

West Tennessee Regional Plan Modification Program Years 2022 – 2024

The Local Workforce Development Areas of West Tennessee, **Southwest** serving Chester, Decatur, Hardeman, Hardin, Haywood, Henderson, Madison, McNairy, **Northwest** serving Benton, Carroll, Crockett, Dyer, Gibson, Henry, Lake, Obion, Weakley, and **Greater Memphis** serving Lauderdale, Tipton, Fayette, and Shelby Counties have prepared a Regional Plan for the 2022-2024 program years.

**The West TN Regional Plan is
OPEN FOR PUBLIC COMMENT MARCH 8-22, 2022**

and will be available at any American Job Center or online at www.NWTNjobs.org during this time. Submit comments or questions in writing to Jennifer Bane at 208 N. Mill Ave. Dyersburg, TN 38024.

A Public Listening Session has been scheduled for
MARCH 17, 2022 AT 5:30 PM
Zoom Meeting ID: 830 4496 7260, Passcode: 410867

All meetings are open to the public. For additional information on joining the meeting, contact Jennifer Bane at jbane@nwtworks.org or 731-286-3585.

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EOE. Auxiliary aids/services available upon request. TDD# 711.*



Contents

Economic and Workforce Analysis	2
Strategies for Service Integration	6
Vision, Goals, and Implementation Strategies	12
Attachment for Vision, Goals, and Implementation Strategies.....	16

Economic and Workforce Analysis

Utilizing regional data provided by the Workforce Insight Research and Reporting Engine Unit (WIR2ED) and comparing to information included in your current plans, share detail for the following:

1. How is the region changing in terms of demographics, labor supply, and occupational demand?

Per the Tennessee Economy 2020-2021 Reference Guide, the West TN region, consisting of the Northwest (NW), Southwest (SW), and Greater Memphis (GM) Local Workforce Development areas (LWDAs), saw the following changes between 2019 and 2020:

Demographics

The population in the West Region in 2020 was estimated at 1,569,363, a decrease of 0.04% over 2019. This is a slightly slower rate of decline than the previous year's decline of 0.12%. Only the SW area increased in population with an addition of an estimated 469 people, while the GM area lost an estimated 431 and the NW area an estimated 720 people. Females were 52% of the population in the West Region during 2020.

The lowest rate of higher educational attainment (attainment of some college or more for those 25 years of age or older) was in the NW, with a rate of 42.3% compared to the West Region's rate of 54% and the State's rate of 55.4%. Poverty rates decreased slightly in the West Region from 19.9% in 2018 to 18.8% in 2019. The NW had the highest poverty rate at 19%, just slightly above the West Region and 3.8% above the State's poverty rate of 15.2%. The GM area had a poverty rate of 18.8% and SW had a poverty rate of 18.5%.

Labor Supply

The labor force decreased over the year by 0.7%, which was 0.5% less than the amount the state decreased. The labor force participation rate in the West Region was 60.5%, just 0.9% lower than the State's rate of 61.4%. The GM area had the highest labor force participation rate at 63.8%, while NW had the lowest at 53.6%. Average unemployment rates increased in all three areas in the West Region, for a regional average of 8.8%, above the State's rate of 7.5%. The West Region also saw a 14.8% unemployment rate for youth ages 16 to 24, compared to the state rate of 11.1%, with SW having the highest rate at 18.5%, GM at 14.4%, and NW at 12.7%.

The percent of the unemployed with a disability in the West Region was 14.1%, 2.6% points higher than the State's percent of the unemployed with a disability of 11.5%. The GM area had the highest percentage of those unemployed with a disability at 15% while NW had the lowest percentage at 11.9%. The percent of those not in the labor force with a disability was 33.2%, slightly lower than the State's 33.7%. The NW had the highest percent of those not in the labor force with a disability at 42.6%, while the GM area had the lowest at 30%.

Occupational Demand

Total employment in the West Region, excluding agriculture and the self-employed, decreased from 695,438 to 656,438, a decrease of 5.4% or nearly 39,000 jobs. This rate of job growth was like that of the state. Only two counties in the region increased in employment from 2019 to 2020, fewer counties than the previous year. The average number of establishments increased to 33,930 over the year and payroll increased by 2.4% to \$38 billion. The average annual industry wage in the region, calculated by dividing the total payroll by the average number of workers, increased by 2% in 2020 to \$46,554, about \$1,000 more than the state average. The median occupational wage increased by 2.7% to \$37,128, just below the state median.

The transportation and material moving occupational group was the largest in the West Region in May 2020, according to the annual Occupational Employment Survey, which provides data on all industries except agriculture, the self-employed, and a few not covered by Tennessee's unemployment insurance system. Employment was 14.8% of total employment in the region, above the state's rate of 11.4%, and exceeded 100,000 workers, with average entry level wages about at the level of all occupations in the Region (\$22,937). Salaries of experienced workers in the group averaged \$45,157. Other major occupational groups employees with greater than five percent of employment in the Region included:

- Office and Administrative Support workers- 94,260 (13.7%)
- Sales and Related workers- 58,860 (8.6%)
- Food Preparation and Serving workers- 53,610 (7.8%)
- Production workers -56,270 (8.2%)

- Healthcare Practitioners and Technical workers -49,870 (7.3%)
- Management workers-40,480 (5.9%)
- Education, Training, and Library workers– 36,100 (5.2%)

Compared to state occupational employment, the West Region has smaller percentages of food preparation and serving, and sales and related employees, and a slightly smaller proportion of production employees (8.6% vs. 8.7%). For most occupational groups listed above, the West Region median salaries are lower with a few exceptions such as the computer and mathematical occupations. Business and financial occupations and healthcare support pay more in the West compared to the State median wages.

2. What sectors/industries/occupations/skills are in demand and targets of opportunity?

In-Demand Sectors

Per the Tennessee Economy 2020-2021 Reference Guide, from 2018 to 2028, a total of 949,460 jobs are forecast to be created – 43,400 new jobs and 906,060 from exits and transfers out of occupations. The five largest sectors/industries by projected 2028 employment are:

- Education and Health Services (186,250)
- Trade, Transportation, and Utilities (169,930)
- Professional and Business Services (119,110)
- Leisure and Hospitality (71,250)
- Manufacturing (70,560)

In-Demand Industries

Per the Tennessee Economy 2020-2021 Reference Guide, the below table indicates the top industries for the three largest sectors listed above:

Education and Health Services	Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	Professional and Business Services
Educational Services	Couriers and Messengers	Employment Services
Hospitals	Merchant Wholesalers, Durable Goods	Architecture, Engineering, and Related Services
Ambulatory Health Care Services	Truck Transportation	Investigation and Security Services
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	Warehousing and Storage	Management, Scientific, and Technical Consulting Services
Social Assistance	Building Material and Garden Equipment and Supplies Dealers	Advertising, Public Relations, and Related Services
	Support Activities for Transportation	Computer Systems Design and Related Services
	Transit and Ground Passenger Transportation	Office Administrative Services
	Wholesale Electronic Markets and Agents and Brokers	Accounting, Tax Preparation, Bookkeeping, and Payroll Services
		Services to Buildings and Dwellings
		Facilities Support Services

Additionally, a recent report by the Tennessee Advanced Energy Business Council identifies industries included in the advanced energy (AE) sector as utilities and construction, manufacturing, information, professional, scientific, and technical services, and other services. The report defines AE activities as “...being directly involved with researching, developing, producing, manufacturing, distributing, selling, or implementing components, goods, or services related to alternative fuels and vehicles; energy efficiency; renewable, nuclear, and natural gas electricity generation; smart grid; and other related technologies.” The below table indicates the largest industries with expected growth for the three largest sectors impacted by AE in the West region:

AE Manufacturing	AE Construction	AE Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
Medical Equipment and Supplies Manufacturing	Building Equipment Contractors	Management, Scientific, and Technical Consulting Services

Motor Vehicle Parts Manufacturing	Foundation, Structure, and Building Exterior Contractors	Architectural, Engineering, and Related Services
Electrical Equipment Manufacturing	Nonresidential Building Construction	Computer Systems Design and Related Services
Petroleum and Coal Products Manufacturing	Building Finishing Contractors	Other Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
Other Miscellaneous Manufacturing	Residential Building Construction	Scientific Research and Development Services
Commercial and Service Industry Machinery Manufacturing	Utility System Construction	

In-Demand Occupations

As listed in Appendix A of the Tennessee Economy 2020-2021 Reference Guide, the below table indicates the top growing middle-skill occupations or those with the most openings for the above largest industries:

Education and Health Services	Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	Professional and Business Services
Registered Nurses	Laborers and Freight Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	This is the most rapidly growing sector in the West Region. The industries employing more than 1,000 workers and expected to grow through 2028 are listed above. Many of these are considered AE industries. Jobs related to those industries are listed below.
Licensed Practical and Vocational Nurses	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	
Clinical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians	Packers and Packagers, Hand	
Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedic	Light Truck or Delivery Services Drivers	
Medical Records and Health Information Technicians	Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	
Respiratory Therapists	Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Technical and Scientific Products	

Per the Tennessee Economy 2020-2021 Reference Guide, the table to the right summarizes the number of new jobs projected for the decade ending in 2028 for the most prominent occupations in the AE industries listed above. Furthermore, since the development of the report, Ford announced that the Memphis Regional Megasite will be the location of Blue Oval City, a 3,600-acre mega campus where production of next generation all-electric F-Series trucks will begin in 2025. The project will result directly in the creation of 5,800 new jobs in West Tennessee and is anticipated to generate nearly 30,000 new jobs indirectly to support the site's operations. The West Region will incorporate the identified occupational needs of Blue Oval City into service strategies as they are finalized by the Ford team.

West Region - Most New Jobs in the Advanced Energy Industries	Estimated New Jobs 2018-28
Advanced Energy Manufacturing	
Industrial Engineers	80
First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	50
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	30
Advanced Energy - Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	350
Customer Service Representatives	150
Computer Systems Analysts	130
Veterinary Assistants and Laboratory Animal Caretakers	120
Civil Engineers	110
Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	100
Architects, Except Landscape and Naval	90
Management Analysts	90
Veterinary Technologists and Technicians	60
Veterinarians	60
Advanced Energy - Utilities and Construction	
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	280
Construction Laborers	130
Sheet Metal Workers	60
Helpers--Electricians	50
Roofers	40
Construction Managers	30

In-Demand Skills

Per the West Tennessee Workforce Region Report, below are the top 10 in-demand job certifications and tools and technologies, listed in order from greatest to least demand:

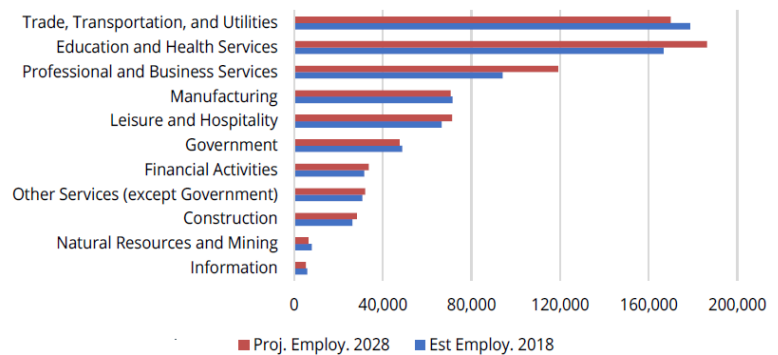
In-Demand Job Certifications	In-Demand Tools & Technologies
AHA CPR & First Aid Certifications	Microsoft Office
Nursing Credentials & Certifications	Forklift
Commercial Driver's License	Cash Register

American Institute of CPAs Certifications	Ladders
National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians	Microsoft PowerPoint
FINRA Financial Securities Professionals	Personal Protective Equipment
National Board for Respiratory Care	Motor Vehicles
Nephrology Nursing Certification Commission	Microsoft Word
American Red Cross First Aid Certifications	Structured Query Language (SQL)
North American Transportation Management Institute	Cell Phone

Additionally, the report’s comparison of educational level of job postings versus candidates shows a high school diploma or equivalent, a bachelor’s degree, or no minimum education requirement as the three largest educational requirements. While the percentage of potential candidates is larger than the percentage of job openings requiring a high school diploma or equivalent, the number of job postings requiring a bachelor’s degree is larger than the percentage of potential candidates with a bachelor’s degree.

3. Describe the regional sectors/industries/occupations that are priorities, in order of priority, and how these were determined. Explain how the status of growing, maturing, and emerging was factored into the ranking.

Accounting for a focus on mature and growing sectors, private, rather than public sector employment, and middle-skill jobs with self-sufficient wages, the Regional Planning Council (RPC) and partners have identified the top in-demand sectors, industries, and occupations, in order of priority based on current size and then growth of the sector in the region per the graph to the right as found on page 38 of the



Tennessee Economy 2020-2021 Reference Guide:

Sectors	Industries	Top Occupations (with New Jobs)
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	Couriers and Messengers Merchant Wholesalers, Durable Goods Truck Transportation Warehousing and Storage Building Material and Garden Equipment and Supplies Dealers Support Activities for Transportation Transit and Ground Passenger Transportation Wholesale Electronic Markets and Agents and Brokers	Laborers and Freight Stock, and Material Movers, Hand (5,780) Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators (1,060) Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers (1,020) Light Truck or Delivery Services Drivers (370) Packers and Packagers, Hand (330) Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Technical and Scientific Products (270)
Education and Health Services	Educational Services Hospitals Ambulatory Health Care Services Nursing and Residential Care Facilities Social Assistance	Registered Nurses (2,439) Licensed Practical and Vocational Nurses (971) Clinical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians (563) Respiratory Therapists (232) Medical Records and Health Information Technicians (148) Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedic (131)
Professional and Business Services	Management, Scientific, and Technical Consulting Services Architectural, Engineering, and Related Services Computer Systems Design and Related Services Other Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services Scientific Research and Development Services	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand (350) Customer Service Representatives (150) Computer Systems Analysts (130) Veterinary Assistants and Laboratory Animal Caretakers (120) Civil Engineers (110)

		Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists (100) Architects, Except Landscape and Naval (90) Management Analysts (90) Veterinary Technologists and Technicians (60)
Manufacturing	Medical Equipment and Supplies Manufacturing Motor Vehicle Parts Manufacturing Electrical Equipment Manufacturing Petroleum and Coal Products Manufacturing Other Miscellaneous Manufacturing Commercial and Service Industry Machinery Manufacturing	Industrial Engineers (80) First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers (50) Industrial Machinery Mechanics (50) Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers (30)
Construction	Building Equipment Contractors Foundation, Structure, and Building Exterior Contractors Nonresidential Building Construction Building Finishing Contractors Residential Building Construction Utility System Construction	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers (280) Construction Laborers (130) Sheet Metal Workers (60) Helpers—Electricians (50) Roofers (40) Construction Managers (30)

While towards the bottom of the list of largest and growing sectors, due to the projected construction needs of Blue Oval City, and related housing development needs, Construction has been identified as an emerging priority sector.

a. Explain how the education and skills needs of the workforce and employment needs of the employer, have an impact on growing, maturing, and emerging employers.

For emerging employers, skills gaps may be seen in that new skills may be needed for new occupations. Existing programs may not be sufficient to meet the new needs and may require the development of new training programs. Growing employers may also have a need for new skills, or they may have a higher demand for skills produced through existing training programs, requiring increased capacity for training. Increasing capacity can go beyond expanding existing training programs to also include the development of registered apprenticeship programs in which employers can “grow their own” skilled workforce. Apprenticeship programs may also be beneficial for mature employers who may be faced with a workforce nearing retirement and a shortage of new workers to fill the anticipated gap. Employers can benefit from an apprenticeship program that utilizes the knowledge, skills, and abilities of existing experienced workers to train new workers. Providing access to labor market information to determine baseline skills and knowledge of in-demand jobs is crucial to determining skill gaps as well as the compatibility index of declining occupations compared to in-demand, growth occupations. Coupling this data with local employers serving in an advisory role capacity, training programs can be customized to ensure providers are covering the gap.

Strategies for Service Integration

Utilizing the information provided in the Economic and Workforce Analysis section, describe how the needs will be met through strategic service delivery:

1. Describe how supportive services are coordinated within the region. Include how your region is implementing local practices at the regional level for those supportive services based on participant need (whether physical, virtual, or both).

In order to effectively provide training services that will equip the labor force with in-demand skills, supportive services must be considered. West TN has a diverse labor pool including populations with significant barriers to employment (low income, lack of transportation or childcare, no high school diploma, etc.). Supportive service payments for WIOA enrolled participants help to address these barriers by allowing individuals to participate in training and workforce activities to secure employment. Braiding funds and leveraging resources with multiple regional partner organizations also assists in these efforts. Transportation and other supportive services will be guided by regional policy alignment. The region seeks to adopt a cooperative support services policy to address the individual needs of participants so that they may accomplish their goals. By doing so, participants can

positively contribute to West TN's workforce pipeline and the demands of the region's employers. The RPC will periodically evaluate related local policies and procedures to ensure regional coordination.

Transportation and Other Supportive Services

West TN recognizes the barriers individuals wishing to pursue training and employment services may face including transportation, childcare, affordable housing, etc. Our network of AJCs offers a wide variety of supportive services to help individuals overcome significant barriers to employment. The region also recognizes these needs are ever changing, as evidenced by the circumstances with COVID-19. With the shift to virtual delivery of education and training, the need for laptops, computers, and internet service is on the rise. Parts of the region have modified their supportive services policy to include allowable funds for a one-time purchase of laptops to help meet this need. The Virtual AJC (VAJC) is also available as a regional tool to alleviate transportation barriers and help with matching the appropriate supportive services based off of the customers' needs. The RPC will continue to be mindful of the needs of customers and discuss appropriate actions that may be taken to better align these supportive services across the region.

Regional Organizations

Each local area in West TN maintains Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with the required AJC partners to define the mutually agreed upon roles and responsibilities of each partner for the operation of the One-Stop Service Delivery system. Examples of AJC partner support services currently offered include:

- Test fee stipends to customers seeking to earn a high school equivalency credential.
- A one-time payment for work-related expenses such as appropriate work attire, uniforms, tools, medical physicals, background checks, drug screens, industry certifications, driver's license fees, or other employment-related needs are available to Work Experience participants.
- Childcare support in the form of a weekly stipend paid to a licensed daycare facility.
- Transportation stipends.

Special attention to transportation support services is needed as this is one of the greatest barriers for many AJC customers. We partner with the local Human Resource Agencies and other community agencies to offer transportation services. Each of the local areas currently have transportation stipends available to eligible participants who attend occupational skills training programs through approved training providers. The RPC will continue to review each local areas supportive services policy for best practices on how we can align toward a regional service strategy. Partnerships for economic relief and supportive services are also being provided through various government and community organizations, including:

- United Way of West TN's 211 Hub of resources (childcare, food, utility assistance, virtual learning, and more)
- Other regional organizations providing childcare and related assistance such as TN Department of Human Services (DHS), Boys & Girls Clubs, and YMCAs
- Goodwill Career Solutions Center
- Non-profit roundtables (as a platform to market workforce activities and create new partnerships to break down barriers across West TN's vulnerable populations).

2. Describe the coordination of activities between regional economic development agencies and workforce system service providers.

Realizing the transformative period ahead with the implementation of the Blue Oval City, West TN strives to increase access to education, training, and employment, particularly for those with significant barriers to employment, align education, workforce, and economic development, improve quality and labor market relevance of workforce investment, education, and economic development efforts, promote the improvement in the structure and delivery of services, increase economic self-sufficiency, meet employer needs, and enhance the productivity and competitiveness of TN. A primary strategy for the American Job Center (AJC) partners to engage employers, is to engage with all other economic and workforce development partners including Chambers of Commerce, TN Department of Economic and Community Development (ECD), regional economic

development districts, training providers, Small Business Development Centers, Regional BST members, etc. Regional ECD partners host quarterly collaboration sessions designed to coordinate services and share information. By including a variety of stakeholders in our employer engagement strategy, we are able to use the combined strengths and resources to meet the needs of our employer community.

a. Describe the projected employer engagement strategy under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to better connect business with well trained and qualified applicants.

The Regional Planning Council's Business Services subcommittee is charged with coordinating employer engagement efforts among WIOA programs and partners across the three local areas to ensure a regional, streamlined, employer engagement strategy focused on the prioritized sectors, industries, and occupations named above. Led by the Deputy Director for the Northwest area, who oversees Business Services in the local area, the Business Services subcommittee meets quarterly and includes each Board's Business Services staff, ECD and chamber partners, Vocational Rehabilitation business services staff, and private sector employer representatives. The goals of the subcommittee are to increase the group's awareness of employer needs in order to meet those needs through services available to employers and regional efforts such as sector-based initiatives, job fairs, and career exploration events. Strategies to meet these goals and connect employers to well-trained and qualified applicants include, but are not limited to:

- i. Maintaining highly qualified, well-trained Business Services staff who are fully equipped to develop and maintain relationships with employers, understand employers' needs and how to meet those needs, and who have a vast knowledge of not only AJC services to employers, but also those available through other partner programs.
- ii. Standardized branding so it is easy for applicants and employers to recognize AJC services.
- iii. Offering a standard minimum menu of services to include On-the-Job Training (OJT) grants, Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) grants as funding is available and / or through the use of Coursera for cost-free training options, apprenticeship support, connection to training providers, job postings and recruitment of applicants, job fairs including virtual through the Premier Virtual platform or blended with in-person and virtual option, providing labor market information, sector strategies, and connection to target populations and related services, such as justice-involved individuals and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit.
- iv. Connecting with the Tennessee Pathways model and RPC's Career Pathways subcommittee to further develop talent pipelines and increase supply of skilled labor for growing occupations and those experiencing high rates of attrition through retirements.
- v. Evaluating provided labor market information to enable employers to make the most informed decisions and extend competitive employment offers to jobseekers. For example, staff will assist with evaluating whether wages are competitive, compatibility of applicants' skills to the skills needed by the employer, anticipated retirements and new entrants to the workforce, and commuting patterns of the workforce.
- vi. Social media outreach promoting job postings from Jobs4TN.gov, job fairs, services, etc. to attract job applicants, but also other employers who desire to utilize this method of free advertising. Live streaming videos for hiring events, including interviewing management or long-time employees about the benefits of the company, have been equally successful.
- vii. Seeking out employer organizations, such as the Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM), Plant Manager organizations, Main Street Associations, Chambers of Commerce, Small Business Development Centers, etc. to share information about AJC services.
- viii. Making traditional "cold calls" to individual businesses to explain how the AJC can meet the company's workforce needs, and how such services may increase competitiveness of the company.
- ix. Gathering input from private sector partners and Board members to ensure outreach and services are value-added to employers. Board members are targeted for service use and peer sharing and engagement in their industry sector.
- x. Engagement of all partners facilitated by the One-Stop Operators (OSOs) through regular functional team meetings and sharing information regarding new job orders, upcoming job fairs, and on-the-job training opportunities.

b. How will the region measure the effectiveness of the strategy for all stakeholders, including key performance indicator (KPI) measures?

As a region, West TN utilizes Jobs4TN data to track the overall progress of most services within an AJC. Entering service data into Jobs4TN will allow the region to track progress towards the federal performance measures for employers, once implemented, for market penetration and repeat customers. Baseline data will be reviewed by the RPC's Business Services subcommittee for consideration of possible regional goals prior to state negotiated goals being implemented. While each area may be assigned a proportionate percentage of the regional goals, it is the responsibility of the region as a whole to monitor progress toward successful achievement and hold each local area accountable for measures. Progress will be presented quarterly to the RPC as a matter of transparency for all partners and to validate data. If a corrective action plan is needed by any area to explain and to submit a strategy for improvement, those plans will also be presented during quarterly meetings. Additionally, performance and self-created and tracked partner dashboards are used to measure the effectiveness of those partners according to the recognized regional measures and, when combined, present an ongoing picture of the workforce ecosystem across the area.

West TN strives to streamline processes for both employer and jobseeker customers and utilizes surveys to measure system satisfaction. These surveys explore the effectiveness of current services and the overall quality of customer experience. Both jobseekers and employers measure the ease of workforce system use and likelihood of utilizing the system in the future. Opportunities for direct feedback, concerns or suggestions are taken back to the RPC for consideration. The RPC's subcommittees also regularly discuss ways to make the experience more unified across the West Region in an attempt to improve the customer experience from local region to local region. Best practices are shared and implemented to ensure high quality service to our customers and to ensure active engagement across the region. It is the long-term goal for the system experience to be seamless between local areas. Common areas of synergy surround the intake process and service to employers who cross multiple areas. It becomes increasingly important to minimize duplication and administrative burden on employers to increase effective utilization of the workforce system, particularly with the development of the Blue Oval City.

3. What new and existing regional service delivery strategies with workforce system partners will be used or expanded based on a promising return on investment (ROI) for job seekers and employers, including regional education and training needs?

The West TN region continues to utilize the Regional Business Services subcommittee, as well as local Business Services Teams, to develop and maintain strong partnerships with local and regional businesses as part of its regional service delivery strategy. This includes access to the various employer services available in Jobs4TN, as well as work-based learning programs such as On-the-Job Training (OJT) and Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) to upgrade the skills of new and existing employees. Funding for these employer training programs allows for a successful ROI, as many organizations do not have the training dollars to upskill their employees and are looking for additional support.

To expand on IWT strategies, the region plans to increase usage of the large catalog of course opportunities offered through Coursera for education and training needs. This will allow for a customized approach to include various courses that can be compiled, based on a specific employer's training needs, at no cost. The region believes this will be a beneficial option to offer, especially for our local areas without funds specifically allocated for IWT year-round. Additionally, a new focus on layoff aversion will also offer IWT opportunities throughout the region with goals of job retention, advancement opportunities, and increased wages.

Other strategies that will continue, or be expanded, include:

- Apprenticeships, to include employers with a regional presence
- Regional job fairs (annual), such as the West TN Virtual Regional Job Fair held in September 2021
- Employer forums and other events (bi-annual)
- Building workforce pipelines for new and existing industries, including Blue Oval City

- These include work-based learning pipelines with our youth in partnership with local school systems, reentry pipelines through partnerships with local jails and TN Department of Correction, and individuals with disabilities through partnerships with Vocational Rehabilitation, to name a few.
- Utilization of the Virtual AJC to reach individuals that may not be able to physically visit an AJC
- Engagement with faith-based organizations, to include roundtable events to discuss needs and match with appropriate partner services
- Additions of access points throughout the region to introduce AJC services and increase enrollments to various partner programs
- Designing career pathways for in-demand sectors for both youth and adult populations
- Utilization of the Mobile American Job Centers for job search, resume assistance, and other services delivered remotely, as well as to facilitate hiring events and screening for employers
- Utilization of the three RPC subcommittees to collaborate on regional initiatives, breakdown barriers, streamline service delivery, and ensure a regional team approach

4. What plans are being made at the regional level to ensure more consistent and efficient service delivery, training opportunities, as well as enhanced performance and reporting structures across the region? These may include administrative and/or programmatic activities that are planned, or currently occurring, to ensure a more robust collaboration between the local areas in the region.

To ensure more consistent and efficient service delivery, providers and other partners collaborate regularly to provide technical assistance and share best practices. As an example, Southwest's Career Service Provider (CSP) is new to Tennessee and has collaborated with Northwest's CSP on multiple occasions to adopt successful strategies in serving participants and align services to better meet the needs of the West region. When customers cross regions, either by work or home address, it is the long-term goal for the system experience to be seamless between local areas.

To ensure consistent levels of training opportunities across the local areas, quarterly reviews of the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) providers are now performed as a joint exercise and discussed at each RPC meeting. This is intended to more closely align the training being received across the region and across providers. The local areas also streamline processes when assisting partners that are accessing services across multiple areas, so they do not experience the artificial barriers of local workforce area lines. Contractual agreements will be established where a company's headquarters is located, and eligibility of a jobseeker customer will be determined where a worker resides.

Several considerations regarding administrative activities have been, and continue to be, explored for regional coordination and collaboration. These include Northwest and Southwest exploring the potential of a partnership for fiscal management, or possibly a business services partnership in which Southwest would contract with Northwest to provide streamlined business services (solutions) to better serve our employer customers. Additional discussion for this will take place over the next six months. Other ideas include grant opportunities, regional planning and projects, and employer trainings.

The Regional Planning Council has enhanced performance and reporting structures by incorporating the presentation of local area dashboards, performance scorecard, and KPI results on each quarterly meeting agenda. This has proven to be beneficial in that it allows the RPC partners to see each local area's progress, as well as struggles, towards goals and share best practices for improvements as a region. Should an area fall behind in obtaining their goals, the RPC may request that the area submit a corrective action plan. The RPC is also still considering the implementation of a regional dashboard to show reporting on a more consistent level, with each area contributing data and the responsibility of compiling the information rotating between each of the areas. In addition, the RPC is also looking more closely at how to monitor and report out on employer activity codes in VOS in a regional effort to support the goal of increasing these activities across the state.

- a. Describe how the Regional Planning Councils (RPCs) are making efforts to ensure regional policy drives alignment with local boards and how Chief Elected Officials support this effort to drive regional performance with outcome-based accountability.**

The Executive Committee of the RPC will continue evaluation of various local area policies and

procedures to ensure regional coordination and enhance regional performance. These will be brought before the subcommittees, as appropriate, for additional recommendations and input, such as the Job Seeker Services subcommittee reviewing local supportive services policies for alignment, the Business Services subcommittee reviewing local work-based training policies, and the Career Pathways subcommittee reviewing opportunities for replication of successful work-based learning initiatives across the region. Furthermore, local boards and Chief Local Elected Officials will support regional performance and outcome-based accountability through:

- Regional goal of sharing best practices to be adopted by each local board
- Development of a regional dashboard to be shared with Chief Elected Officials for comparison and accountability
- Engaging local board chairs, local board members, and local elected officials in the regional planning process including extending meeting invitations to them and including updates on regional efforts in local meetings

5. Describe your regional strategy to reach individuals in priority populations (recipients of public assistance, low-income individuals, individuals who are basic skills deficient, and veterans). How will you ensure they are included in work-based learning and other innovative practices to improve their employability and viability in a rapidly changing workforce?

The expansion of access points has been a focus in the Greater Memphis area over the 2020 program year. Using the same model, the entire region is looking to expand the number of access points throughout West Tennessee due to low foot traffic in the AJCs after a slow recovery from Covid. With an increase in access points at libraries, local DHS offices, schools, faith-based organizations, and other locations, AJC staff will have increased flexibility to meet potential clients where they are with the goal of eliminating transportation and access barriers faced by priority populations within the region. The decrease in the number of AJCs to manage will provide the three OSOs more time to strategize collectively with partners for improved service delivery. The Virtual AJC system will be a valuable tool in the access points for connecting individuals with WIOA programs.

West TN will ramp up outreach efforts by distributing marketing materials to community partners and by participating in events focused on priority populations within the region. Because the use of technology has seen a dramatic rise since the pandemic, there will be an increase in social media presence to reach youth, veterans, and other special populations. Business Solutions staff in the region will also play a vital role in the increase of opportunities for special populations. In order to increase training and employment opportunities for justice-involved individuals, there will be increased collaboration with education partners and employers. Business Solutions staff will drive efforts to connect employers to job seeking justice-involved individuals. Business solutions staff will work in tandem with VR Counselors to assist VR clients in obtaining employment.

To improve employability in a rapidly changing workforce environment, the West region is exploring a new idea of conducting a reverse virtual job fair for specific target populations in collaboration with the Job Seeker Services subcommittee and the Business Services subcommittee. Candidates would be those actively pursuing employment such as those participating in AJC job readiness workshops, completing training, and conducting job searches. This would include our Adult Education customers/graduates, justice-involved individuals, veterans, and others. Utilizing the Premier Virtual platform, candidates could build their “booth” to display their resume and other credentials. The Business Services subcommittee would market the event to employers, and employers would log on at their convenience during a specified timeframe to view candidate booths and interact, to include virtual interviews with candidates of their choice.

Coordinated veteran-focused events, reentry programs, youth work-based learning programs, and Manufacturing Day events for high school students and their parents will all continue to be components of the West Region strategy to reach target populations, prepare them for a career, and put them on a successful path forward.

Vision, Goals, and Implementation Strategies

This section will outline how the LWDB(s) will coordinate the regional workforce, education, and economic development activities with regional activities that are carried out in the local areas. The responses must illustrate that business, education and workforce development stakeholders have provided input and agree with the plan.

1. Utilizing the State’s key objectives (listed in Section I(B) above), define the region’s strategic vision to support local economic growth.

Based upon input from local and regional stakeholders, including business, education, and workforce development stakeholders, the Regional Planning Council (RPC) developed a vision of the workforce boards in West Tennessee. West Tennessee seeks to foster a region where skilled workers contribute to thriving businesses, economic growth, and a high quality of life. To support a healthy regional economy where all West Tennesseans have – or are on a path to – meaningful employment and a family sustaining wage, and where all employers are able to fill jobs in demand, the goals of the West Region are to have:

- Clear connection to current industry/employers,
- Clear pipeline development infrastructure,
- Clear integration with economic development, and
- Outcome visibility- clear data/reporting and predictive analysis.

To achieve the goals listed above, the West TN region will carryout the activities listed in the Attachment for Vision, Goals, and Implementation Strategies. Furthermore, the region will fulfill these goals by achieving the following objectives:

a. Creating an Integrated Intake System to Efficiently Deliver Services

- Effective utilization of Jobs4TN across programs with access to the system.
- Encouraging cross agency and combined efforts to ensure a full continuum of services for the people we serve and develop a more customer centric intake and flow that not only incorporates traditional WIOA partners but also the many partners across the system.
- Eliminating duplication and leveraging dollars to provide more opportunities to the existing and emerging workforce through co-enrollment and braiding of resources.
- Co-locating, whenever possible, traditional WIOA/AJC partners as well as other partners like TANF, Section 8/Subsidized Housing, Rental and Utility Assistance Programs, United Way, training providers, and non-profits specializing in specific populations would be available for actual warm handoffs rather than an email or system referral.

b. Creating a Shared Vision for Supporting Tennesseans with the Greatest Number of Barriers to Enter the Workforce

- Expanding access to employment, training, education and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment, by focusing services on those with the greatest barriers, including Youth, justice-involved individuals, individuals with disabilities, etc.
- Increasing access points at libraries, local DHS offices, schools, faith-based organizations, and other locations, so that AJC staff will have increased flexibility to meet potential clients where they are with the goal of eliminating transportation and access barriers faced by priority populations within the region.
- Coordinating with Adult Education to provide educational training on-site for companies who agree to hire high school dropouts, thereby opening the door to employment for many workers without a high school diploma, and meeting employer needs.
- Coordinating with Vocational Rehabilitation, TANF, RESEA, SNAP E&T, and Veterans programs to increase co-enrollment, braid resources, and host regional events targeted toward these special populations, such as a designated day to host veteran specific job fairs under the title of “Red, White and You.”
- Enhancing career exploration and pathways through regional and annual events such as Manufacturing Day Career Awareness events, the Pathways2Possibilities event for 8th graders and high school students, and youth-focused training and employment opportunities.

c. Creating a Trained Workforce to Meet Current Industry Needs

- Building employer-led industry sector partnerships focused on better understanding of the skills that employers need and connecting skilled workers to those opportunities.
- Creating career pathways from high school, postsecondary education / training to the workforce.
- Improving access to activities leading to a recognized postsecondary credential through the use of ITAs and supportive services in partnership with other AJC programs such as Vocational Rehabilitation, SNAP Employment & Training or TAA, TN Promise, and TN Reconnect.

d. Creating New Dashboards to Measure the Effectiveness of the Integrated Workforce Strategy

- Utilizing the Business Services, Jobseeker Services, and Career Pathways subcommittees to identify specific, measurable, goals to fulfill the strategies identified in the regional plan and achieve the region’s strategic vision.
- Developing dashboards for identifying progress towards established goals and reviewing progress at quarterly Regional Planning Council meetings.
- Striving to implement real-time, publicly available dashboards to convey the activities and outcomes of the workforce system in West TN.

e. Creating a Simple and Effective Engagement Experience for All Candidates

- Creating a system experience to be seamless between local areas, to the degree possible, through a common intake form, uniform service policies across the region, such as similar transportation and incentives policies.
- Minimizing duplication and administrative burden on employers to increase effective utilization of the workforce system.
- Using surveys to measure system satisfaction.
- Continuing collaboration and sharing of best practices through the RPC’s subcommittees.

2. Describe any regional partnerships, new collaborations, or innovative practices the RPC is considering pursuing.

As described in the Strategies for Service Integration section above, and in following questions, the West TN region is collaborating on a variety of regional partnerships and innovative practices including:

- Aligning Business Services strategies through a regional subcommittee, coordination with all economic development agencies and workforce partners, consistency of services across the region, sector strategies and career pathways focused on the target sectors, regional events, and regionally aligned outreach strategies.
- Aligning Jobseeker Service strategies through a regional subcommittee, targeted outreach and services to priority populations, regional events, virtual services, increased use of access points, connecting individuals to career pathways, and consistency in training and supportive services across the region.
- Ramping up efforts and services to prepare for the transformational economic development coming through Blue Oval City including collaborating on several projects for outside funding to support the overall economic competitiveness and prosperity of West TN, such as the Opportunity Now! submission for the EDA Good Jobs Challenge and the GROWWTH project through the Tennessee Department of Human Services’ TANF Opportunity Act.
- Increasing services through additional access points and the establishment of a formalized kiosk network throughout the region as championed by the Greater Memphis area.

a. Is your RPC considering a request for statewide funds to support regional initiatives (training, other)? If so, what activities will your region plan to support utilizing statewide funds?

West TN is in a peculiar position of having low population counts across the region, outside of Shelby County, driving low funding allocation percentages each year; while, at the same time, the region is having to ramp up efforts and services to prepare for the transformational economic development coming through Blue Oval City. As a result of this conflict, the LWDAs of West TN may need to seek additional funding support from the State of Tennessee to ensure we are best addressing this unique period of growth.

One such idea to increase efficiency while increasing services is the establishment of a formalized kiosk network. Championed by Greater Memphis, this kiosk system was designed to meet that region’s goal

of increasing equitable access to services in historically underserved communities. However, as the pandemic and recovery has played out, the West TN Grand Division as a whole has recognized the need to provide services in a different way. The dramatic shift to virtual services across the country during the pandemic has highlighted the willingness of the public and providers to engage in these types of service delivery. The kiosk system is the next, more intentional and robust way, to continue this virtual delivery. The goals of the kiosk network are:

- To better serve customers “where they are,”
- Reduce overhead of a brick-and-mortar AJC while still actively providing access to services, and
- Operate more efficiently by allowing a single staff person to service multiple kiosks from a central location.

The Grand Division is also keenly aware that the creation of Blue Oval City will have dramatic impacts on the services we provide and our capacity to do so. While the need is still unknown, the local LWDA can reasonably foresee a need to request Statewide funding specific to this initiative; whether it be increased Incumbent Worker Training funds to upskill current workers in West TN, career exploration funds to ensure our young people have exposure to the types of careers available through Blue Oval or specialized training funds to increase the skills of special populations of West Tennesseans.

Each LWDA will continue to utilize statewide funding as it becomes available. Currently the region is pursuing Re-entry, Apprenticeship, RESEA, Layoff Aversion and Career Exploration funding opportunities. As the individual LWDA continue to learn more about what will be needed in the region over the next few years, collectively we will continue to explore ways to align efforts both within the TNDLWD and outside.

b. Is your RPC considering applying for any other grants that will provide additional resources to be leveraged?

The landscape of West Tennessee, both literally and figuratively, will be rapidly evolving over the next several years. In an attempt to best respond to these changes and most effectively serve our communities, the Local Workforce Development Boards of West TN have recognized the need for greater collaboration across the Grand Region. To amplify our voice and our joined impact, we realize a need to collectively pursue funding beyond traditional WIOA formula awards to fully meet our community need. The boards of the West Tennessee Grand Division have collaborated on several projects for outside funding to support the overall economic competitiveness and prosperity of West TN. Two such initiatives have been the Opportunity Now! submission for the EDA Good Jobs Challenge and the GROWWTH project through the Tennessee Department of Human Services’ TANF Opportunity Act.

Recognizing the need to more efficiently and effectively move West Tennesseans into economically mobile careers, Opportunity Now! is a collective of the LWDBs in West TN, LWDBs in North Mississippi and Eastern Arkansas, the University of Memphis, University of Mississippi, Le-Moyne Owen College, Lane College and Moore Tech as well as over 50 employer partners to dramatically accelerate the credentialing process for key industry sectors. Needing to meet current shortages as well as prepare for the dramatic increase in opportunity brought on through Blue Oval, Opportunity Now! will stand up accelerated skills training centers in each of the three LWDA of West TN to fast track employer-designed curriculum in Advanced Manufacturing, Logistics Technology and Construction. With the formation of the Mid-South Center for Occupational Innovation, we have formalized an agency/non-profit entity to which all partners can be members and continue engagement. Additional industry sectors, such as Healthcare and Utilities/Telecom, have already approached seeking additional regional sectors for those industries. Mid-South Center for Occupational Innovation will continue to be a regional vehicle for seeking additional funding well beyond the Good Jobs submission.

For the TN DHS TANF Opportunity Act, the West TN LWDA have partnered with the University of Memphis to re-imagine how low-income Tennesseans are served by both the TANF and WIOA supported systems. The University is leveraging its vast network of researchers, practitioners, and

experts to craft a more user-friendly experience for individuals receiving public assistance. The service interaction point will be in the American Job Center network already established. Together we will braid funding and leverage expertise to ensure our customers are not only dual-enrolled but rather the services are maximized by through both funding mechanisms functioning at a more effective level. It allows us to more robustly serve an individual as a whole person including barriers not typically addressed through WIOA. It also increases the return on investment for the AJCs as a public resource by diversifying the types of services offered and the customers being served.

Attachment for Vision, Goals, and Implementation Strategies

Based upon input from local and regional stakeholders, including business, education, and workforce development stakeholders, the Regional Planning Council (RPC) developed a vision of the workforce boards in West Tennessee. West Tennessee seeks to foster a region where skilled workers contribute to thriving businesses, economic growth, and a high quality of life. To support a healthy regional economy where all West Tennesseans have – or are on a path to – meaningful employment and a family sustaining wage, and where all employers are able to fill jobs in demand, the goals of the West Region are to have:

Clear Connection to Current Industry/Employers

The regional strategies to achieve West TN’s vision to foster a region where skilled workers contribute to thriving businesses, economic growth, and a high-quality life include three basic concepts. First, with the ever-changing needs of employers, it is necessary to increase the skills and knowledge of West Tennesseans both now and in the future. We must unite workforce development partners around regional sector strategies: These strategies will focus resources on the industries with the highest potential to add jobs and increase prosperity in local areas across our region. These strategies bring together the public and private sectors locally to build on their unique strengths. Now, more than any time before, employers are coming to the system with an urgency and actively engaging to make the systems work most effectively.

The One-Stop Operators (OSOs) in the West TN Region facilitate employer engagement of all partners through an Integrated Business Service Team approach. While the OSOs schedule monthly Business Service meetings to provide a structured environment for sharing information, they also provide notice of employer related information such as new job orders, upcoming job fairs, and on-the-job training opportunities throughout the AJC. While many employers seek out services and are greeted by knowledgeable staff via the phone or in person, many do not. With the multitude of technology options available today, we are reaching many employers through social media and websites, including the TN Department of Labor Employer Service portal.

Business Service staff from the local areas are meeting quarterly and working together to assure that employers throughout the region are familiar with the AJC and its services. BST in Northwest and Southwest write OJTs, IWTs, apprenticeship agreements, job fairs, they provide labor market information, and special projects such as jail programs and sector strategies, including Manufacturing Day events. In Greater Memphis, BST at the Board staff level write IWT and apprenticeship contracts, provide labor market information and support special projects with outside workforce development initiatives. The BST members at the Career Service Provider level write OJT agreements and conduct job fairs as well as reaching out to local employers to help in creation of Jobs4TN postings. The OSOs, as well as all partners on the Business Service Team, seek out employer organizations, such as the Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM), Plant Manager organizations, Main Street Associations, Chambers of Commerce, Small Business Development Centers, etc. to share information about AJC services. In Greater Memphis, the Greater Memphis Chamber of Commerce is one of the most widely visited resources for employment and employers. The BST locally shares information with local employers directly through the Chamber network of nearly 2500 Memphis MSA businesses. Still, we find that many small businesses, which make up approximately 70% of the employers, are either not aware of our services or are not inclined to seek out our services.

To further promote employer engagement with the AJC, Business Service Representatives armed with information on all partner business services make traditional “cold calls” to individual businesses to explain how the AJC can meet the company’s workforce needs. Many small businesses have a very lean management team, sometimes just the Owner/Operator. They do not have a Human Resource “department.” The Business Service Representative can show them many ways to save time and money by utilizing the services of the AJC. This may include registering in Jobs4TN.gov, completing a job order form for them and/or training them how to enter a job order, and showing them how to search for resumes of qualified applicants. They can also offer for the AJC to screen applicants and refer only those who meet employer qualifications. Explaining how hiring an individual with certain barriers through On-the-Job Training can also qualify for a tax credit through the Work Opportunity Tax Credit program can save even small employers thousands of dollars. Sometimes just a simple question, “do you need to train your employees on new

technology?”, can result in determining the need to access Incumbent Worker Training funds. Business Service Representatives can direct the employer to the application and/or assist them with completion, including helping to find training providers.

Another strategy for employers, both large and small, is to provide labor market information to allow them to make informed decisions. With most employers experiencing the effects of lower unemployment rates, labor market information becomes a great tool to provide insight into meeting their skill gap needs. Often an employer will experience high turnover rates, which in turn costs them time and productivity. By providing wage rate information for specific occupations, such as Buyers and Purchasers (see below), employers can determine if they need to make adjustments to combat turnover.

This information is particularly valuable to the small business owner who is often too busy running their business to keep up with employment trends. We also seek out the advice of our private sector Board Members to determine how to best engage their counterparts. Suggestions have included helping companies navigate Jobs4TN.gov, streamlining processes, and having flexible schedules. Finally, a primary strategy for the AJC partners to engage employers, is to engage with all other economic and workforce development partners including Chambers of Commerce, TN Department of Economic and Community Development, regional economic development districts, training providers, Small Business Development Centers, Regional BST members, etc. Regional Economic and Community Development partners host quarterly collaboration sessions designed to coordinate services and share information. As a region we are discussing the feasibility of presentations about AJC services to their respective business organizations. By including a variety of stakeholders in our employer engagement strategy, we are able to use the combined strengths and resources to meet the needs of our employer community.

Importantly in this period of recovery, LWDA's have increasingly stepped into the role of bridge between job seekers and employers to help both groups better understand the current climate. Through partnership with the Greater Memphis Chamber, Greater Memphis LWDA has engaged as expert panelists, guest speakers and industry coaches to walk employers through the current workforce challenges. Greater Memphis has also contracted for a system evaluation with the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning. Through this work, Greater Memphis will host strategic planning sessions for targeted audiences to openly hear what is needed from the public workforce system. Sessions for both small and large employers were hosted in February 2022 with over 85 participating employers. This direct feedback will be synthesized and incorporated into local planning. Greater Memphis heard a clear need to broaden the ability to engage at the Board level and amended by-laws allowing for non-board members to serve on Board Committees which in turn make recommendations to the Workforce Board for approval and adoption.

Through the intensive planning for a Good Jobs Challenge proposal, all West TN LWDA's were able to increase engagement of local employers in the Advanced Manufacturing, Logistics Technology or Constructions space. A formalized non-profit entity, Mid-South Center for Occupational Innovation was created with local boards, educational partners and employers making up a Sector Council for each targeted industry. Different than other sector partnerships, these Sector Councils have the ability to reach across workforce regions and even across State lines for holistic regional solutions. Since the topic was of immediate interest, employers connected to the system and provided dialogue in a more intentional way...creating connections that last well beyond the proposal planning. There is already conversation about how the formalized Sector Councils created for Good Jobs can be replicated for Healthcare. TVA and Memphis, Light, Gas and Water have also expressed interest in a sector around utilities and telecom.

Clear Pipeline Development Infrastructure

West TN is committed to developing a skilled pipeline of workers to meet the needs of business and industry in order to promote sustainable economic growth and global competitiveness.

- Strong K12 alignment, especially in the CTE space, to maximize the number of young adults able to easily access the public workforce system to prepare for future careers.
- Prioritize equitable career exploration opportunities for all young adults across West TN

- Greater Memphis will establish a community youth service location that also houses a Youth Specialized American Job Center to more directly address the estimated 40,000 Opportunity Youth within that LWDA.
- Prioritizing occupational training based on demonstrated in-demand industries.
 - Greater Memphis is creating an annual list of eligible training programs divided into priority Tiers with those providing the highest return on investment, best outcomes and employment attributes considered to be “Quality Jobs” receiving a larger ITA contribution.
- Identifying multiple system on-ramps that take into account the diverse needs of our communities and ensuring those entry points are assessable and equitable.

The regional strategies to achieve West TN’s vision to foster a region where skilled workers contribute to thriving businesses, economic growth, and a high-quality life include three basic concepts. First, with the ever-changing needs of employers, it is necessary to increase the skills and knowledge of West Tennesseans both now and in the future. We must unite workforce development partners around regional sector strategies: These strategies will focus resources on the industries with the highest potential to add jobs and increase prosperity in local areas across our region. These strategies bring together the public and private sectors locally to build on their unique strengths, such as the Regional Apprenticeship Forum that was held in February. The West region plans to offer similar events in the future, at least on an annual basis.

Clear Integration with Economic Development

The mission of the TN Department of Economic and Community Development (ECD) is to develop strategies that help make TN the # 1 location in the Southeast for high quality jobs. To fulfill this mission, ECD has set five long-term objectives and has set all of these goals for 2025:

1. To have the lowest unemployment of the dozen states in the Southeast.
2. To rank among the top 2 states in the Southeast for personal income per capita.
3. To have the highest private capital investment per capita in the Southeast.
4. To eliminate all Tennessee counties that are federally designated as distressed counties. This designation is based on poverty rates, income levels and unemployment rate.
5. To secure predominantly high-quality jobs from expanding or newly locating businesses in Tennessee, defined as 55% of job commitments paying at or above the county median wage where the private investment is made.

West TN has taken a big step toward accomplishing these goals by securing the largest single economic development investment in Tennessee history with the creation of Blue Oval City. Our economic development agencies have received awards across the nation for the momentous deal. Workforce Development has been one of the primary conversations since day 1 and throughout the process—as it is with countless businesses coming to relocate—the local workforce boards are present at the table explaining the system and how we can facilitate a talent pipeline. Our connection to economic development has never been stronger as the leadership of the LWDA’s must now swing in to help make the Blue Oval vision a reality by ensuring a prepared workforce ready to seize the opportunity.

Outcome Visibility- Clear Data/Reporting and Predictive Analysis

Each local area’s success in providing the services outlined in the regional plan is measured by Performance Standards developed by the US Department of Labor, which are broken out by the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth funding streams. These standards are negotiated with each state. Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce then negotiate with each local area across the State. On a local level, the Workforce Development Boards hold contracted providers to the same performance levels. For Adult and Dislocated Worker programs performance levels measure employment rates for individuals in the 2nd and 4th quarter after exiting services as well as median earnings for 2nd quarter after exit. Credential attainment within four quarters after exit for all programs is also measured. To be successful as a region, it is vital that each local area achieve negotiated local performance goals, as well as performance dashboards developed by the TDLWD for pre and post-program outcomes. Additionally, the State of Tennessee has negotiated shared goals for

each grand region in addition to the negotiated local goals called KPIs. Not only are regions being held to individual performance targets, but we must work together to achieve shared targets.

To accomplish our collective goals, the West TN region will ensure open communication regarding best practices that promote regional strategies and alignment that are efficient and effective in delivering workforce services in the West region. West TN's regional goals for not only Title I, but for all AJC partner programs are proportionally divided among Northwest, Southwest and Greater Memphis Local Areas based on the amount of funding each area receives. Since these goals include many partner programs, it is important to involve the RPC to engage and track partner successes. As a collective, the RPC serves as a shared unit for measuring progress and sharing ideas to holistically serve the region's priority populations. As West TN, each local area will report progress toward shared goals no less than quarterly and make needed adjustments to keep on track toward measures through a shared dashboard accessible to all RPC members. The RPC's Executive Committee that is comprised of three Executive Directors and three Regional Directors establishes goals and strategies for the region and monitors the sub-committees for alignment of services in three categories: Business Services, Job Seeker Services, and Career Pathways. The RPC as a body will measure the region's success in serving the people in the region most in need of coordinated services. Should a LWDA begin lagging in the proportionate share of the tracked measures, a corrective action plan will be submitted by the LWDA to the Regional Planning Council at the next scheduled RPC meeting. Each LWDA will be responsible for collecting corrective plan data from individual contracted providers in the local areas.

Business Leaders, through the Greater Memphis Chamber's Chairman Circle, has expressed a desire to see published real-time data related to spending, numbers served and outcomes in a publicly accessible format. Greater Memphis is working now to find an affordable solution to meet the request. Once a workable format can be created, the live dashboard can be replicated throughout the Grand Division.

The region will fulfill these goals by achieving the following objectives:

Create an Integrated Intake System to Efficiently Deliver Services

Jobs4TN, a Virtual One-Stop system developed by Geographic Solutions, Inc., allows both job seeker and employer customers to remotely access secure, web-based AJC services such as labor market information, unemployment insurance, and mediated labor exchange. The system's ability to integrate seemingly different program designs, such as Title I, WP, TAA, RESEA, SNAP E&T, Unemployment Insurance, and Adult Education programs also maximizes customer service and efficiency as it provides a common intake and case management information system. Jobs4TN is effective in combining the intake process between some AJC programs however does lack the ability to cross many partner programs such as TANF and Vocational Rehabilitation. This often leads to multiple, sometimes conflicting, intake experiences for customers needing assistance.

As the LWDA's continue to partner for opportunities outside traditional formula funding, it becomes necessary to 1.) re-evaluate the effectiveness and usability of current systems and processes and 2.) develop a more customer centric intake and flow that not only incorporates traditional WIOA partners but also the many partners across the system. The need to share customer information, documents, referrals, case notes and tracking outside of the closed Jobs4TN tool is increasingly important when trying to design a truly integrated system of triage, assessment and service to all customers.

WIOA places a strong emphasis on planning and implementation across multiple partner programs to ensure alignment in service delivery. Co-enrollment is consistently supported by the State Plan and one way to better integrate services. As a planning region, West Tennessee strongly encourages the utilization of co-enrollment as a strategy to further leverage resources for maximum benefit to a participant. Furthermore, strategic co-enrollment can increase program and participant success, maximize resources, enable greater efficiencies in service delivery, and align services with regional sector pathways. By braiding resources and realigning program service delivery models, we can redefine participant flow and facilitate access to comprehensive services. Establishing a common intake model among partner programs would promote co-enrollment models to enhance a more efficient use of system resources on behalf of the participant and ensure a more seamless system for the client.

As the next step toward integrated intake and co-enrollment, Greater Memphis supports the establishment of the Mid-South Opportunity Center. This is the true realization of WIOA's intended one-stop design by physically co-locating not only traditional WIOA/AJC partners but also including all resources a person or business would need in the workforce arena. Partners like TANF, Section 8/Subsidized Housing, Rental and Utility Assistance Programs, United Way, Mid-South Food Bank, and non-profits specializing in specific populations would be available for actual warm handoffs rather than an email or system referral. Training providers, Adult Education and our post-secondary partners will have space on-site to provide direct enrollment, career guidance and in many cases actual training classes. The environment is collaborative and connected for the customer's best outcome. Like a jobseeker, employers often are led on an endless loop of referrals for assistance. The MOC integrates a Business Opportunity Lab to ensure business serving entities are also co-located and co-designing a customized plan for each employer partner which maximizes the offerings of all programs.

Create a Shared Vision for Supporting Tennesseans with the Greatest Number of Barriers to Enter the Workforce

As a region, West TN hopes to expand access to employment, training, education and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment, by focusing services on those with the greatest barriers, including Youth, justice-involved individuals, individuals with disabilities, etc.

As a planning region, we are working with multi-barrier populations such as justice-involved individuals to prepare for employment. Northwest Workforce Development Area has implemented the Re-Entry Advanced Manufacturing Program in six county jails. Southwest and Greater Memphis are exploring the replication of this program as one of the RPC goals toward regional strategies. Greater Memphis and Southwest both have programs targeting the justice involved specifically to provide a second chance to opportunities to inmates, while filling the employers' needs. Southwest partners with TDOC's Day Reporting Center to offer job readiness workshops and educate participants on AJC services. Southwest's Rural Initiative also focuses on justice-involved individuals by providing soft skill training and offering stackable credential training. Through an initiative funded by Hope2Hire, Greater Memphis is able to go into the local jails to provide career planning assistance to individuals within 60 days of release these individuals then have a warm handoff to the AJC for further assistance. Greater Memphis has also formed a special partnership with the Shelby County Office of Reentry to serve those individuals returning to the community with one-on-one guided support through the AJC processes in a safe and familiar space for the customer.

The Mobile AJC staff are meeting at least once per quarter with individuals soon to be released (within 30 days) from prisons in West TN and may meet monthly, if the need warrants. The Mobile AJC staff provide workshops on topics such as resumes and interviewing, and complete partial Jobs4TN.gov paper registrations for each individual soon to be released. The Mobile AJC staff also work directly with the prison coordinator throughout the exit process to ensure each one is registered. Individuals are instructed to bring the full registration form with them to their first appointment at the AJC when they meet with a Career Specialist. Having this groundwork done in advance makes for a better outcome on their first visit for both the participant and the staff and allows staff more time to build the relationship with the participant who is re-entering the workforce. The Mobile AJC also partners with Probation and Parole, and other partners in the regional workforce system, to host events on-site to serve their clients with the full AJC Menu of Services. In Greater Memphis, the LWDB has entered into an MOU with the Department of Corrections to establish the first specialized AJC in the TN Corrections system. Covid-19 has delayed the opening of the center several times but official launch is set in Spring 2022. In the AJC, inmates will have access to traditional services once they have reached 90-120 of release. With the setup being conducive to work release the intent is to connect inmates with career opportunities while still incarcerated and continue that employment post-release. Once established within the Mark Luttrell Center, similar AJC locations will be created in Henning, TN prisons.

The three local areas have agreed to a streamlined process to assure companies accessing services with multiple locations throughout the region do not experience the artificial barriers of local workforce development lines. Contractual agreements are established by the local workforce area where the corporate headquarters is located, and eligibility performed by the local area where the jobseeker resides. Necessary reimbursements between local areas are

handled through a “back office” process. Likewise, potential workers have access to Title I Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) or other State funding opportunities, such as TN Promise and TN Reconnect without regard to boundaries when selecting a training program/provider to gain the necessary skills and knowledge to meet employer needs. Adult Education provides foundational education skills, including HiSet preparation throughout the region. Utilizing one of the West TN Mobile AJCs for examinations provides opportunities for educational services beyond the “brick and mortar” of the AJCs.

LWDAs sponsor events like Manufacturing Day Career Awareness events with high schools, have initiated manufacturing career pathways in local high schools (utilizing LEAP grants), and hosted larger scale career exploration events through youth demonstration grant funding for high school youth. In March 2020, the Pathways2Prosperity event exposed over 2500 students to careers across West TN. Another P2P event is planned for March 2022. For opportunity or OSY young adults, incentives are offered to promote the attainment of specific milestones toward success. Earning high school equivalency and occupational credentials are steps designed to enhance the experience for young WIOA participants. A YouthBuild program is also available in the Greater Memphis area to provide participants with academic or construction training, work experience, and leadership development. In the Northwest area, in partnership with Amteck, an electrical pre-apprenticeship program is in place to provide participants academic and technical training and paid work experience, while also providing the opportunity to be hired by Amteck and selected for the Registered Apprenticeship program. The region is also considering implementation of the Manufacturing Career Internship Program (MCIP), as described in the National Skills Coalition’s Promising Practices in Work-Based Learning for Youth publication. The 4-week, boot camp session includes soft-skill and job preparation training, touring 12-14 manufacturing worksites, earning OSHA-10 and Forklift certifications and exposure to shop math. After the 4-week boot camp, each youth enters an 8-week paid internship with an employer to gain further knowledge and skills of a particular industry and occupation. Greater Memphis will also establish a community youth service location that houses a Youth Specialized American Job Center to more directly address the estimated 40,000 Opportunity Youth within that LWDA.

A recent initiative of Adult Education is to provide educational training on-site for companies who agree to hire high school dropouts. This opens the door to employment for many workers without a high school diploma and provides an opportunity to meet employer needs. The TN Department of Labor and Workforce Development Title III programs offer educational/training support for dislocated workers through RESEA and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), when applicable. Trade petitions are based on the location of the company, allowing job seekers to cross local area and even regional boundaries for services.

Vocational Rehabilitation’s and Greater Memphis area’s Ticket to Work Programs strive to provide re-employment services to individuals with disabilities to facilitate a successful transition into the workplace. These entities develop an Individualized Employment Plan for each individuals with identified disability needs to access necessary skills for success in competitive integrated employment. The Disabled Veterans Outreach Program is also available in all three areas to provide services to disabled veterans. In addition to the already inclusive features of Jobs4TN and other AJC services, the RPC also intends to explore developing a job board or club targeting positions welcoming of individuals with disabilities in order to enhance services to this population. This webpage would serve to more efficiently streamline the search for jobs through Jobs4TN for a population needing a more focused job search capability.

TANF uses a Two-Generation Approach with intentional focus on the success of the children and adults simultaneously, including emphasis on education and training. SNAP provides similar employment support through a network of contracted third-party providers. In addition to TANF, Youth, and RESEA programs being offered through the AJCs, the Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Employment and Training (SNAP E&T), a partnership between the Department of Human Services and TDLWD, allows eligible SNAP recipients to receive job readiness services such as job search assistance, training or educational placement assistance and scholarships, high school equivalency test fees, and books and transportation assistance for Adult Education classes. These funds offset the need for ITA funds to be applied towards tuition and fee costs, allowing ITAs to cover other costs such as books, supplies, tool, uniforms, and

transportation stipends. Aligning services such as SNAP E&T and ITAs allows customers to receive all the help they need, but also provides a way for LWDA's to maximize the funds available and to serve more customers.

To enhance the workforce of West TN, regional initiatives and strategies must focus on special populations in order to bring more individuals into the workforce with the skills needed by employers. The Regional Planning Council is considering regional job fairs specifically targeted toward special population groups such as individuals with disabilities, youth, and persons with a justice involved background. A best practice nationally is a designated day to host veteran specific job fairs under the title of "Red, White and You". Sharing the same day and naming allows for shared marketing across the West TN region.

Create a Trained Workforce to Meet Current Industry Needs

West TN improves access to activities leading to a recognized postsecondary credential through the use of ITAs and supportive services in partnership with other AJC programs such as Vocational Rehabilitation, SNAP Employment & Training or TAA, TN Promise, and TN Reconnect. The region creates a trained workforce to meet current industry needs through On-the-Job Training, Incumbent Worker Training, Apprenticeships and Pre-Apprenticeships, career pathways development, and Occupational Skills Training. For ISY and OSY young adults, priority is given to work experiences in industries considered high demand for the West Region. Events like Pathways2Possibilities exhibit an array of in-demand career fields such as Healthcare, Manufacturing and Transportation and Logistics through hands on exposure to career possibilities throughout the West TN region. For adults, strategic partnerships with employers within high demand industries are sought to best understand the hiring needs of these employers in the attempt to best prepare individuals to meet those expectations. ETPL training providers must focus on training for the most practical and necessary skill sets needed to obtain meaningful jobs in these industries. LWDA's are responsible for monitoring of regional training providers to ensure training is most relevant to real world employment. As funding allows, Incumbent Worker dollars are used to support the upskilling of workers within high demand fields. OJT opportunities for individuals entering a high demand local industry are encouraged and actively sought out to help fill the talent gap for these employers. As a region West TN is exploring regional apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs to target industries across the region since the most in-demand fields are shared between all LWDA's. This regional view of apprenticeships helps to reduce the administrative burden and overlap for employers and partners with one LWDA acting as the lead but with shared support from each LWDA.

Create New Dashboards to Measure the Effectiveness of the Integrated Workforce Strategy

As a region, West TN utilizes Jobs4TN data to track the overall progress of most services within an AJC. Performance and self-created and tracked partner dashboards are used to measure the effectiveness of those partners according to the recognized regional measures and, when combined, present an ongoing picture of the workforce ecosystem across the area. The implementation of shared goals for the grand region drives the need for a centralized space to view progress toward federal performance measures and regional key performance indicator (KPI) goals negotiated with the State of TN, as well as any other priorities identified by the RPC. The hope is to create a shared dashboard updated monthly as a checkpoint of progress to regional success and intervention of areas of weakness. While each LWDA is assigned a proportionate percentage of the State negotiated regional goals, it becomes the responsibility of the region as a whole to monitor progress toward successful achievement and hold each region accountable for measures. A rollup of monthly spreadsheets will be presented quarterly to the RPC as a matter of transparency for all partners and to validate data. If a corrective action plan is needed by any LWDA to explain and to submit a strategy for improvement, those plans will also be presented as part of the ongoing dashboard. If a Regional OSO is procured, a shared dashboard would be the responsibility of the Regional OSO.

Create a Simple and Effective Engagement Experience for All Candidates

When customers cross regions, either by work or home address, it is the long-term goal for the system experience to be seamless between LWDA's. A common intake form and uniform support service policies across the West TN region have been explored and discussed with obvious challenges to implementation. The RPC will continue to work through these particular areas of cooperation to get closer to a more unified regional experience. To the degree possible, replication of

service policies occurs across LWDAs, such as similar transportation and incentives policies. Common areas of synergy surround the intake process and service to employers who cross multiple LWDAs. It becomes increasingly important to minimize duplication and administrative burden on employers to increase effective utilization of the workforce system. West TN strives to streamline processes for employer and jobseeker customers and will use surveys to measure system satisfaction. These surveys will explore the effectiveness of current WIOA services and the overall quality of customer experience. Both jobseekers and employers will measure the ease of workforce system use and likelihood of utilizing the system in the future. Opportunities for direct feedback, concerns or suggestions will be taken back to the RPC for consideration. RPC's sub-committees also regularly discuss ways to make the experience more unified across the West Region in an attempt to improve the customer experience from local region to local region. Best practices are shared and implemented to ensure high quality service to our customers and to ensure active engagement across the region.