

### Overview West Central Economic Development Region (EDR 10)

The West Central Illinois Economic Development Region (EDR 10) covers 5,583 square miles and encompasses the nine counties of Local Workforce Area 14. The nine counties include: Adams, Brown, Hancock, Henderson, Knox, McDonough, Pike, Schuyler, and Warren. The most western counties, Adams, Hancock, Henderson and Pike, border the states of Iowa and Missouri. Adams County is included in the Quincy-Hannibal, IL-MO Combined Statistical Area, Hancock County is included in the Fort Madison-Keokuk IA-IL-MO Micropolitan Statistical Area and Henderson County is included in the Burlington IA-IL Micropolitan Statistical Area. The West Central EDR is also part of a Tri-State Region with Northeast Missouri and Southeast Iowa and has been designated by USDA as a Great Region for its community's **regional approach to creating economic opportunity and job creation in rural communities**. The Tri-State Region also offers unique partnerships and consortium opportunities for the communities served.

The West Central Illinois EDR is located in the heart of the Midwest. The western counties border the Mississippi River. The EDR offers the northernmost port on the Mississippi River for 12-month barge traffic. **In addition, the Illinois River borders Brown, Pike and Schuyler counties.**

The EDR is a central hub to several major metro (SMSA) areas. Quincy, in Adams County, is at the center of four-lane highways in all directions. The Avenue of the Saints passes just 5 miles to the west and is 4-lane from Canada to the Gulf. Illinois Highway 172 is part of the newly designated CKC (Chicago – Kansas City Expressway) which offers a less-congested alternate route to these popular Midwest destinations. The Knox County Area is served by Interstate 74 running from Indianapolis and the Quad Cities and by Interstate 80 connecting Des Moines and Chicago, in addition, US-34 serves the area as well as US-150.

Seven class-1 rail lines enter Galesburg in Knox County and converge at the BNSF classification yard in Southeast Galesburg. Strategic grade separations within the city allow trains to get in and out of the city quickly and easily without disrupting local automobile traffic. Over 100 trains enter and leave the Knox County community each day. BNSF and Norfolk Southern offer multiple freight trains daily and Quincy also has two daily Amtrak trains to and from Chicago.

The region is within miles of four airports. Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport is approximately 70 miles from Pike County and offers travel to two major airport hubs: Dallas Fort Worth International Airport and Chicago O'Hare International Airport. Galesburg, in Knox County, is conveniently located approximately 45 minutes from both Peoria International Airport and Quad Cities International Airport. Residents and businesses can connect through these two airports with direct flights to more than a dozen cities including Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Minneapolis, and the Phoenix area. Quincy Regional Airport offers flights to St. Louis Lambert Airport and Chicago O'Hare International Airport.

## CHAPTER 1: ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS – REGIONAL COMPONENT

This chapter must discuss how the region has collected and analyzed updated regional labor market information including the local planning requirements. Regional teams are encouraged to use the labor market information posted on <https://www.illinoisworknet.com/WIOA/RegPlanning> to provide consistency in the data used for regional analysis throughout the state<sup>3</sup>.

**A. Provide an analysis of the factors listed below:**

- 1. Economic conditions, including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations (§ 679.560(a)(1)(i));**
  - a. What are the targeted industries, high-impact industry clusters, and in-demand occupations in the region?**

Following a review of industry employment distribution, health care and social assistance, manufacturing and retail trade are the highest-impact industry clusters in EDR 10. It is important to note that the top five industries include educational services, accommodation, and food services. Transportation and warehousing, finance and insurance, and educational services also impact EDR 10. Health care and social assistance remain the bedrock of industries in the area. Additionally, manufacturing and retail trade continue to flourish in the entrepreneurial perspective of the district.

**b. What industries have favorable location quotients?**

As all counties included in EDR 10 are not considered part of a metropolitan statistical area (MSA) as defined by the U. S. Census Bureau and have a population of less than 60,000, the entire EDR is classified as rural. The geographic structure of EDR in most industries is predicted to have quotients between one and two. Agriculture remains a leading industry in the region with a quotient of six. Other leading industries with quotients above one includes retail, manufacturing, and wholesale.

|           | Construction | Education and Health | Financial Activities | Information | Leisure & Hospitality | Manufacturing | Natural Resources & Mining | Professional & Business Services | Trade, Transportation & Utilities |
|-----------|--------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------|-----------------------|---------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Henderson |              |                      |                      | *           |                       |               |                            |                                  |                                   |
| Warren    |              |                      |                      | *           |                       |               |                            | *                                |                                   |
| Knox      |              |                      |                      |             |                       |               |                            |                                  |                                   |
| Hancock   |              |                      |                      |             |                       |               |                            |                                  |                                   |
| McDonough |              |                      |                      |             |                       |               |                            |                                  |                                   |
| Schuyler  |              |                      |                      | *           |                       |               |                            |                                  |                                   |
| Adams     |              |                      |                      | *           |                       |               |                            |                                  |                                   |
| Brown     |              |                      |                      |             |                       | *             | *                          |                                  |                                   |
| Pike      |              |                      |                      | *           |                       |               |                            |                                  |                                   |

Key: Favorable Quotient: Dark Blue Highlights Neutral: Light Blue Highlights Not enough data: \*

**c. What industries and occupations have favorable demand projections based on growth?**

Based on the Location Quotient by Sector, the following industries are considered leading in EDR10: retail, government, manufacturing, wholesale, and agriculture.

Based on the LQ, the following industries are emerging in EDR 10: financial activities, transportation and warehousing, construction, and professional services. Construction is the industry with the highest percentage growth of 5.7% since Q2 2019 (pre-pandemic); however, construction continues to have low employment rates compared to other sectors.

|           | Employment Growth |                      |                      |             |                       |               |                            |                                  |                                   |
|-----------|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------|-----------------------|---------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|           | Construction      | Education and Health | Financial Activities | Information | Leisure & Hospitality | Manufacturing | Natural Resources & Mining | Professional & Business Services | Trade, Transportation & Utilities |
| Henderson |                   |                      |                      |             | *                     |               |                            |                                  |                                   |
| Warren    |                   |                      |                      |             |                       |               |                            | *                                |                                   |
| Knox      |                   |                      |                      |             |                       |               |                            |                                  |                                   |
| Hancock   |                   |                      |                      |             |                       |               |                            |                                  |                                   |
| McDonough |                   |                      |                      |             |                       |               |                            |                                  |                                   |
| Schuyler  |                   |                      |                      | *           |                       |               |                            |                                  |                                   |
| Adams     |                   |                      |                      |             |                       |               |                            |                                  |                                   |
| Brown     |                   |                      |                      | *           |                       | *             | *                          |                                  |                                   |
| Pike      |                   |                      |                      | *           |                       |               |                            |                                  |                                   |

Key: Favorable Quotient: Dark Blue Highlights Neutral: Light Blue Highlights Not enough data: \*

**d. What industries and occupations have favorable demand projections based on replacements?**

Demand projects indicate that occupations in the following industries are favorable: manufacturing, trades, transportation and utilities, and professional and business services.

**e. What industries are considered mature but still important to the economy?**

Education, health care, leisure and hospitality remain key employers in the region.

Health care remains on the largest employers throughout the region. As the countries within the region continue to age, health care needs remain constant.

**f. What industries are considered emerging in the regional economy?**

Based on the LQ, the following industries are emerging in EDR 10: financial activities, transportation and warehousing, construction, and professional services. Construction is the industry with the highest percentage growth of 5.8% since Q2 2019 (pre-pandemic); however, construction continues to have low employment rates compared to other sectors.

**g. What are the projected regional key in-demand occupations?**

Occupations in health care, manufacturing, and agriculture remain in demand to meet the region's current leading and essential industries. Occupations in finance, transportation,

construction, logistics, and other professional services are needed to support the region's emerging industries.

### **Western Illinois Occupations by Sector**

#### **Healthcare**

Nurses  
LPN (in hospitals)  
Patient Access Staff  
Pharmacist  
Physicians  
Dietitian  
Surgical Technician  
Mental Health  
CNA  
Dental Technician

#### **Education**

Teachers  
Early Childhood  
Paraprofessional  
Bus Driver

#### **TDL**

Forklift Operator  
CDL Drivers  
Material Handlers

#### **Hospitality**

#### **Manufacturing**

Welder  
Electrical Technician  
Maintenance Mechanic  
Tool Room Operator  
CNC Operator  
HVAC  
Automation Technician  
Maintenance  
Technician  
Food Industry  
Technician

#### **Utilities**

Journeyman  
Line Worker  
Pipefitters  
Engineers  
Engineer Technician

#### **IT**

IT Developer  
AI  
Robotics  
Web Design  
Social Media  
Management  
Cyber Security

#### **Law**

#### **Enforcement/First**

#### **Resp**

Sheriff Deputies  
Dispatcher  
Jailer  
Firefighters  
EMT  
Paramedic

#### **Construction Trades**

Highway Construction  
Carpenter  
Electrician  
Iron Worker  
Laborer  
Millwright  
Operating Engineer  
Painter  
Pipefitter  
Plumber  
Cement Mason  
Plasterer  
Roofer

#### **Entrepreneurship**

#### **Agri-Business**

Ag Precision  
Technicians  
Diesel Mechanics  
Farm Management  
Drone Pilot  
Vet Tech

#### **Energy**

**h. What sources of supply and demand data were used to determine the targeted industries occupations and skills?**

The source used to determine the targeted industries and occupations is information from the Bureau of Labor Statistics that was provided by the Illinois Department of Employment Security, Illinois Board of Higher Education, and the Illinois Community College Board.

**2. Employment needs of employers in existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations (§ 679.560(a)(1)(ii));**

As the emerging industries include financial activities, transportation and warehousing, construction, and professional services, employers continue to seek a trained workforce. Continuing education beyond a high school diploma is a need in EDR 10. Of the counties in the district, approximately only 18 to 26% of the population have a bachelor's degree, with McDonough County having the highest percentage at 31.2% and Brown County having the lowest at 14%. Essential skills, including critical thinking, professionalism, active listening, and attention to detail, remain a focus for employers. These skills transfer across industries and heighten with advanced education and work experience.

**3. Knowledge and skills needed to meet the employment needs of the employers in the region, including employment needs in in-demand industry sectors and occupations (§ 679.560(a)(2));**

**a. What are the targeted career pathway clusters in the region?**

Health Sciences is one of the career pathways clusters that will be targeted in West Central Illinois region. This pathway aligns with the in-demand existing and emerging sectors and occupations while fulfilling many of the occupations that are showing a supply gap.

The other career pathway cluster that will be targeted in EDR 10 is Manufacturing, TDL, Agribusiness and Construction Trades. This cluster will cover manufacturing, transportation, distribution, and logistics which are targeted sectors, but will also cover construction that is also an occupation where demand is greater than supply. All of these occupations fall under the Thinker Career Path.

**b. What skills are in demand in the region?**

**Manufacturing, health care and TDL remain the key sectors in the Western Illinois region. All occupations supporting these sectors continue to be in demand. Welders, CNC machinists and industrial maintenance staff remain the most demand occupations in manufacturing. Certified Nurse Assistant and Registered Nurses remain in high demand in health care. Warehousing and CDL remain in high**

**demand in the TDL sector. Community colleges continue to adjust their curricula and delivery methods to meet the changing demands of local employers.**

**c. How well do the existing skills of job seekers match the demands of local businesses?**

Although there remains a demand for skilled workers in the in the demand jobs as there is a need to address Artificial Intelligence since this technology will have an impact on each of these sectors. The Energy Sector is not well defined in this region so the ability to determine the lacking skills is undetermined.

**4. Regional workforce considering current labor force employment and unemployment data, information on labor market trends, and educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment<sup>4</sup> (§ 679.510(a)(1)(iv) and § 679.560(a)(3)).**

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

Unfortunately, EDR 10 trends in labor force participation remain below the states. The data from the first quarter of 2023 shows the region lags behind state labor force participation by an average of 5.6%, with January 2023 being the lowest at 57.4%, 6.3% below the state.

The unemployment rate for EDR 10 in December 2023 is 4.1%, slightly better than the state's rate of 4.2%.

The population of EDR 10 is steadily growing older and trending out of the typical workforce age. The age demographics typically associated with the force in the region 20-24 years old is the highest at 7.4%, while ages 25-54 do not exceed 6% in each of the 5-year grouped categories. Essentially, EDR 10 has a dwindling workforce.

Although the West Central EDR has many geographic advantages, due to the region's rural environment there are various challenges the region faces including: 1) limited access to opportunities geared toward major metro areas; 2) inadequate access to broadband; 3) lack of local community transportation services; and 4) decaying infrastructure. There are three major population centers in the West Central EDR which together share 67.2% of the EDR population- Adams County (30.3%), Knox County (23.1%) and McDonough County (13.8%). The main population centers within these counties are Quincy (Adams County) with a population of 40,587; Galesburg (Knox County) with a population of 31,215; and Macomb (McDonough County) with a population of 19,684.

The southern subregion of the West Central EDR (Adams, Brown and Pike counties) are part of the John Wood Community College District. The central subregion of the West Central EDR (Hancock, McDonough and Schuyler counties) are part of three community college districts-Carl Sandburg College, Spoon River College and John Wood Community College. The northern subregion of the West Central EDR (Henderson, Knox and Warren counties) are also part of

three community college districts-Carl Sandburg College, Spoon River College and Black Hawk College.

Continuing education beyond a high school diploma is a need in EDR 10. Of the counties in the district, approximately only 18 to 26% of the population have a bachelor's degree, with McDonough County having the highest percentage at 31.2% and Brown County having the lowest at 14%.

Essential skills, including critical thinking, professionalism, active listening, and attention to detail, remain a focus for employers. These skills transfer across industries and heighten with advanced education and work experience.

**b. What special populations exist in the region, what is their magnitude, and what are the policy and service implications to meet the needs of these individuals?**

Populations Facing Challenges To Become Employed and Self-Sufficient

- Low Income Individuals, including those receiving TANF benefits
- Food Insecurity, includes individuals or families receiving SNAP benefits
- Single Parents
- Long Term Unemployed
- Veterans
- Returning Citizens
- No HS diploma or GED
- English Language Learner
- Intellectual and/or Physical Disability
- Mental Health
- Homeless
- Prior Legal Issues
- Substance Abuse Recovery

**B. Describe how the Local Workforce Innovation Board and WIOA partners support the development and implementation of sector initiatives for in-demand industry sectors or occupations for the planning region (§ 679.510(a)(1)(iii)). Plans must answer the following questions:**

- 1. How will the workforce partners convene or support the convening of regional employers, foundations, institutions and other stakeholders to create or maintain sector partnerships?**

Sector partnerships currently exist in several inform structures. Economic Development entities convene manufacturing representatives in partnership with the WIB. Community College Advisory Committees are convened in all key sectors. Foundations support several workforce-related initiatives which include the business representation.

The WIB has committed to supporting sector partnerships as part of the reframing of the workforce infrastructure in Western Illinois.

- 2. Identify the established and active sector partnerships in the region (as defined in Illinois' Nex Generation Sector Strategies Guide<sup>5</sup>). If any exist, are they business-led and what is their role WIOA planning?**

N/A

- 3. What public-private partnerships exist in the region that could support sector strategies, and what is their role in planning?**

The WIB will work in partnership with local Economic Development Entities to establish sector partnerships throughout the region.

- 4. What neutral conveners with the capacity to help establish sector partnerships exist in the region and what is their role in planning?**

The Workforce Innovation Board of Western is the neutral convener. The WIB will lead the planning process to organize sector partnerships as members of these key sectors determine the role a sector partnership.

**C. If any employer collaboratives are engaged in the U.S. Chamber's Talent Pipeline Management initiative, describe the following:**

- a. **What is the focus of the collaborative(s)?**
- b. **How is the workforce system supporting the needs of these employers?**

N/A

**D. Describe any broad economic development opportunities in the region within the context of the workforce, education and economic development plans.**

The WIB supports local economic development plans. Staff are participating in regional meetings as part of the Climate Equity and Jobs Act (CEJA). Staff are participating in the DCEO Five Year Economic Development listening sessions. "Earn and Learn" opportunities are being created by the community colleges where major employers will partner with them in different scenarios where individuals can work with a guaranteed hourly rate and attend classes. Food processing is a major growth industry in the area, and we need to develop a food technician training program in the region.

**E. Describe any broad economic challenges in the region's workforce, education and economic development plans.**

Connectivity remains an issue in most rural communities and some neighborhoods in larger communities. Staff are participating in the DCEO Technology listening sessions and supporting



community efforts to secure funding for infrastructure and equipment. Transportation and Childcare remain challenges throughout the region. Staff continue to participate in discussions and community initiatives to address these problems. The lack of suitable and affordable housing is also becoming a challenge for local residents. A limited and aging energy grid is also becoming an impediment to economic growth. There are challenges of funding for public infrastructure improvements to support economic growth.

**F. Describe how a *workforce equity lens*<sup>6</sup> is incorporated into the local planning requirements for collecting and analyzing labor market information.**

IDES demographic and labor market data will be the source of information for the WIB in developing local plans and services with an emphasis on diversity, equity, inclusion, and access.

## **CHAPTER 2: STRATEGIES FOR SERVICE INTEGRATION – REGIONAL COMPONENT**

This regional component of the plan must describe the regional service strategies, including use of cooperative service delivery strategies and the connection of job seekers with employers. Regions are required to provide information and analysis of the steps that will be taken to address the challenges and opportunities associated with the regional service integration strategies.

- A. Provide an analysis of workforce development activities, including education and training, in the region. This analysis must include the strengths and weaknesses of workforce development activities and capacity to provide the workforce development activities to address the education and skill needs of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment, and the employment needs of employers (§ 679.560(a)(4)). The plan must address the following areas:
1. Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of workforce development activities in the region.

A recent Service Integration Goals self-assessment gave partners the opportunity to identify strengths, acknowledge weaknesses, and recognize gaps in service integration. It is the intention of the region's partners to continue to advance service integration, reaffirm the structure for regional success, and address identified gaps. The strategies, tactics, and outcomes, developed with the input of all partners, outline plans for continuous improvement, dealing with weaknesses and finding solutions to close any gaps. The partners' commitment to working together to develop and offer appropriate and seamless partner services is clearly a strength in Western Illinois.

Gaps in connectivity and limited flexibility in service delivery compounded the difficulty of employment support efforts. This type of communication highlighted the technological challenges in our rural areas. Providers and municipalities have worked together to utilize funding from state and federal technology grants to address the technology challenges.

Initiatives will be coordinated under the BEAD Plan.

Building on existing platforms supports continuous improvement efforts. A strength identified by the region is IDES's Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program. This program allows claimants to be referred to partners for connection to partner services. Additionally, Illinois Job Link, the state employment platform, connects employers to job seekers. Also, IDES utilizes Illinois Job Link to connect job seekers to employers.

It is important to note generational differences in workforce demographics and changes needed to meet workforce demand. There are up to five generations in today's workforce — including traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials and Gen Z — and they all share the common experiences, recent challenges, displaying resilience and quickly adapting to a different type of workplace. This has caused a significant shift in the way workers view their jobs, with many reevaluating their purpose and employment situations. Ideas that may have caused friction in the past, such as differing opinions on professionalism, more relaxed working conditions, casual attire and flexible schedules, may be non-issues in today's business landscape. Jorgensen, 2021

As the region is extremely rural, support systems for working family members is limited. Affordable and accessible childcare is one the largest barriers to potential employees. Traveling to work can also be difficult in a rural setting with limited public transportation.

Constrained economic growth and declining community resources are causing a great export of talent from our area and it also hinders the area from bringing in new talent. Community leaders and their constituents are tasked with making our communities richer in diversity and culture. Communities need more than economic development to maintain the current talent and attract new talent; communities need to be welcoming and present a strong quality of life.

2. Analyze the capacity of the regional partners to provide workforce development activities to address the education and skill needs of the workforce including individuals with barriers to employment.

Carl Sandburg College offers a variety of academic programs with stackable levels to provide students with the ability to choose a program that best fits their abilities and career goals. To address equity and connectivity issues brought forward by the pandemic, Sandburg supports students through the loaning out of institutional technology and through crisis grants from the Sandburg Foundation.

Sandburg representatives meet monthly with workforce and industry partners to better understand the needs of the local workforce and assess curriculum with workforce best practices, resulting in courses and programs that are aligned with industry needs. Industry partner feedback continues to indicate the need for soft-skill training surrounding teamwork, communication, and career readiness. Sandburg's Employability Skills Academy (ESA), a 16-hour, college program offered to Sandburg students as well as community partners, is continuously updated and is well-positioned to address this concern. Upon successful completion, ESA participants receive a certificate of completion that may be added to their resume/portfolio, which highlights their skills to prospective employers.

The Carl Sandburg College's Career Expo, held every spring, is an excellent way for students

and community members to network with prospective employers, learn about their hiring needs and even explore new career paths. At the Expo, connections are formed between businesses looking for qualified candidates in a wide variety of careers and applicants

Career Counseling services at Carl Sandburg are provided to TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) students. Services are designed to be individualized, with opportunities to small and large group experiences. Examples on services include:

- Individualized Student Success Plan
- Customized intake process that includes questions about career and provides resources for career exploration.
- 1:1 career and academic counseling
- Access to Career Cruising and post-assessment review/advising.

Carl Sandburg College hosts youth camps on an annual basis. These summer offerings are provided to k-12 students and gives youth an opportunity to have fun while exploring a variety of courses without the pressure of homework and grades. These camps are open to all students, regardless of academic standing. Instructor teaching credentials are not required; however, expertise and enthusiasm are essential. The camp instructors are made up of Carl Sandburg College staff and faculty, area schoolteachers and community members. Many of the camps are aligned with academic programs at Sandburg, including camps in the areas of manufacturing, writing, agriculture, coding, and criminal justice. Additional camps include themes such as recreation, financial literacy, etiquette, problem solving, creative arts, and theatre.

John Wood Community College Career Services staff meet bi-annually with the Career Services Advisory Council and have included a Zoom attendance option for participants. The Advisory Council is a mutually beneficial partnership including members from a variety of local industries. It has been particularly helpful during the pandemic to be more aware of hiring challenges, brainstorm how JWCC may be able to help and share updates about various programs at the college. High schools brought groups of students to visit the facility to learn more about JWCC CTE programs and potential career pathways.

The Healthcare Careers Expo included videos on a variety of different careers in health care and included information about the specific healthcare programs offered at JWCC. All participants were given a complimentary JWCC t-shirt for participating in the event.

John Wood Career Services continues to offer Career Cruising to interested individuals. This is an online career assessment tool which helps narrow down areas of interest and look at possible career paths. Testing for paraeducators is offered through ACT Work Keys, by appointment, at the Quincy Campus, Mt. Sterling Education Center, and the Southeast Education Center.

JDUB Academy is traditionally offered for three weeks during the month of June through Community-Based Outreach at JWCC. This program is for students in grades kindergarten through 12th grade and classes span a variety of interest areas including agriculture, archery, baking, computers, drama, healthcare, science, welding, robotics and more. During the summer of 2020, John Wood was forced to cancel all in-person classes for JDUB Academy because of the pandemic. However, an online STEAM class for kids was offered and had 28 participants. In 2021, John Wood will return to its traditional in-person program but will still offer online STEAM classes for kids.

3. Analyze the capacity of the regional partners to provide activities to address the needs of employers.

The in-demand industries in the region include health care, transportation, distribution and logistics and manufacturing. Bridge/Integrated Education and Training, provided collaboratively by area business and service organizations prepare students for in-demand occupations. The focus of these efforts is to allow students to complete Health Care, Manufacturing, Transportation, Distribution and Logistics bridge courses and successfully transition to post-secondary education.

The Business Service Teams provide services delivered by the WIOA partners that assist employers in:

**Recruitment and Hiring:**

- Applicant recruitment
- Business and/or industry-specific recruiting events
- Assistance in writing job descriptions
- Taking and electronically posting job orders
- Screening, Selection and Referral
- Online access to resumes
- Use of facilities for recruitment and interviewing

**Training Assistance:**

- Analysis of employee education and training needs
- Training program development
- Incumbent Worker training
- Adult Basic Ed/General Equivalency Diploma/English as a Second Language for employees (on or off-site)
- Work-based learning such as internships and apprenticeships

**Information:**

- Workforce and other labor market information
- Human resource consulting
- Tax credit information.
- ADA, EEO and other workplace compliance information
- Unemployment Insurance information

4. Lay-off aversion How well do existing training programs in the region and local areas prepare job seekers to enter and retain employment with regional businesses?

Training programs in the area have the capacity to meet the skills necessary for the job seeker to obtain employment and enter the workforce.

There are many challenges in retaining employment. In addition to the challenges previously mentioned such as rural transportation and childcare, other challenges included the ability to sustain a regional workforce, including a lack of soft skills, and need to “grow” your own workers (keeping younger workers in the community, and being work ready, i.e., passing drug tests). Innovative solutions such as providing additional intern sites for young workers, going to schools to share information about regional workforce opportunities, collaborating with substance abuse partners to strengthen the communication with Economic Development entities and enhancing advertising of workforce opportunities within region are potential solutions.

Carl Sandburg Sandburg’s Workforce Development and Community Education Department offers a variety of non-credit courses that result in industry-recognized credentials. In addition, apprenticeship development is led through this area of the College. Partnership with SkillsUSA Illinois and the WIOA Workforce Office to register employers for DOL recognized apprenticeships continues to be a priority in the region. Sandburg’s Office of Career Development provides students with training in employability skills, resume building, interview preparation, internship coordination, and job search skills.

5. Summarize the commitments of each program partner to implement the selected strategies described in the “Action Plan for Improving Service Integration in the Region.”

All WIOA Partners are meeting each month in Quincy, Galesburg, and Macomb to develop tactics to achieve the goals developed during the Service Integration Self-Assessment. The Quincy One-Stop Operator and Individual partners are on schedule to improve service integration in the coming year. Details of the partners specific service integration activities are listed below:

- Improving Customer Service
- Customer input drives service design for job seekers, employers, and system customers
- Cross-training (resource training) on program information occurs among staff
- Career Pathway strategies drive service delivery and collaboration efforts among partners
- Communication occurs across one-stop partners
- Coordination of Business Services

B. Describe how transportation and other supportive services are coordinated within the region (§ 679.510(a)(1)(vi)). The plan must address the following sections:

1. What regional organizations currently provide or could provide supportive services?

EDR 10 has many varied agencies helping in providing supportive services. Those agencies include:

- Bus transportation through the City of Galesburg is offered free to Sandburg students when they present their current Sandburg Student ID. The WIOA workforce office provides WIOA funds to support transportation and wraparound services for students who qualify for WIOA funding. For those who are adult basic or secondary education students through ROE #33, grant funds support students in ICAPS programs which

covers tuition for CTE courses at Carl Sandburg College.

- Child Care Resource and Referral agencies provide child care assistance throughout the nine counties.
- Several community organizations have received state grants with barrier reduction funds. Department of Human Services - childcare, elder care, food
  - IDHS-Division of Rehabilitation Services – vocational counseling, job coaching, job retention services, required employment physicals, assistive listening devices, programs for individuals with visual impairments, interpreter services, assistance with training and supplies, transportation, childcare, dental, glasses, medical supplies, physicals, personal assistants, homemaker, maintenance home health, home delivered meals, adult day care, assistive technology/equipment, environmental modification, respite services
  - Workforce Offices of Western Illinois - transportation, childcare, elder care, dental, glasses, software & supplies required for training, vehicle insurance
  - Regional Offices of Education - child care, jump drives, transportation, training supplies
  - Western Illinois Regional Council and Two Rivers Regional Council CSBG - food pantry, shelter, clothing and utility assistance
  - Community Colleges - transportation, special needs accommodations, counseling
  - Child Care Resource and Referral and West Central Child Care Connection - financial assistance for childcare
  - Quana and Housing Authorities - housing assistance
  - Salvation Army - emergency housing, food assistance
  - Goodwill - employment workshops, basic computer training
  - Bella Ease/Teen Reach - transportation, employment assistance

2. What policies and procedures will be established to promote coordination of supportive services delivery?

When looking at supportive services, EDR 10 attempts to work collaboratively with all local resources in virtually all our program components in order to eliminate the likelihood of service duplication. We look at the service delivery system, analyzing the internal and external resources available to deal with the identified problems. LWA 14 will continue to develop supportive service policies in place that promote coordination among community providers.

All mandatory partner staff may make and receive referrals. A standardized referral form has been developed and is available to be utilized by the partners. The form is initiated by referring partner staff and returned by referral recipient partner staff for tracking purposes. LWA 14 staff periodically check with the partners on value of the referral process and to track utilization of the process. This review of the referral process will also identify areas that are not being met by the partners current supportive service policies.

Carl Sandburg College takes great pride in the support services offered at the College. Students in the Galesburg area have free access to the Galesburg Transit System on a year-round basis. Bus ridership has greatly increased since the implementation of this program. In compliance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Disability

Support at Carl Sandburg College seeks to make the classroom equally accessible to students with disabilities by providing students with tools and accommodations intended to remove barriers imposed by their unique disabilities. Accommodations are available to all students, whether they attend the Galesburg campus, the Carthage campus, the Annex, online or as dual credit students. Classroom accommodations can be arranged via a Letter of Accommodation, drafted with Academic Support staff, at any point throughout the semester for students with documented disabilities. Letters of Accommodation are individualized in order to provide students with the unique supports they need, while also considering class and program requirements and competencies. The Academic Support office additionally provides resources and guidance, accommodated testing, and equipment loans (including laptops and tablets, assistive technologies like handheld video magnifiers and smart pens, and scientific and graphing calculators); Academic Support partners with DRS to arrange disability testing and secure funding for students with disabilities, participates in the local Transition Planning Committee (intended to help high school students transition to college or work after graduation), attends high school IEPs to facilitate guidance toward college enrollment, and makes regular referrals to the campus Tutoring Center, housed in the same office.

Sandburg employs two faculty counselors. These individuals are available to provide short term services to students. Appointments are available to discuss academic issues, stress, and related topics. Sandburg has a partnership with Bridgeway to refer students for longer term needs and any situation beyond the scope of campus services.

IDHS-Division of Rehabilitation Services – vocational counseling, job coaching, job retention services, required employment physicals, assistive listening devices, programs for individuals with visual impairments, interpreter services, assistance with training and supplies, transportation, childcare, personal assistants, homemaker, maintenance home health, home delivered meals, adult day care, assistive equipment, environmental modification, respite services

Sandburg employs a student success coach to monitor the Starfish Retention System as well as do follow up with students. This individual also monitors trends in attendance and works with faculty as well as students to increase student success.

For job seekers, Sandburg will provide targeted support and resources, such as job training programs, language assistance, accessibility accommodations, and mentorship opportunities. It also involves ensuring that job seekers are aware of and can access these resources.

For employers, Sandburg's Workforce Development and Community Education Department will offer training and resources to help employers create inclusive and equitable workplaces. The training will include diversity and inclusion training, assistance in developing equitable hiring practices, and support for creating inclusive job descriptions and outreach efforts.

For partnership and collaboration, Sandburg will continue to work with a wide range of partners, including local businesses, educational institutions, community organizations, and government agencies to enhance resource sharing and to provide diverse perspectives ensuring that strategies are grounded in the needs of the community.

John Wood Community College support services will provide a wide range of intensive services to assist learners in pursuing their educational goals. John Wood provides services to help

students succeed in the classroom, find resources to afford college, transfer to a four-year college or university and explore career options. Tutoring, disability services, cultural activities, degree planning, and test preparation are just a few opportunities available to help students succeed at John Wood.

John Wood has a Disability Services Coordinator on staff to ensure we provide appropriate resources and support services which will ensure students with disabilities the opportunity to competitively pursue a college education. In addition, the Disability Services Coordinator assists other college departments in providing access to services and programs in the most integrated setting possible. Students with disabilities at JWCC have the right to:

- equal access to courses, programs, services, activities and facilities offered through the college.
- an equal opportunity to learn, and to receive reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services.
- appropriate confidentiality of all information regarding their disability and to choose to whom, outside of the college, information about their disability will be disclosed, except as disclosures are required or permitted by law.
- information, reasonably available in accessible formats.

Reasonable accommodations are individualized and flexible, based on the nature of the documented disability and the academic environment. Below is a partial list of common academic accommodations:

- accessible classroom location/furniture
- alternative ways of completing assignments
- assistive computer technology
- assistive listening devices
- sign language interpreters.
- notetakers
- separate testing location
- use of calculator
- extended time on exams
- texts on tape
- readers and scribes

John Wood Community College offers professional counseling services to provide personal support with the goal to promote social, academic, and career success in all students. It provides a safe place and someone to talk with about college and life experiences, overcoming obstacles, engaging in student life activities and improving student success. All Personal Counseling Services are free to all enrolled students and are available on the John Wood main campus as well as all outlying centers and the Workforce Development Center. John Wood offers students access to TAO Connect, which is an interactive, web-based program that provides guided activities to help overcome anxiety, depression and other common mental health concerns and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Resources are also available to John Wood faculty and staff to help them recognize signs of serious emotional distress in students and give appropriate responses and referrals to deal with identified concerns. The JWCC Counseling Department has published a list of websites and apps that provide resources for students who may be dealing with



specific mental health concerns. The list is available on the JWCC website under the Counseling Services tab.

Included in John Wood Student Services Department is Academic Talent Search (ATS) and Upward Bound. These are Federal TRIO programs funded 100% by the Department of Education. The programs are dedicated to assisting students in identifying and maintaining healthy academic habits from elementary through high school. The programs provide free help to 170 qualifying John Wood students who are first generation college students, meet income guidelines, or have a disability. Goals for the TRIO programs include increasing retention rates and grade point averages of participants to facilitate successful graduation from John Wood or transfer to a chosen college or university. TRIO also aims to foster an institutional climate supportive of the success of individuals in the targeted groups. John Wood has seen remarkable success with the TRIO programs. During the 2020-21 academic year, the average grade point average for program participants was 3.01 and 98.68% were in good standing with the college. There was an 82.89% retention rate with students either remaining enrolled at JWCC or transferring to another institution. Examples of services provided to students who are supported by TRIO at John Wood include academic support such as individual and group tutoring in developmental English and math, referrals to community service agencies, and advocacy and assistance for students with disabilities to access on-campus resources.

JWCC Adult Education coordinates support services with local providers to assist students with transportation, childcare, assistive and adaptability equipment, literacy, career counseling and transition services using grant funding in accordance with state and federal guidelines. Spoon River College provides support services to ensure that qualified students with documented disabilities have equal access to all educational opportunities offered by the college. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Spoon River College does not discriminate against individuals with disabilities, and provides reasonable accommodations to assist students in accessing the college admissions process, courses, and activities. The disability support services office at Spoon River College coordinates with the Division of Rehabilitation Services and assists with accommodations to the classroom environment for students with documented disabilities.

To increase access to support services and further identify students with mental health needs, Spoon River College employs a counselor. The counselor, who has earned advanced professional degrees and is licensed by the State of Illinois, works with students who may experience (but not limited to) stress, depression, anxiety, trauma, relationship issues, and academic struggles. SRC Counseling Services provides free, brief, confidential, accessible, and professional therapy directed at helping students succeed in the college environment. When specialized long term services are needed, the counselor assists in making a referral to off-campus professionals.

The Student Success Coach serves as an advocate to make sure that students are aware of all services, including academic support and college and community resources so that students have every opportunity to be successful in pursuing their educational goals. The Success Coach is available to discuss student concerns such as work, childcare, housing, transportation, time management or other personal matters that interfere with academic performance. The Success Coach can help identify possible solutions or refer students to the appropriate resources within the region.

In the five-county region of Hancock, Henderson, Knox, McDonough, and Warren there exists a network of social service agencies which provide programs and services targeted towards low-income citizens. The social service networking within the region allows for greater coordination of services to meet the clients' multiple needs. The prioritizing of the Community Services Block Grant program components is accomplished by considering the internal and external resources available and how we can work most collaboratively to effectively serve the client population.

The Western Illinois Regional Council-Community Action Agency utilizes its five-county outreach program to collaborate with dozens of other groups to better serve our clients. Linkages are ongoing so that when people are assessed at intake, referrals are made to connect clients with essential services. For example, the "Loaves and Fishes" organization (a food pantry comprised of a group of local churches) refers clients to us who need vital services such as shelter, clothing and utility assistance. This group refers their unserviceable clients to the WIRC-CAA for our services and for our organization to utilize our large referral base to link these clients to various supportive services, such as employment training and educational opportunities.

The analysis of resources and service delivery shows that CSBG funding is coordinated with other public and private resources, which maximizes the efficient use of our resources to serve the low income. This means increased case management services, leveraging of funds, technical assistance, and counseling services are provided with each of the CSBG components.

The WIRC-CAA utilizes its five-county outreach program to collaborate with dozens of other groups to better serve our clients. Linkages are ongoing so that when people are assessed at intake, referrals are made to connect clients with essential services. For example, the "Loaves and Fishes" organization (a food pantry comprised of a group of local churches) refers clients to us who need vital services such as shelter, clothing and utility assistance. This group refers their unserviceable clients to the WIRC-CAA for our services and for our organization to utilize our large referral base to link these clients to various supportive services, such as employment training and educational opportunities.

Two Rivers Regional Council of Public Officials provides services through the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG). Services include Rental assistance, school supplies, 2 food pantries, the REACHOUT CENTER (thrift store), Christmas basket project, toy drive for grandparents and parents at Christmas time, programs for at-risk youth that include scholarships for post-secondary schooling, and a referral system to other needed services. Brown County United Way and Schuyler County United Way grants provide emergency assistance to households such as but not limited to car repairs, medication, utility assistance, and food; both of these grants are administered through CSBG. We also provide services to the homeless population with a hotel/motel voucher program Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity grants provide Weatherization services and utility assistance through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Emergency Furnace program and reconnect services. Also, Ameren Illinois grants are available to assist with a utility bill payment program and Warm Neighbors Cool Friends.

Regional Office of Education # 33 programs will follow state and federal rules and regulations to provide support services to students utilizing grant funding. Adult Education support services include Social Work Services, Assistive and Adaptive Equipment, Student Transportation, Guidance Services, Assessment and Testing, Volunteer Literacy Services, Career Counseling

and Transition Services.

Agencies providing support services to adult learners eligible for enrollment in Adult Education program are invited to be members of the Area Planning Council. The APC identifies services currently being offered to this population, produces a plan for the continuation of these services, identifies populations not being served, and instructional and support services not being offered, and develops a plan for providing services to meet identified gaps in service.

The Workforce Office will be the last provider of services. If a support service is needed or required for the participant to continue or complete training, support services may be provided if it is determined no other agency can provide that service. All support services are provided at the lowest possible cost via comparison bids or sole provider situations.

If public transportation is not available/practical, mileage reimbursement will be offered at the current Federal privately owned vehicle rate per mile for Workforce programs, Trade, and 1 EC participants. Workforce programs will not be the first source for funding.

IDHS-Division of Rehabilitation Services – vocational counseling, job coaching, job retention services, required employment physicals, assistive listening devices, programs for individuals with visual impairments, interpreter services, assistance with training and supplies, transportation, childcare, personal assistants, homemaker, maintenance home health, home delivered meals, adult day care, assistive equipment, environmental modification, respite services

C. Describe the coordination of services with regional economic development services and WIOA service providers (§ 679.510(a)(1)(vii)). The plan must address the following sections:

1. What economic development organizations, WIOA service providers or businesses are actively engaged in regional planning?

Economic development organizations participating in regional planning include:

- Great River Economic Development Foundation
- Hancock County Economic Development Corporation
- Henderson County Economic Development Corporation
- Knox County Area Partnership for Economic Development
- Macomb Area Economic Development Corporation
- Pike County Economic Development Corporation
- Schuyler County Economic Development Commission
- City of Monmouth Community and Economic Development Department
- City of Mt Sterling.
- EDA Economic Development Districts administered by Two Rivers Regional Council and Western Illinois Regional Council

Employers from the following growth sectors have been active participants in regional planning efforts:

- Manufacturing
- Healthcare
- Transportation, Distribution and Logistics
- Members of the WIB's Business Engagement Task Force

WIOA Partners have been active participants in developing the plan:

- Carl Sandburg College
- Department of Employment Security
- Department of Human Services
- DHS Division of Rehabilitation Services
- John Wood Community College
- John Wood Community College Adult Education
- National Able
- NAPCA
- ROE #33 Adult Education
- Two Rivers Regional Council
- Western Illinois Regional Council
- Western Illinois Works

2. What economic development organizations, WIOA service providers or businesses were invited to participate but declined?

No organization that was asked to participate refused to assist in this regional plan

D. Describe the coordination of administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate (§ 679.510(a)(1)(v)).

All partners are contributing to the MOU infrastructure, service delivery and systems delivery costs as shown in the Resource Cost Sharing Agreement.

E. Describe how a *workforce equity lens*<sup>6</sup> is or will be incorporated in the regional service integration strategies, including to job seekers and employers.

An equity lens will be developed that will contain the standard elements of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Any plan considered will include equity dimensions of involvement, process, values and assumptions, and outcomes, from a perspective that highlights how practices hold potential to shift power toward inclusion and equity.

### **CHAPTER 3: VISION, GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES – REGIONAL COMPONENT**

This section will outline how the Local Workforce Board(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 are involved with the development of the strategies and to ensure alignment with other plans.

A. Describe the local strategic vision to support state and regional economic growth (§ 679.560(a)(5)). Describe how this aligns with the State of Illinois' vision and principles (page 1). Include a description of how the region and local areas will accomplish the local strategic vision and support state and regional economic growth.

The Workforce Innovation Board (WIB) of Western Illinois serves as a representative forum of community leaders in the counties of Adams, Brown, Hancock, Henderson, Knox, McDonough, Pike, Schuyler, and Warren. It is an assembly for the discussion of local policy and programs relating to the establishment of the workforce development system for both youth and adults in Western Illinois.

The Workforce Innovation Board of Western Illinois will be the advocate for the resolution of workforce development challenges in Western Illinois and provides an array of resources to meet business and industry workforce needs.

In this role the WIB will:

1. Continuously seek the input of our job seekers and business customers to assure the system is responsive to customer needs;
2. Ensure that the delivery of services are physically, geographically and programmatically accessible to all;
3. Ensure that programs and services are tailored and responsive to the needs of each county;
4. Strive to enhance the services for our customers by creating a seamless and immediate delivery system; and,
5. Expect our system to continuously improve the delivery of services by providing staff with the necessary tools to achieve these goals.

B. Describe the local goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce (including youth and individuals with barriers to employment) and goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on performance indicators (§ 677.155(a)(1)). Include a description of how the region and local areas will accomplish local goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce and goals relating to performance.

The WIB tracks enrollments and performance outcomes for Title 1 workforce programs. As part of service integration, the WIB will assess services, programs and outcomes of all partners.

The Local Workforce Area partners, education entities and community agencies work together to provide hands-on experiences to promote career opportunities for high school students in Western Illinois. Partners and education entities identify and recruit Opportunity Youth for the Out-of-School program. Partner and community agencies identify and refer individuals with barriers to employment.

C. Provide a description of the regional and local strategies that will achieve the vision and

principles. This section must include a description of the strategies and services that will be used in the local areas:

1. To facilitate engagement of employers in workforce development programs, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations (§679.560(b)(3)(i));

The WIB will continue to emphasize and respond to the talent demands of employers throughout the region. Business Service Teams will continue to engage employers, including small business, to identify and address their workforce needs. Through labor market data, manufacturing, health care and TDL have been identified as key sectors in Western Illinois. The WIB will take a leadership role in forming sector partnerships throughout the region.

2. To support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area (§ 679.560(b)(3)(ii));

The WIB will continue to coordinate with the Economic development Entities and Community College Advisory committees to identify and address new skill requirements identified by area employers. The WIB will continue to support new and innovative programs.

3. To better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development (§ 679.560(b)(3)(iii));

The WIB will continue to rely on local economic development entities as partners in identifying and addressing local business concerns. EDC entities regularly meet with workforce and education representatives to plan and coordinate activities to build a talent pipeline, address current skill requirements and prepare for trends in key sectors.

4. To strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs (§ 679.560(b)(3)(iv));

Illinois Department of Employment Services will continue to participate in Rapid Response activities in the region. In addition, IDES shares information and services available from all partners with UI claimants and has partners either present or be available for one-on-one meetings with Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) participants.

5. To promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services (§ 679.560(b)(4)); and *Community College Programs*

Carl Sandburg College created an entrepreneurial certificate in an academic/credit bearing setting is currently underway.

John Wood Community College works with their advisory committees as well as conducting regular visits to our industry partners to identify the education and skills required for the workforce.

The Spoon River College program in Small Business Management offers a mix of transfer and career courses for the student interested in business and entrepreneurship. This program is part of the Business Management & Administration career cluster.

### *Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities (CEO) Program*

The Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities program is a yearlong course designed to introduce ambitious high school students to local businesses and entrepreneurs. Throughout the year students meet with local businesses, learn from guest speakers, participate in a class business, write business plans and start their own business. This program operates in Adams, Brown, Hancock, Knox, McDonough, Pike, and Schuyler counties.

6. To implement initiatives such as incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, customized training programs, industry and sector strategies, career pathways initiatives, utilization of effective business intermediaries, and other business services and strategies designed to meet the needs of regional employers (§ 679.560(b)(3)(v)).

Funds are designated for incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, and apprenticeship programs. Economic Development entities will lead in the implementation of industry and sectors strategies. These strategies will be developed after the business survey has been completed. The WIB supports the efforts of secondary and post-secondary education's efforts in career pathway initiatives.

D. Describe regional strategies that will increase apprenticeship and other work-based learning opportunities.

The WIB will work to build a regional network of partnerships to develop and implement outreach strategies based on an analysis of regional labor market factors, sector trends, hiring challenges, and potential solutions for business partners. Three WIB regional strategies are:

- use information about clients' needs, challenges, history, and practices to offer effective assistance and workforce solutions, as applicable.
- serve as a liaison amongst employers, area economic development organizations, and education providers; and,
- create partnerships with local educational and training providers, employers, and CBOs to implement apprenticeship programs and other work-based learning opportunities.

Internships are embedded in a variety of programs at the three community colleges (Carl Sandburg College, John Wood Community College and Spoon River College) in the area and those without look for opportunities for students to gain work-based experiences through job shadowing, industry tours, and in-class visits from industry representatives. The colleges work with advisory committees to gauge the need for required internships as well as opportunities to offer alternative work-based experiences for students.

Apprenticeships are an important part of our regional strategy. Although the region has not been overly successful to date, the Business Service teams will continue to promote and develop apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships.

E. Describe initiatives to shorten the time from credential to employment and address how the area will work with the education system to begin putting training opportunities in place to meet this strategy.

The Carl Sandburg College's Institutional Effectiveness Department reviews programs annually to ensure programs meet the needs indicated by labor market data as well as advisory committee surveys and feedback. Program review processes provide the opportunity to seek avenues in which educational programs can be created or revised to allow for a prompt entry into the workforce. John Wood Community College and Spoon River College have a similar process.

Where possible, the region will try to combine shorter training programs with on-the-job training. In addition, there will be an increased effort to work the community colleges internship component of the various approved training programs. The goal is to assist job seekers in obtaining a career in as short of time as possible.

F. Describe the steps that will be taken to support the state's efforts to align and integrate education, workforce and economic development, including:

1. Fostering the improvement and expansion of employer-driven regional sector partnerships to increase the focus on critical in-demand occupations in key sectors that are the engine of economic growth for the state and its regions.

Partners have been working with local businesses that are involved in manufacturing, healthcare and transportation, distribution and logistics sector-based partnerships. The WIB acts as a neutral convener and has launched each sector partnership by featuring a manufacturing, healthcare and transportation, distribution and logistics industry key speaker at quarterly Board meetings. In addition, meetings will be hosted in each of the nine counties of EDR 10 to determine if there are additional sector priorities based on data that will assist the region in making additional informed decisions.

Economic Development entities will play a leading role in coordinating workforce development and education partners. The Economic Development entities and Chambers of Commerce will work with the WIOA partners in strengthening their business services to maximize their effectiveness while minimizing any duplication of services.

2. Expanding career pathway<sup>7</sup> opportunities through more accelerated and work-based training and align and integrate programs of study leading to industry-recognized credentials and improved employment and earnings.

Carl Sandburg College, John Wood Community College and Spoon River College work closely with its advisory committees consisting of agency, industry, secondary, and post-secondary partners to identify pathways to careers and determine industry sought credentials. Where the opportunity exists, credentials are embedded into programs. For credentials obtained externally post program completion, training is geared toward preparing students with the knowledge and skills necessary to obtain such credentials. A similar process is also utilized by the other two community colleges in the region.



In order to expand career pathway opportunities, the regional partners will collaborate to increase program capacity by reducing duplicative services, building programs at greater scale and leveraging the efficiencies created by a stronger alignment of system resources. Partners will work together with employers to expand bridge and stackable credentials programs to support a broad spectrum of jobseekers looking for career progression and link work-based learning approaches such as apprenticeships, internships and on-the-job training programs that meet industry demands. The WIB will continue to spearhead initiatives that bring together employers and training providers, working closely with the community colleges to secure support for short and long-term training programs that meet the region's expressed goals. By developing appropriate career pathways that include assessments, training curricula and compatible work-based learning opportunities, the workforce system can prepare structured sequences of activities that will fully prepare youth and adult jobseekers for successful employment.

3. Expanding career services and opportunities for populations facing multiple barriers to close the gap in educational attainment and economic advancement through career pathways and improved career services.

To ensure the proper mix of educational, training and support services is available to all members of the community, the WIB will continue to engage education and training providers, economic development and private sector WIB members in program planning. In addition, specific communication and outreach strategies will be developed that target individuals most in need of services including basic skills deficient individuals, ex-offenders and those with disabilities.

Community Colleges maintains a strong working relationship with social agencies, area regional offices of education, and k-12 partners within its district to assist diverse populations in locating support services needed to obtain an education and succeed in the workforce. By understanding the external resources available through each partner, students are referred to a variety of services available including training related to language skills, tuition assistance, childcare, transportation assistance, and employability skills.

In addition to helping students increase English language skills and obtain high school equivalency, Adult Education programs provide education and support services to help adult learners access employment and succeed in the workforce. Information on career pathways and employment readiness skills are a part of the curriculum and core subjects such as reading, math, science and social studies are contextualized to the workforce. ICAPS programs in Manufacturing, Health Care, and Logistics offer industry recognized credentials to program participants as well as opportunities to gain valuable insight into job responsibilities and employer expectations.

- G. Describe how goals established in this plan will be monitored and evaluated.

The WIB will monitor progress on the Goals throughout the life of the Plan. Mid-year reviews and annual evaluations will be conducted.

- H. Describe how a *workforce equity lens*<sup>6</sup> is or will be incorporated in the implementation of

regional workforce, education, and economic development strategies.

The WIB will develop a plan that will contain the standard elements of diversity, equity, and inclusion. This plan will be shared and coordinated with education entities and economic development entities.

The WIB will promote these standards as a business practice that supports retention and expands recruitment opportunities.