830
Forklifts	4,908	5,666	-758
Microsoft Outlook	5,259	5,957	-697
Manufacturing	2,197	2,625	-428
Power Tools	1,399	1,647	-249
Lean Six Sigma	238	487	-248

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Working with Children	261	496	-235
Barcode Scanners	321	524	-203
Heavy Equipment Operation	508	688	-180
Automated External Defibrillators (AED)	399	573	-174
Presentation	1,379	1,539	-160
Purchasing	545	703	-158
Personal Computers (PC)	353	505	-152
Microsoft Access	451	602	-151
Calculators	134	277	-144
Budgeting	344	477	-133
Mandarin	70	202	-132
Accounting	915	1,044	-129

Source: JobsEQ Skill Gaps in SJVAC RPU. Data as of 2020Q2; openings and candidate sample compiled in July 2019.

<u>Awards gaps</u> show the difference between the number of educational awards (which are post-secondary certificates or degrees) and the occupation demand in the region for which each award is required. Negative values represent a shortage of degrees being awarded to meet the demand for the occupation. The positive values represent the surplus of awards, indicating the number of awards is greater than the target range of demand.

Gaps also exist between the number of awarded degrees in the region and overall employment demand by occupation. Table 4 demonstrates the awards gaps that are forecasted for SJVAC RPU that will feed into the occupations that are in-demand. The target range includes the US Awards Benchmark and the Annual Demand. Business and financial operations occupations will see an awards gap of 1,018 and healthcare practitioners and technical operations will see a gap of 814 awards. There will be a surplus of awards granted that feed into arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media occupations.

Table 4. SJVAC RPU Awards Gaps

soc	Occupation	Award Gap	Awards	Annual Demand	US Awards Benchmark
13-0000	Business and Financial Operations Occupations	(1,018)	1,111	6,579	2,129
29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	(814)	4,371	5,895	5,185
15-0000	Computer and Mathematical Occupations	(145)	930	1,768	1,075
19-0000	Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	(129)	1,135	1,264	1,626
25-0000	Educational Instruction and Library Occupations	(101)	7,073	10,508	7,174
41-0000	Sales and Related Occupations	(65)	100	19,308	166
17-0000	Architecture and Engineering Occupations	(62)	1,180	1,387	1,241
23-0000	Legal Occupations	(39)	296	607	335
35-0000	Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	(18)	163	21,738	181

37-0000	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	(6)	43	6,652	49
11-0000	Management Occupations	0	7,309	9,656	6,584
21-0000	Community and Social Service Occupations	0	3,436	4,146	3,217
31-0000	Healthcare Support Occupations	0	3,946	13,703	1,590
33-0000	Protective Service Occupations	0	2,575	4,163	1,459
39-0000	Personal Care and Service Occupations	0	4,380	6,156	1,531
43-0000	Office and Administrative Support Occupations	0	1,736	18,269	798
45-0000	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	0	378	28,306	302
47-0000	Construction and Extraction Occupations	0	327	8,453	261
49-0000	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	0	1,826	5,641	1,081
51-0000	Production Occupations	0	637	9,679	535
53-0000	Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	0	670	22,271	319
27-0000	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	0	2,479	1,938	1,655

Source: JobsEQ Award Gaps by Occupation in SJVRPU. Data as of 2020 Q2; excludes awards from online schools.

Analysis of Industries and Occupations with Existing and Emerging Demand

RDA's analysis takes into account both existing industry and occupational demand and demand that is emerging throughout the region.

Existing Demand

To understand current demand across both industries and occupations, RDA assessed the following indicators:

- <u>Percent employment</u> (level of employment) demonstrates the portion of total employment by an industry or occupation for the SJVAC RPU and reflects the level of demand based on the proportion of employment in a given industry or occupational group.
- 5-year annual growth (job growth) shows the overall employment trend in an industry
 or occupational group. This measure uses historical employment data based on
 moving quarterly average to calculate the average annual increase or contraction of
 employment in a specific industry or occupational group over a five-year period.
- <u>Location Quotient</u> is measure of the relative size or concentration of the region's industries or occupational group's employment compared to the national average.

Industries with Existing Demand: In the SJVAC RPU, transportation and healthcare and social assistance are the industries with highest percent employment, job growth, and concentration of sector employment (also referred to as location quotient or LQ). All of the priority sectors, with the exceptions of energy and manufacturing, are industries with a high demand for workers.

- Healthcare and social assistance is one of the largest employers in the region and will likely continue that trend based on historical growth and the expanding need for healthcare services that is being driven by both demographics, an aging population across the region, and a large expansion of access to healthcare insurance beginning in 2014 with the Affordable Care Act.
- Transportation and warehousing, while encompassing a smaller share of the workforce, has grown by 8.3% per year and has a high concentration of workers compared to national trends. The growth in this sector is likely driven by the expansion of online shopping in the past decade.
- Construction accounts for about 5% of all jobs across the region and has grown at 3.1% over the past three years reflecting high demand. While the construction industry's LQ suggests a lower concentration of construction jobs in the region compared to the national averages, the high percentage of employment in the region and healthy growth point to an existing high demand for workers in this industry.
- The public administration and education industries account for a wide swath of the employment across the region (6% and 10% respectively). Both of these industry sectors experience high employment, concentration of jobs, and job growth. As these industries are made up largely of directly or indirectly publicly led and funded agencies, services, and programs, growth in these sectors are heavily driven by tax revenues, demographics, and legislation.
- Agriculture makes up a large percentage (13%) of employment and the region has
 ten-times the number of workers compared to the national average. This is likely being
 driven by the San Joaquin Valley being one of the leading agricultural producing
 regions in the world. The low growth in agriculture is likely being driven by automation
 and technological advances that reduce the number of workers needed as well as
 geographic limitations on expansion of current agricultural output. Despite the low
 growth, the seasonality of agriculture employment combined with outsized portion of
 total employment and LQ indicates that there is employment demand.
- Data from the Manufacturing industry suggests moderate to low demand for workers. While manufacturing does account for 7% of the jobs in the SJVAC RPU, these are largely in the agricultural food processing subsectors. The LQ suggest concentration of jobs of in the region below the national average and the industry has experienced negligible job growth over the past five years. This tracks with a national contraction trend for employment in manufacturing where the industry accounts for 8% of all employment but has seen only 0.3% in annual job growth over the past five years.

Accommodation and food services and retail are often interconnected service industries that account for a large portion of employment in the region (respectively 10% and 7%). While jobs in accommodation and food services have grown at an annual rate of 0.8%, the retail industry has experienced a contraction in job growth at a rate of -0.3% annually. The contraction in retail jobs is likely being driven by multiple factors including growth in online retail and regional economic trends. However, the size of total employment in these industries suggest there is ongoing demand for workers.

Occupations with Existing Demand: To understand occupations with existing demand, RDA used similar indicators (% employment, LQ, and annual growth) to assess demand by two-digit SOC occupations. Table 5, below. depicts SJVAC RPU occupations with moderate to high demand as of Q2, 2020. For the most part occupational employment demand is similar to employment demand by industry with healthcare, social services, and transportation and warehousing showing the strongest employment demand.

Table 5. SJVAC RPU Occupations with Existing Employment Demands, 2020 Q2

Occupation	% of Total Employment	LQ	5-year Annual Growth Rate.	Employment Demand
Healthcare Support Occupations	5%	1.18	5.2%	High Demand
Community and Social Service Occupations	2%	1.17	3.5%	High Demand
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	10%	1.22	3.1%	High Demand
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	5%	0.90	2.6%	High Demand
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	10%	15.59	0.6%	High Demand
Educational Instruction and Library Occupations	7%	1.23	1.8%	High Demand
Protective Service Occupations	2%	1.07	2.1%	High Demand
Construction and Extraction Occupations	4%	0.90	1.6%	Moderate Demand
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	3%	0.87	1.3%	Moderate Demand
Management Occupations	6%	0.96	0.9%	Moderate Demand
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	7%	0.89	0.6%	Moderate Demand
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	4%	0.71	1.9%	Moderate Demand
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	10%	0.79	0.3%	Moderate Demand

Source: JobsEQ Occupation Snapshot, 2020Q2 based upon a four-quarter moving average, ranked by Percent of Total Employment. Proportion of total employment is calculated out of a total of 1,604,661 employed in the region.

Emerging Demand

To assess emerging demand across regional industries and occupational sectors, RDA assessed the following indicators based on a four-year forecast: 5

- <u>Total Demand</u> is the number of jobs demanded in the industry or occupation over the number of forecasted years. Total New Demand is the sum of Exits, Transfers and Employment growth, which are defined as follows:
 - ✓ Exits is the number of workers forecasted to leave the workforce.
 - ✓ <u>Transfers</u> is the number of workers expected to transfer from one industry to another.
 - ✓ <u>Employment Growth</u> is the forecasted number of new jobs that are expected to be created.
- <u>Annual % Growth</u> is the forecasted average annual employment growth in a given industry or occupation.

Emerging Demand Industries: Over the next four years, healthcare and social assistance is expected to continue to be an industry centered around job demand. The projected job growth in this industry is estimated at 1.9% annually. Similar to current demand, construction, transportation and warehousing, agriculture, and accommodation and food services area also expected to continue to grow over the next four years.

Other notable emerging industries include:

Professional, scientific, and technical services industry is a much smaller industry in terms of employment that is showing signs of emerging job growth over the next four years. From 2015-2020, this industry in SJVAC RPU had negligible growth (0%) but is expected to grow modestly at an annual rate of 0.9% over the next four years.

Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction is an industry where new demand is projected to emerge with the second highest growth projection of 1.2%. It is unclear what is driving this as historically this industry contracted by -6% over the past five years. Similar to the oil and gas markets, job demand seems highly volatile in this industry.

<u>Emerging Demand Occupations</u>: Job demand is expected in various occupations across the SJVAC RPU. In particular occupations within the *healthcare and social assistance* industry are expected to continue to grow over the next four years. It is also forecasted that there will be demand for workers in occupations in the following sectors:

Food preparation and serving

⁵ Forecast employment trends is based on projections from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, forecasts for **2018-2028**, adapted for regional growth patterns by JobsEQ.

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- Construction and extraction
- Personal care and service
- Farming, fishing, and forestry
- · Transportation and material moving

Each of these areas are expected to have positive job growth as an annual percentage and large total employment growth over four years. In addition, most occupations in these industries offer both entry-level and mid-career employment opportunities.

III. FOSTERING DEMAND-DRIVEN SKILLS ATTAINMENT

Labor market information and intelligence gathered from representatives of businesses in priority sectors help to inform the content and quality of local and regional workforce programs.

In-Demand Industry Sectors for the Region

Under the SJVAC RPU's PY 2017-20 Regional Workforce Development Plan, the partners selected the following sectors as priorities:

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

The SJVAC Regional Plan continues to prioritize these sectors due to their prevalence within the region, and predicted strength when full economic recovery is realized. As noted in the region's last plan, while manufacturing and energy do not show significant growth, there is demand for workers in these industries based on worker replacement considerations (manufacturing) and subregional demand for workers (energy).

Additional sectors show emerging growth and opportunity to create significant numbers of jobs. The following is a summary of key data pertaining to the region's priority sectors and related occupations, which is drawn principally from RDA's analysis.

Despite recent economic challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, data indicates that the SJVAC RPU is situated to grow economically over the next five years. Unemployment has decreased over 2020 and will likely continue to drop to near pre-COVID-19 levels over the course of 2021. The region has many of the ingredients needed for healthy economic growth: a large working age population and a high rate of workforce participation, historical and forecasted growth across a diverse mix of industry sectors, job demand across a range of occupations with varying education or training requirements, and an economy that offers opportunities to workers at various stages of

their career. While many industries are forecast to continue to grow modestly over the next five years, a large portion of economic growth and job development in the SJVAC RPU is situated in a handful of sectors, specifically within healthcare, transportation and warehousing, and construction.

The *healthcare* industry is the largest generator of jobs for the SJVAC RPU and is expected to continue to grow at a rate of 3.6%. Occupations in healthcare support, healthcare practitioners, and social service providers are all projected to grow over the next five years and have a higher demand for qualified workers than the available regional labor supply. Given the growth and demand in this industry/occupational sector, investment in the region's healthcare career technical education pipeline should remain a priority for the region's workforce development partners.

The transportation and warehousing industry and related occupations represent a unique opportunity for the region. The growth of this industry and associated occupations have demonstrated high growth (8.3% annually) over the past five years and has a higher-than-average local demand. This trend is likely driven by several factors including growth of online shopping and ecommerce with notable growth during the pandemic as well as the SJVAC RPU's strategic location along California's main transportation corridor and availability and affordability of land for developing large distribution centers. Many of the occupations in this sector are entry-level, but they do offer decent wages and are opportunities for job seekers entering or reentering the workforce or job seekers that experience barriers to employment.

The construction industry is also expected to continue to experience healthy job growth at a rate of 1.1% annually. Similarly, construction-related occupations are also expected to add over 3,000 jobs to the region and grow at a rate of 1.2% annually. This trend will likely be driven by construction projects in both the Central Valley as well as large urban areas adjacent to the SJVAC RPU such as the San Francisco Bay Area and potentially the Los Angeles region.

As indicated in the preceding section, while data from the *Manufacturing* industry suggests moderate to low demand for workers, it remains a priority for the Central Valley. It accounts for 7% of the jobs in the RPU, which are largely in the agricultural food processing subsectors. Ties to agriculture make the sector a priority for the region.

Energy production industries and subsectors include employment in either the mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction industry sector and the utilities sector. While these sectors are much smaller, more volatile, and situated across multiple sectors, they are a strategic industry for the region given the growth potential for renewable (solar) energy as well as the contributions the industries make to the local economies in terms of employment, career opportunities, and tax revenue. Combined, both of these sectors account for only slightly over 1% of total employment, however, it is an industry that has a high Location Quotient (LQ) and has demonstrated outsized growth in certain subsectors. The solar power generation subsector in particular is likely to continue to grow. While it only employs around 250 workers currently, it has an LQ of 5.83 and

employment growth over the past five years was 36.8% annually. It is projected to continue to grow at 3.8% annually over the next three years. This is likely being driven by the growth of solar farms across the region over the past decade and the growing popularity of and investment in renewable energy. On the other hand, employment in oil and gas extraction is far more common than renewable energy generation and likely driven by the extensive oil and gas operations in Kern County. However, historically employment growth in the sector is quite volatile and is expected to contract over the next three years at about 1% annually. While the U.S. economy is still highly invested in fossil fuels, it is reasonable to expect a gradual decline of employment in the oil and gas extraction subsector over the next five to ten years. It is also important to note that the average salaries in the utilities and extraction sectors far outpace the region's average annual salary with an average salary of \$108,139 and \$101,026, respectively.

Agriculture will continue to be a behemoth in terms of the total percent (13%) of employment for the region. However, job growth in agriculture is expected to be flat or slightly contract. This is likely due to both advances in agricultural technology and the use of automation that reduce labor demand as well as geographic limitations on farmable terrain. It is also worth noting that agriculture jobs are often labor intensive and offer some of the lowest wages in the region. However, for the foreseeable future, agriculture will continue to account for a significant percentage of employment across the region.

RDA's analysis noted that there are several industries and occupations within the SJVAC RPU that are potentially new and emerging opportunities that workforce partners may want to consider developing career education pipelines in. Industries with potentially emerging job growth are *professional scientific*, and technical services and mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction⁶ industries. From an occupational standpoint, there is a growing occupational demand in protective services specifically for security guards as well as a notable demand for installation, maintenance, and repair occupations. It is also worth noting that these are careers that offer sustainable wages and have less demanding training requirements for entry.

The retail trade and accommodation and food services industries have experienced outsized employment contractions due to COVID-19. While a rebound is expected once social distancing measures are fully lifted, it is unclear if these industries will rebound to pre-COVID-19 employment levels. As a large share of the retail economy has shifted to online sales, it is not clear the extent to which this sector will return fully to a brick-and-mortar economy. Retail has historically been a large generator of entry and mid-level jobs; a permanent contraction in this industry and occupation could impact employment trends especially for entry-level jobs. While the accommodation and food services industries and occupations have also seen a contraction over 2020, it is unclear if pre-COVID-19 employment levels will resume in this industry.

⁶ This is industry demand is largely concentrated in Kern County.

Sector Initiatives

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

Healthforce Partners - Healthcare

The healthcare sector in the Northern San Joaquin Valley needs qualified workers. Community residents want to pursue healthcare careers. To achieve these compatible goals, healthcare employers, educators, workforce development professionals, and community leaders worked together to launch an innovative partnership: HealthForce Partners Northern San Joaquin Valley. The mission is to serve as a catalyst to improve career pathway opportunities for community residents and to increase the supply of skilled healthcare workers. HealthForce Partners brings together leaders from healthcare, education, and workforce development to develop strategies that meet the needs of the region's employers and expand educational and work opportunities for community residents. The partnership convenes key stakeholders to identify workforce gaps and develop solutions to address them. Programs include, but are not limited to: Registered Nursing, Certified Nursing Assistant, Medical Assistant and Behavioral Health.

Tulare - Kings Health Care Partnership - Healthcare

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

South Valley Industrial Collaborative - Manufacturing

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

Acquisition, Development & Retention; Policies and Regulations Impacting Business; and Infrastructure.

Tulare - Kings College and Career Collaborative - Multiple Industries

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

Biomethane Production - Green Energy

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

Valley Build - Construction

The SB-1-funded Valley Build High Road Construction Careers (HRCC) project is led by the Fresno Regional WDB and serves an expansive region that includes the following fourteen (14) counties: Alpine, Calaveras, Fresno, Kings, Inyo, Kern, Madera, Mariposa, Mono, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Tulare, and Tuolumne. The project provides inclusive access to MC-3 pre-apprenticeship training and related services that enable individuals from all backgrounds to qualify for employment and acceptance into apprenticeships in the skilled building and construction trades. A goal of the project is to build a network of community partners throughout the region to promote Valley Build and to recruit target candidates for pre-apprenticeship training.

IV. ENABLING UPWARD MOBILITY FOR ALL CALIFORNIANS

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

Working with Businesses that Provide Quality Jobs

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

High Road Jobs Strategy

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

Focus on Career Pathways

The SJVAC RPU boards offer regional career pathway strategies that begin with information. Career Pathways information is available through a regional initiative that culminated in the development of a website, www.careersinthevalley.com, which

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

Promoting Job Quality

The local boards promote job quality by looking for the best job matches for participants at all skill levels. They also do so through their investments, such as focusing on on-the-job training positions that pay wages above a certain level and only approving training that prepares individuals for high demand jobs in priority sectors. There is no structure through which a "region" can adopt policy. Policy is the purview of workforce development boards. Workforce leadership will continue to engage board members in discussions about job quality to determine what fits best with the policy framework of their local workforce systems.

Shared Target Populations and Targeted Service Strategies

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

Shared Populations

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

Targeted Service Strategies

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

Working with Businesses and Training Providers to Ensure that Historically Unserved and Underserved Communities have Equal Access

Each of the local boards represented by the SJVAC RPU supports and promotes equal access to all services and activities of its local workforce system. As such, workforce leaders and system staff will continue to use and will improve upon messages that communicate our commitment to equity.

Promoting Equal Access

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

Workforce System Commitment to Equity

As expressed in the introduction to this plan, the region's workforce leaders are committed to equity, diversity, inclusion and access in every aspect of their operations and programs. Several of the local boards have included within their PY 2021-24 Local Plans their intentions to communicate the workforce development board's position on equity. In many

cases, this may be in the form of a formal policy. As stated above, there is no structure for the adoption of policy at a regional level. However, it is possible that the boards can share their local-level efforts, and that a protocol for workforce system equity can be developed that would provide a framework for all boards as they consider the adoption of policies related to equity.

V. ALIGNING, COORDINATING, AND INTEGRATING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

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

Regional Service Strategies

Regional agreements, strategies and initiatives include the following:

Central California Workforce Collaborative Regional Agreement

For nearly a decade, the boards that comprise the SJVAC RPU have had a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in place that provides a framework for collaboration among the local boards and creates opportunities to coordinate, especially with regard to special projects and initiatives that cross local area boundaries. The purpose of the MOU is to maintain cooperative and mutually beneficial relationships. The MOU describe CCWC members as "a confederation of equals." The CCWC operates under a general working structure, rather than as an entity. Both the current and prior MOUs stress the importance of collaboration with regard to securing regional funding and 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 and sub-regional level; conduct formal and informal meetings under the CCWC name to discuss best practices; utilize the CCWC name in sponsorship materials for third party organizations; and, project by project, designate local workforce development boards as the "lead agency" for regional and sub-regional initiatives. Furthermore, the CCWC MOU establishes a format for meetings, which may be held in person, via electronic media, or through conference calls, and for keeping minutes of scheduled meetings. Responsibilities for organizing meetings rotate among the boards. The agreement is periodically reviewed and updated, confirming the value that the boards place on cooperation and bringing greater capacity and resources to the region.

Central Valley Industry Engagement Roundtable

Supporting regional and local efforts to serve business is the Central Valley Industry Engagement Roundtable (CVIER), which includes participation by all eight local boards in the Central Valley and Mother Lode WDB. Also participating in CVIER are EDD, the Small Business Development Center, the California Workforce Development Board, and the California Labor Federation. The group meets monthly to coordinate messaging and discuss rapid response and other strategies for the region. CVIER members have identified needs to increase staff knowledge about labor market information, Incumbent Worker Training, rapid response services, and sector partnerships.

Regional and Sub-Regional Grants

One of the longstanding benefits of collaboration among local boards in the Central Valley has been jointly securing competitive grants. Based on the focus of the proposed projects, collaborative grants may include participation by WDBs throughout the region or as few as two local boards. Recent examples of regional and sub-regional grants include:

- Veterans Employment Assistance Program: Stanislaus County (lead), Madera County, Merced County and San Joaquin County WDBs. (pending award)
- English Language Learner Grant (EIT with three county adult education partners): Merced County (lead), Stanislaus County and Madera County WDBs. (pending award)
- · Opioid Grant: Merced County (Lead), Kern, Inyo, Mono WDB's.
- <u>Prison to Employment Grant (P2E)</u>: San Joaquin County (lead), Stanislaus County, Merced County, Madera County, Fresno County, Tulare County, Kings County, and Kern/Inyo/Mono Counties WDBs.
- SB1 Grant: Fresno Regional (lead), San Joaquin County, Merced County, Mother Lode, Madera County, Kings County, Tulare County and Kern, Inyo, Mono WDBs.
- <u>Disability Employment Accelerator Grant, Veterans (DEA)</u>: Kern, Inyo, Mono (lead), and Kings County WDBs.

Regional Scaling of Local Models

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

Regional Administrative Cost Arrangements

While the region does not have any formal administrative costs arrangements in place, local boards' collaborative efforts do yield efficiencies. An example is a shared agreement with a one-stop operator that benefits five local boards. Madera County WDB manages as master agreement with the vendor (ProPath, Inc.), which separately invoices each

local workforce area for the services it provides. Participating WDBs include Madera County (lead), Stanislaus County, Merced County, San Joaquin County and Kern-Inyo-Mono.

Additional collaborative initiatives currently under consideration by the local boards, include:

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

VI. PRIORITY CONSIDERATIONS FOR PROGRAM YEARS 2021-24

Based on input that regional workforce leaders and stakeholders provided during discussions held throughout the planning process, the following topics have been identified as priorities for further examination, exploration, development, and/or enhancement as the regional partners implement the new four-year Plan. The Directors of the RPU's eight local boards will work with their WDB members, elected officials, business leaders, and local partners and stakeholders to set the agenda for review of these priorities and, following such review, determine where, when and how action should be taken.

Protocols and Policy Frameworks

- Draft a policy framework around quality jobs that could be shared with local boards and serve as a resource for development of policies at the local level.
- 2. Draft a policy framework covering equity, diversity, inclusion, and access which local boards could reference as they consider policies.

Recovery Strategies

- Determine how elected officials, local government, economic development, education, and workforce development can coordinate resources and develop joint strategies to support businesses and workers in recovery from the recessionary effects of the pandemic.
- 4. Evaluate the capacity of workforce, education, and support systems to meet the surge of demand as the pandemic subsides and tens of thousands of Valley residents all seek employment, training, education, childcare, transportation and other services over a short period of time. Develop plans to increase capacity.

- Assess the effects on various populations, such as women and Latinos, who, according to numerous reports, have been most significantly affected by and experienced the greatest losses as the results of the pandemic. Identify both broad-based and population-specific approaches to address community and individual needs.
- 6. Entry-level jobs in food service, hospitality, and retail have long served as "gateway" jobs for first time and other inexperienced workers. Jobs in these sectors have been severely impacted by the pandemic, with many businesses having closed with little or no likelihood of re-opening. Without sufficient availability of these jobs, the region and local areas will need to identify other options for entry-level jobs.
- 7. Develop strategies to assist vulnerable individuals and priority populations in securing employment within reopening, transitional, and post-pandemic job markets which are likely to be much more competitive than they were during a near full employment economy, which preceded the pandemic.
- Assess the need for services to address the stress and trauma that individuals, families and communities have experienced throughout the pandemic and how these effects may influence their participation in the workforce and performance on the job.
- Assess the capacity of workforce, education, and service agencies to rapidly
 mobilize services and deploy resources in response to a significant influx of grant
 funds were they to become available through federal programs.
- 10. Assess the extent to which jobs with companies in the Bay Area, across the country, and around the world are now available to Valley residents. Whether these jobs are in customer service, information technology, or another field, what does the availability of work from home jobs suggest for training and education programs offered in the region?

Demand Side Focus

- Determine the capacity in the region to support entrepreneurs through training, access to capital, and other resources/support.
- 12. As businesses express their evolving workforce needs to economic and workforce development professionals, including skills needed by workers, a strategy is required to communicate these needs rapidly to education partners to accelerate the enhancement/development and deployment of training to correspond to need.
- 13. Identify businesses' needs to retrain and/or upskill workers to meet new workplace demands, including changes brought about by the pandemic. Assess how commitment of limited resources to incumbent worker training will affect the

- balance of funding available to support individuals who are unemployed or are new entrants to the workforce.
- 14. Determine the extent to which small businesses, particularly those that are minority-owned, need support to recover, which may include for some, reopening strategies.

Supply Side Focus

- 15. Assess the extent to which skill loss has occurred among workers who have been unemployed for many months and determine what remedial or refresher training may be required whether through didactic instruction or work-based learning.
- Develop and implement training modules focused on communication, behaviors, and attitudes used during interactions (e.g., learning, interviews, meetings, work) via virtual platforms.
- 17. For young workers, who may be new entrants to the workforce, determine the effects of school closures and the implementation of online instruction on what and how well they have learned. Identify what supplemental instruction, remediation, tutoring and other services may be needed to address learning losses and academic skills gaps.
- 18. Increase the availability of skill transferability assessments to determine the extent to which an individual's skills, which were previous used in one industry, may be applicable to other jobs in that industry or to employment in another sector.
- Develop options for addressing the lack of digital access experienced by individuals and communities throughout the Central Valley. Options must address the needs for access to the Internet, hardware, and digital literacy skills.
- 20. With warehousing, manufacturing, agriculture and other jobs in the Central Valley making increasing use of technology, including AI and robotics, what training is needed for incumbent workers and job seekers?

Partnerships

- 21. Identify additional opportunities for community-based organizations to more effectively connect to the workforce system and to serve as points of access to education and workforce programs that support underserved and vulnerable populations in preparing for jobs and careers.
- 22. Assess the need to enhance or expand partnerships with organizations that address issues that have been magnified as a result of the pandemic, such as homelessness, food insecurity, addiction, and mental health.

Communications and Messaging

23. Assess customer recognition and understanding of workforce services throughout the Central Valley and of the brands used by providers. Identify strategies to increase awareness and understanding of the workforce system by key customer groups.

Regional Scaling of Locally Successful Models

- 24. Identify populations, industries and initiatives that could benefit from the use of skilled Navigators to increase the effectiveness of services and to improve the outcomes achieved by job seekers and businesses.
- 25. Assess the replicability of apprenticeship programs that have been implemented in various local areas and determine the need for and feasibility of upscaling these programs throughout the region or to specific areas.
- 26. Examine local initiatives to develop workers' skills for an economy that is changing due to climate initiatives and determine how such training could be expanded regionwide.
- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of services and training that have been implemented on virtual platforms and identify best practices that could be adopted throughout the region.

Several of the foregoing priority considerations are aligned with indicators established by the California Workforce Development Board that demonstrate coordination within regions. Over the four-year span of the SJVAC RPU Regional Plan, local boards will record and track efforts that are ultimately made in connection with these considerations.

VII. APPENDICES

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

Attachment 1: Stakeholder and Community Engagement Summary

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

Attachment 3: Signature Page

Attachment 1

Stakeholder and Community Engagement Summary

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

The Regional Economy – Through the Eyes of Business and the Community: The Four-Year Regional Plan will include an analysis of regional labor market data, growth industries and demand jobs. Workforce leaders, however, realize that data, no matter how recent, will not tell the full story of the regional economy, as COVID-19 has dramatically changed and continues to alter the economic landscape. As our plan must address the goals of the workforce system from 2021 to 2025, we want to supplement statistics with local experiences told in the voice of workers, businesses, and stakeholders.

This forum was held via Zoom on:

- December 17, 2020 (hosted by San Joaquin County WDB)
- January 7, 2021 (hosted by Madera County WDB)
- January 27, 2021 (conducted in Spanish and hosted by Stanislaus County WDB)
- One-hundred six (106) individuals attended the Regional Forum topic

Accelerating the Development of Career Pathways for Priority Sectors: Regional stakeholders have worked to develop career pathway programs that are aligned with regional workforce needs and result in industry-recognized credentials. As we embark upon planning for the next four years, we must address how business, education, and the workforce system can work together to strengthen and expand the development of career pathway programs that reflect the needs of industry throughout the region.

This forum was held via Zoom on:

- January 6, 2021 (hosted by Stanislaus County WDB)
- January 20, 2021 (hosted by Kern, Inyo, Mono WDB)
- Seventy (70) individuals attended the Regional Forum topic

Building a "Big Tent" Workforce System: Leaving no Worker Behind: While the workforce system serves everyone, individuals with barriers to employment take advantage of the system less often than other Valley Residents. Workforce programs should be easily accessible to all and make certain that everyone has access to a marketable set of skills leading to good jobs that enable self-reliance.

This forum was held via Zoom on:

- January 13, 2021 (hosted by Merced County WDB)
- January 14, 2021 (hosted by Fresno Regional WDB)
- February 3, 2021 (conducted in Spanish and hosted by Merced County WDB)
- · One-Hundred forty-six (146) individuals attended the Regional Forum topic

Creating a Pathway to the Middle Class: Imagine a workforce system capable of preparing every job seeker to enter a pathway to the middle class. Such a system would require unique approaches and strategies to eradicate barriers and build skills that businesses need to compete, grow.

This forum was held via Zoom on:

- January 21, 2021 (hosted by San Joaquin County WDB)
- January 28, 2021 (hosted by Kings County WDB)
- Seventy-eight (78) individuals attended the Regional Forum topic

Mode of Outreach	Target of Outreach	Summary of Attendance	Comments
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Fresno County Workforce Development Board	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site Kern Inyo Mono Counties Workforce Development Board		Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Kings County Workforce Development Board	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site Email, Social Media, Development Board		Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
		Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
		Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Stanislaus County Web Site Workforce Development Board		Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site Tulare County Workforce Investment Board		Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Adult Education Web Site Consortium		Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Adult Education/ Literacy	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site Board of Supervisors		Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.

Email, Social Media, Web Site	CalFRESH/SNAP Providers	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitations		Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	California Immigrant Policy Center	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	California Indian Manpower Consortium	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Career Technical Education	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Center for Business and Policy Research	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Center for Employment Opportunities	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Central Valley Immigrant Integration Collaborative	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Central Valley Regional Center	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Chamber of Commerce	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Childcare Service Web Site Providers		Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	City Ministry Network	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	City Planning and Development	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	City, County and State Government Officials	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Community Based Organizations	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Community Leaders	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Community Partnerships for Families	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site Community Services Corporation – Kern Women's Business Center		Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	County Office of Education	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Del Puerto Health Care District	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Delta Sierra Adult Education Alliance	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Department of Behavior Health	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Department of Child Support Services	Attended forums,	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Department of Economic Development	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Department of Human Services	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.

Email, Social Media, Web Site	Department of Probation	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Department of Rehabilitation	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Department of Social Services	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Disability Services	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Division of Apprenticeship Standards	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Education and Leadership Foundation	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Employment Development Department	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Employment Training Panel	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	English Language Learners Organizations	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Equus Workforce Solutions	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Faith Based Organizations	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Fresno Business Council	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Gateway Adult Education Network	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Goodwill Industries	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Healthcare Organizations	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Housing Authority	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Immigration Services	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Justice Involved Organizations	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	K-12 Education	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Labor Organizations	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	LearningQuest	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Members of the Public	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Municipalities	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Opportunity Stanislaus	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	OVCDC Tribal TANF	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Private Business	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.

SJVAC RPU

Email, Social Media, Web Site	Proteus Inc.	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Resource Development Associates	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Small Business Development Center	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Stanislaus Community Foundation	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	State Center Adult Education Consortium	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Superintendents and Administrators of Educational Organizations including Adult Schools, Community Colleges, State 4-Year Universities, Private Colleges	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	The Fresno Center	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Tulare Employment Connection	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Valley Mountain Regional Center	Attended forums.	Engaged in planning process.

Attachment 2

PU	IBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVE	D THAT DISAGREE WITH THE REGIONAL PLAN
1.	From: Date:	
Col	mment:	
2.	From:	Date:
Col	mment:	

Attachment	3
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	<u> Attachment</u>
SIGNATURE PAGE	
The following signatures represent approval of the San Planning Unit PY 2021-24 Regional Plan by the eight what comprise the region.	
or the Fresno Regional Workforce Development B o	oard:
Name, Chairperson	Date
For the Kern, Inyo, Mono Workforce Development B	oard:
Name, Title For the Kings County Workforce Development Boar	Date
or and rainge county working to percioping and	
Name, Title	Date
For the Madera County Workforce Development Boa	ard:
Name, Title	Date

Attachment 3

SIGNATURE	PAGE (cont.)	
For the Merced County Workforce Development Board:		
Name, Title	Date	
For the San Joaquin County Workforce De	evelopment Board:	
Name, Title	Date	
For the Stanislaus County Workforce Deve	elopment Board:	
Name, Title	Date	
For the Tulare County Workforce Develop r	ment Board:	
Name, Title	Date	