

OPENING REMARKS

Welcome to the **2025-2028 South Central Kentucky Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Local Strategic Plan**. This plan is a blueprint for the continued advancement of workforce development in our 10-county region, ensuring that both job seekers and employers have the resources, support, and opportunities needed to thrive in a rapidly evolving economy.

At the **South Central Workforce Development Board (SCWDB)**, we are dedicated to building a robust and responsive workforce system. Our mission extends beyond program oversight—we serve as a bridge connecting individuals with meaningful career pathways and equipping businesses with the skilled talent necessary for success. Through strong partnerships with public, private, and nonprofit organizations, we bring innovative solutions that create lasting economic impact for our region.

Over the next four years, South Central Kentucky will experience significant workforce transformations driven by **technological advancements, industry growth in manufacturing and EV battery production, and shifting labor demographics**. These changes bring both challenges and opportunities, and our strategic plan is designed to address them head-on. By fostering regional collaboration, enhancing training and education opportunities, and prioritizing workforce participation, we aim to empower individuals of all backgrounds—including youth, veterans, justice-involved individuals, immigrants, and older workers—to succeed in today's competitive job market.

With the guidance of our **Board of Directors, local elected officials, and workforce partners**, we remain committed to making South Central Kentucky a leader in workforce innovation. I encourage you to explore this plan, engage with our initiatives, and join us in shaping a future where businesses and workers alike can reach their full potential.

Together, we will continue to unlock opportunities and drive economic growth across South Central Kentucky.

Jon K. Sowards

President & CEO, South Central Workforce Development Board

SETTING THE STAGE

Our Mission & Vision

The South Central Workforce Development Board is all about creating opportunities and driving growth across the 10-county region of South Central Kentucky. Our mission goes beyond simply overseeing programs: we're building a workforce system that empowers individuals with critical career and training services. Partnering with public, private, and nonprofit organizations, we bring innovative solutions to the table, making sure job seekers find real career opportunities and that local employers connect with the talent they need.

Mission Statement: The mission of the SCWDB is to lead the development and implementation of a highly effective workforce development system in the ten counties of South Central Kentucky in collaboration with business, economic development, education, and community organizations in the labor market arena.

Vision Statements: Lead a dynamic region with high-quality jobs where employers can find the skills they need to be competitive and job seekers have the skills they need to acquire high-quality jobs. Be a local workforce development board that is knowledgeable, action-oriented and respected as the leader in defining workforce development needs and in creating integrated solutions for employers, job seekers, students, and the community.

Connecting Talent & Opportunity

The South Central Workforce Development Board, herein referred to as “the SCWDB,” is at the heart of workforce innovation in South Central Kentucky. We oversee the Kentucky Career Center in Bowling Green and Access Points across the region to ensure support is always available for job seekers and employers alike. Our efforts are powered by collaboration, teaming up with our Direct Service Provider Career TEAM, the Career Development Office, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Office of Unemployment Insurance and the three Kentucky Adult Education providers. Together, we form the “public workforce system,” a network dedicated to helping employers find the right talent and guide job seekers on their career paths.

As an organization created by statute, we manage federal, state and local funding to serve our community's workforce needs. Our 23-member Board of Directors, appointed by the panel of 10 County Judge Executives, keeps us on track and focuses on impactful solutions for the region. The SCWDB concentrates efforts towards engaging employers, aligning workforce system initiatives, educating and preparing job seekers, increasing regional workforce participation and ensuring organizational excellence to drive economic growth and workforce innovation in South Central Kentucky. The ambitious goals highlighted throughout this plan describe our vital role in workforce development. By collaborating with partners and the community, we're dedicated to transforming challenges into opportunities and empowering our region's workforce to thrive and achieve lasting growth.

UNLOCKING OPPORTUNITIES

South Central Kentucky is poised for significant economic and workforce transformation, driven by population growth, advanced manufacturing investments and strategic workforce initiatives. With Warren County projected to grow by 70,000 more residents over the next 25 years, proactive planning is ensuring sustainable development across key areas such as talent, infrastructure, and economic growth. Simultaneously, the region is emerging as a national hub for EV battery production, with over 5,000 high-wage jobs anticipated and a reshaping of the automotive supply chain. Additionally, the Smart Manufacturing Workforce Initiative aims to accelerate training in robotics, automation and advanced manufacturing, ensuring a skilled workforce to meet the demands of these transformative industries.

Population Growth: The Kentucky State Data Center projects that the South Central Kentucky region will experience roughly 4% population growth between 2025 and 2030. Warren County is anticipated to exceed 200,000 residents by the year 2050, and proactive planning initiatives are underway to ensure sustainable growth and an enhanced quality of life for residents. The SCWDB President / CEO has been an active participant in the 100-member BG 2050 Project stakeholder group focused on eight key areas of talent development, public health, housing, infrastructure, storytelling, quality of life, tourism and economic development.

EV Battery Production: Kentucky is rapidly emerging as a pivotal hub in the electrical vehicle (EV) battery manufacturing industry, with two significant projects underway: the Blue Oval SK Battery Park in Glendale and the AESC Gigafactory in Bowling Green. These two projects represent the largest economic development projects in Kentucky's history with both setting the stage for tremendous growth and lasting economic impact for the region, state and automotive sector. It is anticipated that both projects could easily create over 5,000 jobs. Opportunities to align education and training efforts have been underway in the region for two years.

Smart Manufacturing Investment: Led by the South Central Kentucky Regional Development Authority, Inc. and the Bowling Green Chamber of Commerce, this grant-funded initiative is designed to strengthen workforce development in robotics, automation and advanced manufacturing across our 10-county region. The regional partnership will unite manufacturers, educators, workforce and economic development agencies and community organizations to attract diverse talent into manufacturing careers. The multi-year project will focus on aligning education and career pathways with stackable credentials, expanding training capacity in robotics and automation, implementing earn and learn models and ultimately place 650 individuals into high-tech manufacturing careers.

ANTICIPATING CHALLENGES

Over the next four years, the workforce landscape will face significant challenges as industries adapt to artificial intelligence (AI), funding uncertainties in workforce innovation and opportunity programs, and the impact of an aging workforce. The rapid integration of AI and automation will require large-scale reskilling and upskilling efforts to ensure workers can adapt to new job roles and evolving skill demands. At the same time, the uncertain reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) raises concerns

about the continuity of critical workforce development programs, potentially affecting funding for training initiatives and employment services. Additionally, as Baby Boomers exit the workforce, businesses must navigate labor shortages, knowledge transfer gaps, and shifting workforce demographics. Addressing these challenges will require proactive policies, industry-education collaboration and strategic investments to build a future-ready workforce.

The Speed of Skills Change: According to recent research from Lightcast (see [The Speed of Skill Change](#) in “References,” Appendix E), the average job has seen 1/3 of its skills change in three years and 25% of jobs have seen 75% skill turnover. AI is set to enhance efficiency, decision-making and workforce capabilities across industries; however, it is largely unknown how quickly changes could occur and to what extent reskilling and upskilling initiatives will be necessary to ensure employees can leverage AI effectively and navigate the evolving job landscape.

WIOA Reauthorization: The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the cornerstone legislation of federal workforce development programs, is slated for reauthorization in 2025. Originally enacted in 2014 with a six-year authorization period, WIOA has continued to operate through annual appropriations since its expiration in 2020. As of the publication of this strategic plan, WIOA has yet to be reauthorized; however, previously proposed legislative efforts have proposed some significant changes that could impact current financial and programmatic structures. While many stakeholders have been advocating modernizing and adequately funding this workforce program, it remains to be seen how Congress will reach consensus on how to fund and reauthorize WIOA.

Exiting Baby Boomers: Individuals who are 60 years old and older make up a significant portion of the overall workforce in the South Central Kentucky region. Currently, they comprise 11% of the overall workforce, yet their current representation in the Construction and Business / IT / Professional Services industries is roughly 19%--indicating that these industries are projected to be the most impacted by retirements. These could create labor shortages and skills gaps, knowledge and leadership gaps, increased demand for healthcare and retirement services, shifts in workforce dynamics and remote work adoption and potential slowed economic growth unless labor force participation rates increase among the younger generations.

MILESTONES

The South Central Workforce Development Board has spearheaded transformational workforce initiatives that have expanded access to education, training, and employment opportunities while fostering regional economic growth. Over the past five years, the SCWDB has implemented strategic programs and partnerships that address barriers to employment, engage underserved populations, and align workforce services with industry needs.

Expanding Reentry and Employment Services

The SCWDB has played a critical role in supporting justice-involved individuals through the Putting Kentuckians First initiative. By embedding Reentry and Employment Services (RES) Navigators across the South Region, the program provides pre-release workforce education, credential training in detention centers, targeted job readiness programs and assistance with securing vital identification documents. These efforts have improved employment outcomes for justice-impacted

individuals while strengthening collaboration with local jails, judicial entities and community partners.

Innovative Navigator Workforce Model

The SCWDB has pioneered a Navigator service model to engage untapped talent pools, including justice-involved individuals, dislocated workers, immigrants and refugees, and transitioning soldiers from Fort Campbell. These Navigators provide mobile workforce services, facilitate employment connections and conduct outreach beyond traditional career centers, leading to thousands of workforce engagements annually. This model has been so effective that SCWDB now tracks more workforce interactions occurring outside of Kentucky Career Centers than within them, demonstrating its impact in meeting job seekers where they are.

Maximizing Additional WIOA Grants

The SCWDB has successfully leveraged WIOA National Dislocated Worker Grants (NDWGs) to provide critical funding during periods of economic disruption. Following the devastating 2021 tornadoes, SCWDB secured funding that enabled training, employment, and supportive services for over 3,400 individuals, generating a \$2.7 million economic impact. Additional NDWG programs have expanded training opportunities in high-demand fields, including CDL, healthcare, cybersecurity, heavy equipment operation, and job readiness bootcamps, ensuring that job seekers have access to recognized postsecondary credentials and sustainable careers.

Enhancing Workforce Access Through Strategic Outreach

The SCWDB has expanded social media engagement and followership, reaching over 6,700 followers and promoting hiring events, career services, and training opportunities to a wider audience through multiple media outlets and channels. Additionally, SCWDB collaborated with MyWorkforceFuture to launch the multi-lingual Job Seeker Map. Available in seven languages, this resource simplifies access to education, training, and employment services, particularly for refugees and immigrants with limited English proficiency.

Workforce Innovation and Regional Collaboration

The SCWDB has been a key player in developing industry-aligned training programs, such as the Heavy Equipment Operator (HEO) training initiative, in partnership with local schools, employers, and training providers. This employer-driven model has placed dozens of high school graduates and adult trainees into well-paying jobs.

Future-Ready Workforce Strategies for Employers

The SCWDB capitalized on an opportunity to partner with Western Kentucky University to share oversight of a dedicated data analyst position charged with uncovering the multitude of reasons why individuals were not participating in the local labor force. The analysis revealed demographics and populations on the thousands of working age adults per county that were opting out of the labor force. The lack of people willing to work has put tremendous pressure on our local business community, the supply chain, tax collection for local services and so on. To tackle this issue head-on, the SCWDB developed a data-driven presentation designed to help employers better identify and recruit individuals back into the workforce. With data and insights unique to each of the 10

counties in our service area, employers who attended these presentations learned why people are not working, how to identify their local, untapped talent pockets, accommodations they can make to be more attractive and subsequent strategies for recruiting and retaining from each talent pocket. Presently, the SCWDB is providing updated analysis and recommendations to executive leadership of regional companies in addition to Human Resource managers through these presentations.

FOCUSING OUR IMPACT

The public workforce system aims to assist and serve all individuals, particularly those individuals with barriers to employment, so they can access opportunities for employment, education, training and support services they need to succeed and participate in the labor market. The SCWDB has traditionally selected five demographic groups, each with their own specific challenges and opportunities, for innovative outreach and employment programming. Over the next four years, the SCWDB endeavors to target and measure our impact serving the following five groups as “focus populations:”

- Opportunity Youth (ages 16 – 24)
- Veterans / Transitioning Military Members
- New Americans (Immigrants & Refugees)
- Justice-Involved Individuals
- Older Adults (ages 45+)

Opportunity Youth (ages 16 – 24)

Volume: nearly 15,000 young people in South Central Kentucky not participating in the labor force—roughly 9,000 are between 16 to 19 years old. Many could be high school or college students

Challenges: several structural, personal and economic barriers and factors including: demonstration of soft skills to employers, driver’s license obtainment and access to their own vehicle/transportation, mental health, and lack of awareness and access to job opportunities and career pathways

Proposed Solutions/Opportunities to Assist: currently providing dedicated personnel and programming, work-based learning, internships and short-term training; provide soft skills training opportunities; provide employer education & best practices; engage schools and postsecondary training providers and youth-services providers

Veterans / Transitioning Military Members

Volume: the Fort Campbell Army base is less than an hour away from the South Central Kentucky region and experiences roughly 500 soldiers transitioning each month.

Challenges: many often lack knowledge in how to write and tailor resumes and perform in interviews; often lack civilian/industry-recognized credentials

Proposed Solutions/Opportunities: currently providing dedicated programming such as the YourTern internship program in collaboration with MyWorkforceFuture; provide employer education & best practices; engage veteran organizations and programs

New Americans (Immigrants & Refugees)

Volume: Bowling Green has traditionally resettled hundreds of refugees each year and has experienced rapid growth in its foreign-born population (working age individuals with limited English now outnumber working age veterans in our region); 9,000+ adults in our region do not speak English well or at all

Challenges: in addition to a myriad of cultural and linguistic barriers, New Americans often are very unfamiliar with resumes and online job applications which are typical formats to communicate strengths and intentions with employers; many have limited English which makes navigating work environments challenging

Proposed Solutions/Opportunities: currently providing dedicated personnel and programming and engaging immigrant and refugee-serving organizations; providing work-readiness sessions in participants' own language; provide employer education & best practices; providing education and training resource directories in multiple languages; encourage and promote the development of language access practices for service providers and employers

Justice-Involved Individuals

Volume: precise numbers are difficult to determine

Challenges: reports indicate 60% of individuals who have served time behind bars are still unemployed a year after their release and the unemployment rate is almost 7 times higher than the general population (27%) for those formerly incarcerated; many employers have strict regulations about hiring individuals with certain offenses on their record; many justice-involved individuals need wrap-around support to holistically reenter society and the workforce

Proposed Solutions/Opportunities: currently providing dedicated personnel and programming in coordination with WIOA Title and community partners; providing targeted orientation sessions in counties throughout the region; providing employer education and best practices; providing pre-release classes in all jails and detention centers in the region; provide on-the-job training and work-based learning opportunities

Older Adults (ages 45+)

Volume: there are 17,000 residents ages 45 – 59 and another 10,000 residents ages 60 – 64 not participating in the region's labor force

Challenges: as Chapter 1 of this Plan explains, there are compounding issues affecting older adults including lack of a High School diploma and health conditions / disabilities

Proposed Solutions/Opportunities: some solutions and opportunities overlap with other Focus Populations and existing WIOA Title partners such as Vocational Rehabilitation and Adult Education; the SCWDB could explore dedicated personnel and programming targeting this demographic; provide on-the-job training, work-based learning, digital literacy and adult education programs

Chapter 1: Economic & Workforce Analysis

- A. **(R)** Provide a description of the planning process undertaken to produce the regional plan, including a description of how all local areas were afforded the opportunity to participate in the regional planning process.

The planning process started in November 2024 when Primary Goals and Subgoals were initially drafted. By late January 2025, stakeholder engagement surveys were created and distributed to Frontline Employment Services Staff, Board Members and Community Partners in the South Central region. By early February, separate versions of each survey were created for the Cumberland Workforce Development Board (herein referred to as “CWDB”) region and disseminated. Throughout January and February, the Workforce Participation Lead, a data analyst position created by WKU with shared oversight from the South Central Workforce Development Board (herein referred to as “the SCWDB”), compiled data reports and analyzed workforce trends and conditions. These were shared and reviewed by staff in both the Cumberland and South Central regions, and additional data was requested and obtained.

In the South Central region, 19 of the 21 Board Members completed surveys (2 Board Member positions were in the process of being filled at that time of the year). Additionally, 14 frontline staff who represented the Career Development Office, Career TEAM (the WIOA Title I Direct Services Provider), and the SCWDB Navigator staff completed surveys as well as 10 individuals representing community partners. All these stakeholders were also afforded, through the feedback surveys, the opportunity to choose and participate in one of five “Strategic Planning Teams” which were organized by each of the proposed Primary Goals (Employer Services & Solutions, Workforce System Alignment, Workforce Education & Preparation, Reducing Barriers to Increase Workforce Participation, and Organization Performance & Accountability). Based on respondents’ preferences, stakeholders were invited to any of the five strategic planning sessions which were held in hybrid or online formats over the last two weeks of February. Twenty-eight individuals representing a mix of Board Members, SCWDB and Career TEAM staff and community partners participated in one or more of the 5 planning sessions. In addition, the Local Elected Officials were emailed a copy of the Strategic Goals (primary and sub, with their associated program and project examples and measurable activities) for review and feedback.

In the Cumberland region, 17 of the 29 Board Members completed surveys. A presentation and review of the draft plans was provided in mid-March through a virtual format to stakeholders from within the region including Board Members, Local Elected Officials, and Direct Service Provider staff. Forty-five stakeholders were invited and twenty-seven attended which represented Board Members, LEOs, staff and one SCWDB staff member.

Recommended edits or additions to strategic goals and their associated performance indicators were used to finalize the Goals document, and then graphic design elements were added to create the visually appealing “Plan of Action” document. Local Elected Officials, Board Members, and others who had been involved in providing feedback (staff and partners) were sent a draft version to review for feedback. In South Central, two meetings were hosted for LEOs and Board Members to review ask questions about the final plan before it was posted for public comment. The documents were posted for public comment through these various channels: social media (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, [\[redacted\]](#)), the SCWDB and CWDB websites, an email inviting feedback to the 100+

member Community Partner Team distribution list maintained by the One Stop Operator, the CWDB . . . Public comments were collected and reviewed by CWDB and SCWDB leadership and can be found in Appendix F.

B. (R) Provide a regional analysis of the Economic conditions including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations as well as the employment needs of employers in existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations. [WIOA Sec. 108 (b) (1) (A)] and [20 CFR 679.560 (a)]

Our regional analysis of economic conditions by in-demand industries and occupations relied upon current and former JobsEQ® data (which is a product of Chmura Economics & Analytics and contains a disclosure that Chmura cannot guarantee its accuracy and completeness). This data source has multiple limitations because it sources only online posted jobs and ads to derive quantities that organizations like the SCWDB and CWDB and other economic and workforce entities can view to gauge demand. To more holistically understand what are considered “in-demand” occupations and industries the following 4 reports were ran. Two reports show the total number of active job ads. The other two reports show the total number of people employed.

- i. “In-Demand Industries:” shows the occupations grouped by industry categories that had the most active job ads over a 12-month span
- ii. “Openings by Occupations Top 10:” shows the top specific occupations that had the most active job ads over a 12-month span (along with their median wages)
- iii. “Occupational Snapshot (Industries):” shows the industries that employed the most individuals at a moment in time (along with their average wages & growth)
- iv. Occupational Snapshot (Occupations) Top 10:” shows the top occupations held by individuals at a moment of time (along with their average wages & growth)

Active Job Ads

To better understand growth and decline among the volume of occupations and their associated industries and wages, these reports were run for the most recent 12-month timespan (late February 2024 – late February 2025) and compared against the 2020 calendar year. Looking at in-demand industries revealed that Healthcare (practitioners and technical occupations) has presently arisen as the top industry for the South Region supplanting the 2020 top industry (Transportation & Material Moving Occupations). All the Top 5 most in-demand industries (based upon open job ads) remained the same, but the volume of job ads has slightly increased from what it was in 2020 as depicted in the charts below:

South Central Kentucky Workforce Development Board Local Plan

Openings by Occupations

Occupations		Active Job Ads
SOC	Occupation	
29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	13,041
41-0000	Sales and Related Occupations	6,832
53-0000	Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	4,881
35-0000	Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	3,651
43-0000	Office and Administrative Support Occupations	3,510

Feb. 25, 2024 – Feb. 25, 2025

Openings by Occupations

Occupations		Active Job Ads
SOC	Occupation	
53-0000	Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	8,547
41-0000	Sales and Related Occupations	7,438
29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	6,066
35-0000	Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	4,646
43-0000	Office and Administrative Support Occupations	3,666

2020

An additional report necessary to review is a JobsEQ “Opening by Occupations” report that provides the most listed Occupations (based upon active job ads in the past year) and their Median Wages. This report is again derived, like the first report, from online job ads that have been posted over a span of time. This report is distinct from the first report because instead of grouping occupations by industry, it may depict multiple occupations from within the same industry.

Feb. 25, 2024 – Feb. 25, 2025

Openings by Occupations

Occupations		Median Wage	Active Job Ads
SOC	Occupation		
29-1141.00	Registered Nurses	\$30.00	3,407
41-1011.00	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	\$17.40	2,329
41-2031.00	Retail Salespersons	\$15.75	1,993
53-3032.00	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	\$27.70	1,806
21-1093.00	Social and Human Service Assistants	\$17.90	1,202
11-9111.00	Medical and Health Services Managers	\$27.10	1,163
49-9071.00	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	\$23.10	1,156
35-1012.00	First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	\$16.00	1,059
53-7065.00	Stockers and Order Fillers	\$15.80	971
35-3023.00	Fast Food and Counter Workers	\$12.00	958

Jan. 1 – Dec. 31, 2020

Openings by Occupations

Occupations		Median Wage	Active Job Ads
SOC	Occupation		
53-3030	Driver/Sales Workers and Truck Drivers	\$26.40	5,618
53-7060	Laborers and Material Movers	\$12.50	2,795
41-2030	Retail Salespersons	\$11.00	2,768
41-1010	First-Line Supervisors of Sales Workers	\$12.00	2,559
29-1140	Registered Nurses	\$30.00	2,331
35-1010	Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	\$13.40	1,452
37-2010	Building Cleaning Workers	\$10.70	1,432
35-3020	Fast Food and Counter Workers	\$8.65	1,099
11-9110	Medical and Health Services Managers	\$22.00	1,058
21-1090	Miscellaneous Community and Social Service Specialists	\$12.95	970

The above charts, provided by JobsEQ’s open jobs report, depict job ads active in the South Region for the most recent 12-month period compared and the entirety of 2020. The first thing to note is that Registered Nurses top the 2024 list by a significant margin - the difference in quantity between ads for nurses and First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers (the second most in demand occupation in the region) is the largest on this chart. Healthcare occupations appear twice on the chart - Registered Nurses and Medical and Health Services Managers have each cracked the top ten

South Central Kentucky Workforce Development Board Local Plan

most in demand jobs in the region. This indicates again that the Healthcare industry needs significant attention in our region. However, anecdotal evidence from frontline employment services and workforce board development staff (who have access to weekly compiled lists from JobsEQ and who have attempted to follow links to these online jobs) reveal that the number of Healthcare openings in our region may be overstated in this report. Many of the posted job ads are for positions not in the region (particularly Registered Nurses, which commonly require traveling) or the ads do not link to an active job ad. The CWDB and SCWDB suspect that the number of open Healthcare jobs in our region (and even among all open positions retrieved and compiled in the reports) are likely lower than the JobsEQ reports suggest.

Total Individuals Employed

To better assess the demand for Healthcare professionals in the region, additional reports are necessary. Therefore, we compared Occupational Snapshot (Industry) reports for the South Region which are reflected below. The first report describes industries by the total number of people employed in each. Over the 4-year timeframe, all the top 5 industries, and even their ranking order, remained the same. While Healthcare appears to have doubled in demand (based upon open jobs), the number of people employed in Healthcare positions has not doubled. Rank changes in “emerging” industries happen further down the list, especially within those industries that rank 6th through 13th in the number of individuals employed in each. Within that range, Construction has outgrown Administrative Support and Agriculture/Forestry/Fishing/Hunting has slightly outgrown “Other Services” over the past four years.

SCWDB+CWDB, 2024Q2 ¹											
NAICS	Industry	Current		5-Year History		1-Year Forecast					
		Empl	Avg Ann Wages	LQ	Empl Change	Ann %	Total Demand	Exits	Transfers	Empl Growth	Ann % Growth
31	Manufacturing	42,937	\$61,526	2.05	-347	-0.2%	4,355	1,592	2,732	31	0.1%
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	40,390	\$53,494	1.03	2,795	1.4%	4,487	1,798	2,148	540	1.3%
44	Retail Trade	30,880	\$34,781	1.18	624	0.4%	4,239	1,759	2,431	49	0.2%
61	Educational Services	22,501	\$40,905	1.06	344	0.3%	2,274	955	1,155	164	0.7%
72	Accommodation and Food Services	22,133	\$21,024	0.96	182	0.2%	4,137	1,878	2,291	198	0.9%
23	Construction	14,709	\$55,012	0.94	2,013	3.0%	1,400	465	794	141	1.0%
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	13,550	\$37,195	0.84	-2,557	-3.4%	1,631	615	925	92	0.7%
48	Transportation and Warehousing	12,856	\$54,144	0.98	2,079	3.6%	1,516	506	830	120	0.9%
92	Public Administration	9,981	\$47,908	0.81	740	1.6%	973	367	548	58	0.6%
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	9,114	\$32,212	0.82	-231	-0.5%	1,120	424	613	83	0.9%
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	8,545	\$23,055	2.65	-615	-1.4%	1,046	495	551	0	0.0%
42	Wholesale Trade	8,101	\$65,380	0.82	591	1.5%	859	302	507	50	0.6%
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	7,115	\$57,938	0.37	943	2.9%	606	213	361	92	1.3%
62	Finance and Insurance	5,988	\$66,552	0.57	52	0.2%	533	190	305	39	0.6%
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	3,790	\$27,018	0.70	398	2.2%	605	223	336	46	1.2%
51	Information	3,339	\$53,638	0.65	275	1.7%	322	106	184	32	1.0%
63	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	2,752	\$52,578	0.59	183	1.4%	285	116	147	21	0.8%
22	Utilities	2,338	\$72,669	1.71	214	1.9%	223	78	129	19	0.8%
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	2,305	\$96,688	0.56	-137	-1.1%	230	73	122	36	1.6%
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	655	\$68,193	0.68	-98	-2.7%	62	21	40	1	0.2%
99	Unclassified	108	\$81,742	0.21	67	21.1%	13	5	7	1	0.6%
	Total - All Industries	263,885	\$47,355	1.00	7,517	0.6%	30,513	11,802	16,874	1,837	0.7%

2024

NAICS	Industry	Current		5-Year History		1-Year Forecast					
		Empl	Avg Ann Wages	LQ	Empl Change	Ann %	Total Demand	Exits	Transfers	Empl Growth	Ann % Growth
31	Manufacturing	39,638	\$50,004	1.96	-1,535	-0.8%	3,968	1,521	2,603	-156	-0.4%
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	37,238	\$43,405	1.03	3,004	1.7%	3,937	1,729	1,788	420	1.1%
44	Retail Trade	29,751	\$29,179	1.18	851	0.6%	3,843	1,753	2,213	-123	-0.4%
61	Educational Services	21,562	\$36,778	1.07	-1,036	-0.9%	2,003	959	1,034	10	0.0%
72	Accommodation and Food Services	20,139	\$15,640	1.02	273	0.3%	3,389	1,443	1,817	129	0.6%
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	14,534	\$28,976	0.94	-615	-0.8%	1,787	710	968	108	0.7%
23	Construction	12,595	\$43,345	0.88	1,061	1.8%	1,252	443	792	17	0.1%
48	Transportation and Warehousing	11,033	\$47,504	0.95	687	1.3%	1,199	499	675	24	0.2%
92	Public Administration	9,162	\$39,422	0.76	-118	-0.3%	838	356	484	-1	0.0%
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	8,878	\$16,165	2.64	-1,263	-2.6%	846	407	549	-111	-1.2%
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	8,644	\$24,798	0.81	-405	-0.9%	1,016	449	536	30	0.3%
42	Wholesale Trade	7,372	\$51,561	0.79	-153	-0.4%	749	291	482	-24	-0.3%
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	5,829	\$44,781	0.34	-332	-1.1%	536	186	313	37	0.6%
52	Finance and Insurance	5,584	\$54,891	0.55	-369	-1.3%	530	198	323	-1	0.0%
51	Information	3,036	\$41,248	0.62	-383	-2.3%	278	106	187	-14	-0.5%
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	3,014	\$22,950	0.71	41	0.3%	459	190	235	34	1.1%
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	2,471	\$38,575	0.57	184	1.6%	246	114	136	-4	-0.1%
22	Utilities	2,183	\$60,313	1.67	157	1.5%	185	71	125	-11	-0.5%
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	2,163	\$90,770	0.57	-355	-3.0%	215	72	123	20	0.9%
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	573	\$52,353	0.59	-365	-9.4%	62	19	39	4	0.6%
99	Unclassified	33	\$52,330	0.13	-2	-1.3%	4	2	2	0	0.3%
	Total - All Industries	245,433	\$38,561	1.00	-672	-0.1%	27,174	11,434	15,308	431	0.2%

2020

The final report to analyze and assess demand is the Occupational Snapshot (Occupations) Top 10 which depicts the top positions held by individuals in the South Region. Comparing the 2024 snapshot to the 2020 snapshot (below), it is clear the top 10 occupations have remained unchanged. There were some adjustments in the rankings--the #3 and #4 swapped rankings and the #9 and #10 swapped rankings, but all the other occupations remained in the same ranking order. Another key observation about the current top 3 occupations in the combined region is their lack of significant growth. Among them, Transportation occupations have the highest growth rate but remain modest at 0.8%. Production occupations, which rank as the second most common occupation group, are experiencing a slight decline of -0.1%, indicating potential stagnation or shifts in industry demand.

OCCUPATIONAL SNAPSHOT (SCWDB+CWDB, 2024Q2 ¹)										SCWDB+CWDB, 2020Q3 ¹									
SOC	Occupation	Current					5-Year History			SOC	Occupation	Current			5-Year History				
		Empl	Mean Ann Wages ²	LQ	Unempl	Unempl Rate	Online Job Ads ³	Empl Change	Ann %			Empl	Mean Ann Wages ²	LQ	Unempl	Unempl Rate	Online Job Ads ³	Empl Change	Ann %
43-0000	Office and Administrative Support Occupations	29,511	\$40,500	0.96	1,199	3.8%	1,007	-1,446	-1.0%	43-0000	Office and Administrative Support	29,326	\$33,200	0.93	1,559	5.1%	808	-959	-0.6%
51-0000	Production Occupations	28,753	\$44,900	2.00	1,616	5.0%	422	-847	-0.6%	51-0000	Production	26,522	\$36,200	1.84	2,181	7.2%	546	-1,678	-1.2%
53-0000	Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	26,304	\$42,300	1.15	2,337	7.4%	1,134	1,972	1.6%	41-0000	Sales and Related	23,856	\$32,700	1.01	1,767	7.0%	1,805	-96	-0.1%
41-0000	Sales and Related Occupations	22,524	\$41,000	0.97	1,448	5.9%	2,103	-338	-0.3%	53-0000	Transportation and Material Moving	23,592	\$33,200	1.15	2,279	8.2%	2,672	356	0.3%
35-0000	Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	21,991	\$27,900	1.01	1,793	7.1%	1,206	13	0.0%	35-0000	Food Preparation and Serving Related	20,359	\$21,300	1.06	3,090	12.9%	1,414	74	0.1%
11-0000	Management Occupations	21,878	\$91,000	1.07	428	2.0%	979	1,224	1.2%	11-0000	Management	19,136	\$74,900	1.19	461	2.5%	472	-889	-0.9%
29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	16,937	\$88,400	1.08	319	1.9%	3,382	773	0.9%	29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	15,289	\$70,600	1.07	321	2.1%	1,450	1,081	1.5%
25-0000	Educational Instruction and Library Occupations	13,958	\$54,700	0.98	423	3.0%	520	339	0.5%	25-0000	Educational Instruction and Library	13,034	\$46,500	0.94	756	5.6%	417	-501	-0.8%
49-0000	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	11,789	\$52,500	1.15	394	3.0%	618	887	1.6%	31-0000	Healthcare Support	10,700	\$28,700	0.98	514	4.7%	621	1,310	2.6%
31-0000	Healthcare Support Occupations	11,594	\$36,600	0.96	532	4.3%	572	1,057	1.9%	49-0000	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	10,511	\$42,300	1.12	564	4.8%	410	283	0.5%

Other observations from these reports are that wages have increased significantly across all industries in the past four years and most industries have experienced growth in the number of individuals employed in each. Both demonstrate healthy economic conditions for the South Region, and they are necessary to support the cost of living in the regions. However, it is also important to note the disparity in average pay amongst the top occupations in our region. Occupations like First-Line Supervisors, Retail Salespersons and especially Fast Food and Counter Workers do not provide wages that can support a family or an individual. This means that these occupations are likely to experience regular turnover and are more difficult to fill than others that have similar educational or skill requirements and pay better. Compounding these challenges, **the average wages for the current top three occupations fall below both the region’s living wage and the overall average wage** (Appendix B for Cost-of-Living Index). This suggests that many workers in these dominant fields may struggle with economic stability, particularly in the face of inflation and rising living costs. Additionally, education and certification requirements vary significantly across these leading occupations:

- Office staff roles may require advanced degrees or specialized training, depending on the position.
- Production workers generally do not require additional education beyond high school.
- Transportation employees may need to obtain a Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) or other industry-specific certifications.

With limited wage growth and mixed employment trends, these industries may face challenges in attracting and retaining workers, especially if wages remain below regional benchmarks. **Future workforce development strategies should focus on upskilling, certification support, and wage improvements to ensure long-term economic sustainability for workers in these occupations.**

The South Region plans to adopt the same **top 5 “in-demand” Industries** as the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board: **Healthcare, Manufacturing and Logistics** (which were previously separated industries, and for the South Region would combine our #1 and #8 Industries into a single Industry), **Construction, Educational Services and Professional/Scientific/Technical Services** (which, for our region, is ranked #12 after Transportation and Warehousing are merged together with Manufacturing). Retail Trade and Accommodation & Food Services, while they are consistently in-demand based upon the number of individuals they employ and the number of job openings, are not planned to be adopted as priority sectors for the South Region because they have not traditionally been high-paying (and thus, a strong return on investment for individual support). Instead, the South Region plans to continue to assess how to best support the newest state-adopted industry sectors of Educational Services and Professional, Scientific and Technical Services.

C. **(R) Provide an analysis of the regional workforce, including 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. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(C)] and [CFR 679.560(a)]**

The SCWDB has been regularly analyzing the regional, state and national labor force and labor market trends because for the previous 2.5 years it has partnered with WKU to help oversee a dedicated “Workforce Participation Lead” staff member whose primary task was to assist the SCWDB in better understanding the root causes for low labor participation in the region. The SCWDB has been using this “workforce intelligence” to provide presentations to employers that empower them with insights and actionable solutions regarding population “pockets” of residents who are not participating in the workforce and the various barriers they may face. Much of the following data and analysis presented below was gathered from these efforts. The analysis in this section is based heavily on information compiled from table S2301 of the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS) data tables. Also included is a demographic breakdown from JobsEQ. However, the labor force participation rates and populations used in the analysis come from the ACS. The ACS data is available in Appendix B.

Labor Force Participation Challenges in the Cumberlands & South Central Region

The Cumberlands & South Central Region faces significant labor force participation rate (LFPR) challenges, lagging both Kentucky and the national average. At 56.3%, the region’s LFPR is 3.3 percent lower than Kentucky’s (59.6%) and 7.2 percentage points below the national average (63.5%). To match the national rate, the region would need to add 36,822 more people to the workforce.

Key Populations of Concern

1. **Older (Pre-Retirement) Prime-Age Workforce (45-64 Years Old)**
The 55-59 age group is particularly concerning, with an LFPR 17% lower than the national average and nearly 8% lower than Kentucky's overall rate. In total, 63,471 individuals aged 45-64 are not in the workforce, with 18,511 of them aged 55-59.
2. **Individuals with Disabilities (ages 20 – 64 years old)**
The ACS asks individuals to report if they have a “health condition.” Those that do have a LFPR 12.6% lower than the national average. 43,376 (65%) of these individuals are not in the labor force. 70% or more of individuals ages 45 – 59 who report a disability are not working. 15,862 people aged 45-54 report a disability, and 69.9% (11,095) are not working. 11,461 people aged 55-59 report a disability, and 76.8% (8,807) are not working.
3. **Educational Attainment (Less than a High School Diploma)**
The LFPR for individuals without a high school diploma is 17.9% lower than the national average. Among 42,415 people without a diploma, 23,876 (56%) are not in the workforce. The impact is especially severe for older adults: 6,294 individuals aged 55-59 lack a diploma, with 72.3% (4,548) not working; 60% of individuals who could be considered Generation X who do not have a high school diploma in the region are unemployed.
4. **Compounded Barriers: Age, Disability & Low Education**
Individuals who both have a disability and lack a high school diploma face even greater labor participation challenges: 4,070 people aged 45-54 fall into this category, and 84.5% (3,440) are not in the workforce; 3,161 people aged 55-59 fit this profile, and 86% (2,720) are not working. Over 6,000 individuals in this age group could benefit from targeted workforce and educational support.

Additional Findings

- Gender differences in LFPR are minimal. Having children impacts LFPR, but age, disability, and education levels play a far more significant role. **Disability has a larger impact on workforce participation than education**, though both remain key barriers.

Recommendations

The **45-59 age group**—especially those with disabilities and low educational attainment—faces immense barriers to workforce participation. Efforts to **increase employment in the region** should focus on **workforce training, education programs, and disability-inclusive employment opportunities**. Investing in **targeted assistance for the 6,000+ individuals struggling with both disability and low education** could significantly improve labor force participation and economic stability in the region.

Employment Trends in the South Region

Since 2020, overall employment trends in the region, including South Central and The Cumberlands, have followed a similar trajectory. Both experienced significant declines during the

COVID-19 pandemic, followed by strong recoveries in 2021. In the most recent quarter for which data is available, The Cumberlands has a slight edge over South Central, though their employment levels remain closely aligned. **While both regions continue to experience employment growth, the pace has slowed considerably since 2021.** Additionally, growth rates were slightly higher before the pandemic (see Appendix B page 6).

Unemployment Trends in the South Region

The unemployment trends in South Central and The Cumberlands closely mirror their employment patterns, reflecting the region's economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic. Both areas experienced a sharp increase in unemployment during the pandemic, followed by a notable decline beginning in 2021. However, recent data indicates a slight increase in unemployment, suggesting that the labor market may be experiencing new challenges.

Currently, The Cumberlands reports an unemployment rate of 6.1%, which is 0.4 percentage points higher than South Central's 5.4%. The combined regional unemployment rate stands at 5.7%, compared to the national average of 4.3%, indicating that the region still has ground to cover in its economic recovery. Despite the recent increase in unemployment, both regions remain below their worst pre-pandemic unemployment levels, demonstrating overall resilience. However, if current trends continue, there is a **possibility of rising unemployment in the near future**, which could pose challenges for the region's workforce and economic stability. Addressing this potential rise through workforce development initiatives, employer engagement, and targeted support for job seekers will be critical in sustaining long-term growth. (see Appendix B page 6).

Wage Trends in South Central & The Cumberlands

The region lags the national average in wages, with an average annual wage of \$47,355, compared to the U.S. average of \$72,405. Within the region, South Central reports a higher average wage of \$51,144, while the Cumberlands trails at \$43,239, highlighting a significant wage gap between the two areas. Despite these disparities, **both regions are experiencing positive wage growth.** However, South Central's wages are increasing at a much faster pace than the Cumberlands', further widening the gap. South Central's wage growth rate stands at 4%, nearly 1.5 times faster than the Cumberlands' rate of 2.7%. Encouragingly, the region's overall growth rate aligns closely with the national wage growth of 3.6%, suggesting steady economic progress.

However, wage growth has slowed considerably since 2022, with both regions experiencing a decline in their rate of increase. In the most recent quarter, South Central showed signs of a rebound, while the Cumberlands saw a slight dip, though this may be attributed to normal fluctuations rather than a clear downward trend. Even with some variations, the broader pattern indicates a deceleration in wage growth across the region. Moving forward, efforts to boost wage growth in the Cumberlands and sustain momentum in South Central will be crucial in enhancing overall economic stability and competitiveness in the labor market. (see Appendix B page 7).

The Rise of Hidden Workers in the Labor Market

The following insights were retrieved from [Hidden Workers: Untapped Talent Pools](#), published by Harvard Business School (the full publication is available in Appendix D, References). Long before

the Great Recession and continuing well beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, structural labor market imbalances have resulted in a growing percentage of working-age adults remaining outside the workforce. Each economic downturn exacerbates this issue, and during recovery phases, those who become disconnected from employment face serious challenges. Gaps in their work histories develop, and with each passing month, they risk falling further behind in acquiring the skills that employers demand.

At the same time, employers struggle to fill job openings, as the pool of workers with up-to-date skills appears to shrink. This shortage is worsened by rapid technological advancements in the workplace. **Employers increasingly turn to automation and AI-driven recruiting platforms to expand and diversify their candidate search, yet these very systems often screen out those not currently employed**, assuming they lack proficiency in the latest technologies. As a result, many job seekers—especially those with employment gaps—perceive themselves as unqualified and refrain from applying. This cycle creates a **compounding labor market challenge**:

- Companies find fewer candidates who meet their hiring criteria.
- In response, they invest in **more technology** to reduce reliance on hard-to-find workers.
- Online job platforms, while expanding access to opportunities, **filter out applicants who do not match predefined job descriptions exactly**.

Consequently, **millions of skilled workers struggle to secure employment** that aligns with their qualifications, hours, and career aspirations. Labeled as **"less qualified"** by automated systems, they become **invisible to recruiters**, reinforcing the cycle of exclusion. This phenomenon has given rise to what labor experts now call **"hidden workers"**—a growing segment of capable individuals who remain **trapped outside the workforce**, not due to a lack of ability, but because of rigid hiring processes and technological barriers. It is difficult to estimate the number of “hidden workers” in the South Region, but workforce development board staff and frontline WIOA employment services staff and community partners confirm that many individuals seeking services frequently have difficulty navigating online applications and online processes used by employers.

D. (R) 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.

Both the CWDB and the SCWDB have established relationships and demonstrate effectiveness towards supporting education and training initiatives and workforce development activities in the South Region. As described in both Local Plans, the two workforce development boards have partnered to launch highly successful “navigator” service delivery models that focus on specific populations of residents with barriers to employment. Both areas have also spearheaded the development and launch of reentry programming that is now adopted by the Office of Adult Education and has evolved into the Reentry Employment Services (RES) Branch, expanding as a statewide initiative seeking to identify and provide wraparound supports (including education and training) to justice-involved individuals. Both workforce board areas currently subcontract with the same WIOA Direct Service Provider—Career TEAM—and share expertise pertaining to case management best practices and support. Both areas have also stewarded additional National Dislocated Worker Grants that have expanded their capacity to provide short-term training, work-

based learning and supportive services for individuals with multiple barriers to employment. Over the course of the previous strategic plan period (July 2021 – February 2025), the South Region supported 1,500 individuals through WIOA programming (ITAs, WEX, OJT, and Supportive Services). For more thorough examples of each area's workforce development activities, please see CWDB's Local Plan Appendix A and SCWDB's Local Plan Appendix A.

E. (L) Provide an analysis of the knowledge and skills required to meet the employment needs of the employers in the local area, including employment requirements for in-demand industry sectors and occupations. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(B)] and [20 CFR 679.560(a)]

<input type="checkbox"/>	SOC	Occupation	Median Wage	Active Job Ads	
<input type="checkbox"/>	29-1140	Registered Nurses	\$31.00	2,542	
<input type="checkbox"/>	53-3030	Driver/Sales Workers and Truck Drivers	\$21.70	1,810	
<input type="checkbox"/>	29-2030	Diagnostic Related Technologists and Technicians	\$26.65	1,547	
<input type="checkbox"/>	41-1010	First-Line Supervisors of Sales Workers	\$17.20	1,520	
<input type="checkbox"/>	53-7060	Laborers and Material Movers	\$16.20	1,402	
<input type="checkbox"/>	29-1210	Physicians	\$118.40	1,226	
<input type="checkbox"/>	41-2030	Retail Salespersons	\$15.00	1,206	
<input type="checkbox"/>	29-1120	Therapists	\$37.00	988	
<input type="checkbox"/>	49-9070	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	\$25.05	982	
<input type="checkbox"/>	37-2010	Building Cleaning Workers	\$14.00	847	

Source: JobsEQ®

The above chart lists the occupations/jobs that had the most online ads in the South Central Kentucky region over a 12-month span of time (JobsEQ 2024). With the need for more education to enter the healthcare field, and extra certification needed to become a truck driver, half of the top in demand occupations in our region require some education beyond high school. With several of those occupations near the top of the list, it paints the picture that many, if not most, of the jobs in our region require extra education. However, this is only true for the top 10 jobs in this report. When compiling the data, also from JobsEQ, on all the active job ads in South Central Kentucky we get a different story. There were a total of 36,530 active job ads in the one-year span that this report covers. Of those, 30,959 (84.75%) did not list an education or certification requirement beyond high school. There may be some jobs that require extra certification or training but do not list that in their ad, but this still implies that the jobs in South Central Kentucky overwhelmingly do not require an advanced education. National data from Lightcast (see the link to [The Rising Storm](#) in Appendix E, References) reports that 9 of the top 10 positions in the nation do not require education beyond a high school diploma.

According to the American Community Survey's (ACS) 2023 1-year microdata estimate, there are 31,214 adults in the South Central Kentucky region with less than a High School diploma and 17,475 of them are not participating in the workforce. There are an additional 91,389 individuals who have a High School diploma (or equivalent), yet 39,607 are not in the labor force. This means the South Central Kentucky region has a potential labor force of 57,081 individuals without higher education who could both benefit from additional post-secondary education and could currently assist in fulfilling the most in-demand positions that do not require advanced education.

The Kentucky 2024 – 2027 WIOA State Plan page 18 (link listed in Appendix E, References) identifies that it is challenging to accurately and reliably identify emerging sectors given the challenges with available data. Furthermore, the WIOA State Plan states “investing in skills training that is only applicable to specific industries and is not transferable may not be advisable. A reliable workforce investment may be to put resources towards helping individuals develop a portfolio of transferable skills created by educational programs and real-world experiences.” The KY State Plan page 32 (link found in Appendix E, References) also provides a list of the top 10 “Skills Required by Projected New Jobs.” The most requested skill, which widely outpaces the remaining skills, is “Active Listening.” Other data sources also indicate that verbal and written communication skills are the most in-demand skills nationally and regionally (see the link for SREB, [The Skills Employers Demand](#) in Appendix E, References).

Chapter 2: Strategic Vision & Goals

A. (L) A description of the Local WDB's strategic vision and goals aimed at fostering regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. This must include plans for preparing an educated and skilled workforce (especially for including youth and individuals facing barriers to employment), and goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on performance indicators described in 116(b)(2)(A) to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(E)].

See Appendix A “Plan of Action” for a thorough description of the SCWDB’s Vision, 5 Core Strategic Goals, supporting Subgoals, and examples of Key Performance Indicators.

B. (L) Describe how the local board’s vision and goals are intricately aligned with the Commonwealth’s goals, initiatives, and priorities as outlined in the WIOA State Plan. This alignment is crucial in ensuring the success of the collective efforts.

The SCWDB Local Plan contains 5 Primary Goals and various Subgoals that integrate the same Strategic Goals and Strategic Objectives as the KY WIOA State Plan (**see Appendix D** for a side-by-side comparison document that outlines precisely **how our organization’s present Strategic Goals align with the KY WIOA State Plan Strategic Goals**).

Supporting State Plan Strategies: As mentioned in the KY WIOA State Plan “Briefer,” **the SCWDB has established experience, partnerships and recent initiatives that have demonstrated our increased capacity to serve Kentucky’s untapped talent pools**. Most notably during the previous

5-year period, the South region (South Central and Cumberlands workforce boards) collaborated to launch dedicated, mobile positions that aimed to connect justice-involved individuals (those incarcerated, released from incarceration, in rehabilitation, or needing rehabilitation as well as those with incarceration or rehabilitation backgrounds) to wrap-around supports and transformational employment opportunities. This regional project was then administratively “adopted” by the KY Office of Adult Education who agreed to provide funding and strategic oversight while contracting with the SCWDB to provide fiscal administration. Termed “Putting Kentuckians First” and the “Reentry Employment Services Branch,” the initiative has been launched as a statewide model for WIOA Title partners to engage justice-involved “reentry” individuals and increase their educational attainment and workforce participation.

Additionally, the South Region’s Directors led efforts to champion for and successfully acquire new KY General Assembly funding to increase our capacity to ensure young people (ages 16-24 years old) successfully transition from high school to employment. Presently dubbed “Putting Young Kentuckians to Work,” this statewide initiative complements the KWIB’s “LAUNCH” initiative.

The South Region has demonstrated successful collaboration and resource sharing to launch innovative “Navigator” service models directed at Reentry, Youth, Long-term Unemployed and (in South Central) New American untapped talent populations. Each Navigator has been highly successful at engaging each talent pool and connecting them to education, training, employment and the local resources that support their attainment of each.

C. (L) Describe how the local board’s vision and goals are considered and provide an analysis of the strategies for working with the required partners and other entities to carry out the core programs and align resources.

Much of the planning, consideration and goal-setting process for the Primary Goals and Subgoals is described in Chapter 1A (above). **The heart of the SCWDB Local Strategic Plan is the identification of and subsequent organization around our five (5) Strategic Goals with Supporting Objectives, five (5) prioritized Industry Sectors, and five (5) Focus Populations.** Sprinkled throughout the 18 various Supporting Objectives are opportunities to partner with employers, education institutions, fellow non-profit organizations, civic institutions and WIOA Title partners. Appendix A: Plan of Action further details programs and resources to be leveraged for various demographics. The SCWDB convenes monthly Partner Meetings to discuss current workforce trends, identify collaborative opportunities, share best practices and develop plans to mutually support each other and has been hosting these meetings for the past eight years. The SCWDB convenes weekly “Sync” meetings comprised of representatives from the SCWDB, the WIOA Title I Direct Service Provider, the One Stop Operator, the Career Development Office (including JVSG staff), The KY Office of Employer and Apprenticeships Services and Vocational Rehabilitation. Other community partners providing employment services also occasionally attend these meetings that endeavor to share information about business needs and business services projects, including the planning and execution of hiring events and outreach and engagement strategies. Ultimately, the Board’s vision and goals have the greatest chance of being achieved through partnership, collaboration and sharing of resources. Additionally, each of the six annual Board of Directors meetings provides Key Performance Indicators and outcomes related to each of the SCWDB’s strategic goals. These meetings have assigned representation from among each

required partner and regular guest participation from among the required partners. Such engagement encourages alignment of resources among partners, including employer partners.

Chapter 3: Alignment of Local & Regional Area Partnerships & Investment Strategies

A. **(L)** Describe the local board’s strategy to work with the entities that carry out the core programs and other workforce development programs to support alignment and provide services, including programs of study authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.), that support the strategy identified in the State plan under section 102(b)(1)(E); H. R. 803—442.1. This discussion should include a descriptive overview of the local workforce development system, including key stakeholders and entities associated with administrative and programmatic/service delivery functions. Examples include elected officials, advocacy groups, local workforce development board and committee structure, fiscal agent, operator(s), required program partners, and major contractors providing Adult/Dislocated Worker and Youth program elements. Describe respective roles and functional relationships to one another.

Note: WIOA identified six core programs: Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Adult Education and Literacy, Wagner-Peyser Programs, and Vocational Rehabilitation. The elected partner plan programs are Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers, Jobs for Veterans State Grants, and Unemployment Insurance.

Collaboration with Core and Workforce Development Programs: The six core programs identified by WIOA are: Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Kentucky Adult Education, Wagner-Peyser Programs and Vocational Rehabilitation. The elected partner plan programs are Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers, Jobs for Veterans State Grants and Unemployment Insurance.

The vision of the South Central workforce area is that economic development, education, and workforce development partners are aligned both locally and regionally to sustain a rapidly growing, vibrant economy in the region. The SCWDB is a key partner providing leadership on talent development strategies within that context. This is consistent with the role and duties of a local workforce board as defined in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014. Multiple agreements provide the structural foundation for local partnerships. These include:

1. Interlocal Agreement among the 10 counties of the workforce area that: creates the Governing Board of local elected officials; defines the voting procedures for approval of key items; creates the process for selection of a Chief Local Elected Official; defines dispute resolution procedures; defines shared liability; establishes rules for selection of a Fiscal Agent; and prescribes the procedure for approval of an annual budget developed and presented to the local elected officials by the South Central Workforce Board.
2. Partnership Agreement Between Local Elected Officials and the SCWDB that: establishes expectations for communications between the Board and the LEOs; defines the process for development of the annual plan and budget, including a youth plan; defines public review

and comment procedures; and defines processes for selection of entities to perform the roles of Fiscal Agent and One-Stop Operator in the local workforce area.

3. Memorandum of Agreement Between the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the South Central LEO / Workforce Board Partnership that establishes the contractual relationship necessary for release of WIOA funds for the local area.
4. Memorandum of Understanding Between the SCWDB and the Required One-Stop Partners that defines the roles and responsibilities of each partner for the operation of the Kentucky Career Center service delivery system in the local workforce area, including expectations for sharing operating costs of the delivery system.

The Board has established its leadership and organizational structure to perform the duties prescribed by WIOA. Current standing committees include:

1. Executive Committee to supervise the affairs of the Board in the intervals between Regular Board meetings and to act on behalf of the Board between meetings. The Executive Committee meets every other month (opposite the months of the full Board of Directors meetings, but it may meet as often as it deems necessary) and will make recommendations to the full Board. Actions taken by the Executive Committee will be presented to the full Board for final approval unless specifically given authority by the Board to act on issues defined by the Board. The Executive Committee will utilize a consent agenda to present items to the full Board.
2. Finance Committee to oversee budget development and monitor spending via reports submitted to the Board from the Fiscal Agent. Spending items requiring Board action will be reviewed by the Finance Committee and recommendations will be made by the Committee to the full Board for action. Any modifications to the budgets of the Board or its contractors will be made by the Finance Committee to the full Board.
3. Governance Committee to create and maintain the Board’s operational procedures and to create draft policies for the local workforce development system to be presented to the full Board for approval. Such policies include operational policies for the one-stop operator, service providers, and training providers in providing services to customers via the Kentucky Career Center network. Policy changes from the state or Federal government related to WIOA will be brought to the committee to create any needed changes in local policies because of state or federal actions.

Two separate non-profit corporations, the SCKY Foundation for Workforce Development, Inc., (D.B.A. Employward) and MyWorkforceFuture (MWF) have also been created with Articles of Incorporation, as filed on April 21, 2016 and April 17, 2020, respectively. These organizations exist primarily to support the work of the Board by generating additional resources that complement and expand WIOA and other programs and services in the region.

Required Program Partner (Core Programs in Bold)	MOU Partners for Local Programs (Core Partners in Bold)
WIOA Adult	Career TEAM
WIOA Dislocated Workers	
WIOA Youth	
Adult Education & Literacy	Kentucky Adult Education (KYAE)

Vocational Rehabilitation	KY Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
Trade Adjustment Assistance	KY Career Development Office (CDO)
Veterans Employment & Training	
Wagner-Peyser	
Unemployment Insurance	KY Office of Unemployment Insurance
Postsecondary Education	South Central KY Community & Technical College (SKYCTC)
Title V of Older Americans Act	Experience Works
Community Service Block Grant	Community Action of Southern Kentucky
Housing & Urban Development E & T	Housing Authority of Bowling Green
Job Corps	Great Onyx Job Corps Center
Bureau of Apprenticeship & Training	KY Office of Employer and Apprenticeship Services
TANF	KY Department for Community Based Services; Audubon Area Community Services

The SCWDB convenes monthly Partner Meetings, comprised of many of the organizations listed above, to discuss current workforce trends, identify collaborative opportunities, share best practices and develop plans to mutually support each other and have been hosting these meetings for the past eight years. The SCWDB convenes weekly “Sync” meetings comprised of representatives from the SCWDB, the WIOA Title I Direct Service Provider, the One Stop Operator, the Career Development Office (including JVSG staff), The KY Office of Employer and Apprenticeships Services and Vocational Rehabilitation. Other community partners providing employment services also occasionally attend these meetings that endeavor to share information about business needs, including the planning and execution of hiring events, and outreach and engagement strategies.

B. (L) Describe how the LWDB, working with the entities carrying out core programs, will expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment. Include how the local board will facilitate the development of career pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs, and improve access to activities that lead to a recognized postsecondary credential. This includes a credential that is an industry-recognized certificate or certification and is portable and stackable. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(3)]

The South Region originally incubated the program and initiatives described below and now fully supports the Kentucky Office of Adult Education’s Reentry and Employment (RES) Branch program and initiatives. There are multiple RES Navigators (who are each considered an extension of the staff of the SCWDB and CWDB) designated to coordinate and execute the following initiatives across the South Region:

- **Putting Kentuckians First:** A state-wide initiative supporting justice impacted individuals. This program takes a county-by-county approach to assist justice-impacted individuals across the spectrum (Pre-Entry, Incarceration, and Reentry) with services such as access to

the entire Kentucky Workforce System (including all WIOA Title partners), substance recovery resources, employment assistance, educational opportunities, healthcare support, and vital documentation obtainment.

- Pre-Release Classes at Local / Regional Detention Centers: On site/in person educational forum facilitated by RES Navigators through partnership with Jailers. Individuals who are currently incarcerated are informed about the WIOA Title and Community Partner services and the assistance available to them to assist with their transition back to society. Some processes are started while the individual is still incarcerated. Upon release individuals are provided with county specific resource folders and contact information for assistance.
- Targeted Orientation Classes: Serve as an extension of the Kentucky Career Centers to counties without a physical career center location. RES Navigators facilitate the members of the Kentucky Workforce System (WIOA Title partners) to be present and available to assist individuals with employment, training, educational and other resource needs. Targeted Orientation Classes serve as a direct referral pipeline from Judicial Entities to the Putting Kentuckians First Program. Referrals occur from the judicial partners within a specific county however the Targeted orientation Classes are open to the community at large and are commonly held at a KY Adult Education program center. Individuals can hear general information and the roles of the Kentucky Workforce System, then immediately transition to in person meetings with the appropriate partners based on their individual needs.
- Credential Training at Local / Regional Detention Centers: RES Branch coordinates and facilitates the offering of credentialing programs to individuals currently incarcerated. In partnership with Jail/Jailers, approved training providers (KCTCS/ Welding Institute of Bardstown), Goodwill of Kentucky, and the local Workforce Development Board, individuals are provided credential training, and employability support. Upon graduation and release from incarceration individuals enter the Putting Kentuckians First Program for additional wrap around support.
- Identification Program: RES Branch oversees/funds the acquisition of identification documents (ID cards, Licenses, Social Security Cards, Birth Certificates) for justice impacted individuals who are participating in Adult Education and/or Reentry activities.
- Behavioral Health Conditional Dismissal Program (SB90): RES oversees the workforce, education and training barrier relief funding for this program and facilitates and coordinates participant activity with the Adult Education Local Provider Network to increase education, workforce and training outcomes for participants in the program.

For the past 5 years, the South Region has been implementing a **“Navigator” service provision model** for certain targeted, untapped talent populations. The first three Navigator positions had assigned focus—two directed towards justice-involved individuals and jobseekers and another on high school (secondary) and college (post-secondary) jobseekers. All positions were funded by the KY Education and Labor Cabinet “Governor’s Statewide Reserve” funds and had territories covering the South Region. A fourth Navigator position launched as an Economic Recovery Coordinator in response to those who lost their job or developed long-term unemployment due to the COVID-19 pandemic and was funded through a National Dislocated Worker grant. All Navigators worked within the 23-county South Region and had shared supervision by the SCWDB and CWDB. A fifth

Navigator position was launched in response to the devastating tornados that swept across South Central Kentucky in December 2021 and was funded by subsequent National Dislocated Worker grant funds. This position, which gives preference for candidates who are multi-lingual, focused on availing services to immigrant and refugee individuals (which the SCWDB terms “New Americans”). A sixth Navigator was jointly funded by local government funds in South Central and positioned at the Fort Campbell Transition Assistance Center to avail South Central KY job and career opportunities to the soldiers who exited the Army from that base each month.

Presently, the SCWDB has acquired local and state government (non-WIOA) funding for several Navigators who each endeavor to provide outreach, education, workforce services, referrals to community and wrap-around services (including services provided by WIOA Title partners) and ultimately connect targeted populations to local employment opportunities. These positions have each been highly successful due to their ability to be highly visible and mobile within the region (as opposed to working solely at a Kentucky Career Center) and execute Business Services roles in addition to traditional employment services assistance. These Navigators have engaged thousands of individuals inside (and in the case of the Fort Campbell Navigator, outside) the region such that the SCWDB tracks more workforce engagements with individuals outside the Kentucky Career Center than are engaged inside a Kentucky Career Center each year.

In addition, over the past five years while these Navigator models were being established, the SCWDB received multiple **WIOA National Dislocated Worker Grant funds** (NDWGs) to increase our ability to serve dislocated workers and long-term unemployed individuals with barriers and connect them to education, training, supportive services and employment opportunities during recent years when WIOA Adult, Youth and Dislocated Worker funding was flat or reduced. The SCWDB has acquired and administered NDWGs that have greatly expanded our ability to provide workforce services and subsidized training opportunities to hundreds of individuals in our region. A past example of this was a 3-year NDWG awarded to our region in response to devastating tornadoes that came through in late 2021. Over the course of the 3-year award, over 3,400 individuals were connected to training and employment, over 100 individuals were placed into Work Experience internships, and over 350 individuals received training, supportive services or career-building internships generating \$2.7 million in economic impact and investing nearly \$950,000 into regional businesses. NDWGs have expanded the SCWDB’s ability to provide Individualized Training Accounts (ITAs) in the following industry-recognized training programs: CDL, Phlebotomy, CMA, Medical Billing & Coding, Lineman Training, Pharmacy Tech, EMT, Web Development/Cyber Security, Heavy Equipment, Dental Assistant, Forklift Training, and Job Readiness Bootcamps comprised of financial literacy, OSHA-10, soft skills and First Aid/CPR training. The SCWDB is presently administering NDWG funded programs directed at opportunity youth, reentry/recovery and long-term unemployed populations.

Each of the examples cited above (Reentry and Employment Services, Navigator positions assigned to specific untapped / focus populations and National Dislocated Worker grants) **have facilitated and enabled co-enrollment opportunities** (ex. a participant can be enrolled in Wagner-Peyser, WIOA Title 1 and WIOA NDWG or a participant may be enrolled in a special-funded Youth program and WIOA). In addition, for nearly 8 years, all 10 Kentucky Adult Education program sites in the region have participated (and become certified) as “Access Points” to allow WIOA Title II

participants opportunities to enroll in and receive WIOA Wagner-Peyser services and possibly enroll and receive WIOA Title I financial support in pursuit of obtaining a job and career.

All Access Point opportunities and each KYAE RES Targeted Services Orientation (described in the response above) are heavily promoted on the multiple social media platforms the SCWDB administers. By the end of 2024, across all social media platforms managed by the SCWDB, there were over 6,700 followers. In addition to promoting programs, all social media platforms promote upcoming hiring events. The One Stop Operator also maintains a listserv of over 100 individuals representing the Core and Community partners to email promotions featuring hiring events and partner events and occasionally open positions.

The SCWDB has undertaken many initiatives that have improved access for individuals to obtain recognized postsecondary credentials. These initiatives can be categorized as Outreach/Engagement, Internal Resource Alignment and Collaborative Projects.

Outreach/Engagement: In addition to an ever-growing social media audience and expanded services and enrollments from WIOA National Dislocated Worker Grants, the SCWDB in collaboration with its sister non-profit agency MyWorkforceFuture, designed and launched a multi-lingual resource guide presently dubbed Job Seeker Map which provides simple navigation and opportunities for the wider public about workforce services in the region. This resource was developed over a 12-month period and required seeking sponsorships and raising additional funds. The 7 present languages are the top languages spoken in our region according to refugee arrival and demographic data. Each of the Core Title partners are listed within this resource guide as well as opportunities to directly contact them (by phone, walk-in or via a Google survey) to indicate interest in services. This tool needs additional advertising and marketing outreach to become a fixture in the region and to be utilized by youth and adults. In addition, the SCWDB has acquired a grant and executed projects aimed at “refugee” populations that endeavor to increase the English language skills and equip this population of residents with postsecondary, industry-recognized credentials. Promotional materials and presentations have been made available in Spanish and Swahili (the two top language groups targeted for this grant) to avail the education and training opportunities available in our region. These initiatives demonstrate how the SCWDB has improved access and availed workforce services, particularly for individuals with language barriers.

Internal Resource Alignment: Coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the obvious initiatives that was necessary was to revamp and revitalize the way that customers were served in the Kentucky Career Center. The Career Development Office (CDO) restructured staff resources several times over a couple of years that has now ultimately assigned staff the responsibility to provide Wagner-Peyser services instead of Unemployment Insurance services. However, for a couple of years the CDO staff were primarily occupied with demands to serve Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants. The SCWDB recognized the need to align and equip Wagner-Peyser staff with capabilities to assist individuals with employment services, including when and how to refer for WIOA Direct Service Provider services such as ITAs, WEX/OJTs and Supportive Services. The SCWDB took a hands-on approach in 2022 to replicate best practices in employment services, create centralized sources of job opportunities, utilize common data collection methods from visitors and ultimately track outcomes for enrolled participants, including employment outcomes and referrals to our WIOA Direct Service Provider, Career TEAM. This initiative provided an improved

customer flow and experience and created better collaboration between these two co-located partners (CDO and Career TEAM). The SCWDB regularly reviews how staff resources are utilized to assist customers. The results have produced staggering results in the number of people enrolled in the Wagner-Peyser program, increasing from 679 enrollments (in 2022) to over 2,700 enrollments (in 2024).

Other notable past and present initiatives aimed at increasing access to recognized postsecondary credentials include Refugee Vocational Training. The SCWDB obtained special funding aimed at increasing recognized credentials among refugee-eligible populations. A dedicated, multi-lingual Coordinator was hired to heavily promote existing training programs and special Career ESL classes were created that would allow for expedited English language advancement and support for individuals pursuing medical, transportation and advanced manufacturing pathways. Individuals from eligible communities were engaged through ESL / Adult Education classrooms, refugee service providers, ethnic community leaders, sports leagues, faith-based settings, organized field trips, K-12-hosted events and community events. The grant funded scholarships (like WIOA-funded ITAs) for various training programs to support these individuals' career advancement and earnings potential.

Collaborative Projects: During the previous strategic plan period, a substantial project that demonstrated the SCWDB's ability to expand access to postsecondary training was the planning and launch of a Heavy Equipment Operator (HEO) training program in our region. Due to employer demand for these operators, the Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce convened representatives from construction companies, postsecondary training providers, K-12 and the SCWDB to develop a local program. The SCWDB leveraged the existing KY Statewide Reserve to request and obtain funding for 4 Heavy Equipment training simulators. A partnership between Southcentral Kentucky Community & Technical College, Warren County Public Schools and Bowling Green Independent Schools created a dedicated Instructor position that would be housed at the Warren County Public Schools Area Technology Center. Feedback from employers and research from a member of the SCWDB staff produced an aligned curriculum. Partnerships with employers have led to dozens of High School students being hired upon high school graduation and completion of the HEO pathway. In addition, an adult cohort of trainees completes a condensed program each summer. Presently, the Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce seeks to execute a similar initiative to create additional pathways for robotics, automation and advanced manufacturing in our region, and the SCWDB will be a funded partner involved in this effort. Funded by the US Economic Development Administration, this 3-year project would match the timespan of the 2025-2028 Strategic Plan and seek to place 650 individuals into high-demand occupations.

C. **(L)** Identify and describe (for each category below) the strategies and services that will be used to:

1. Meet the needs and facilitate the engagement of employers, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations, in workforce development programs and targeted sector strategies and
2. Support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area.

Per the SCWDB Local Strategic Plan, meeting the needs of employers is addressed by Strategic Goal #1, Employer-Related Strategies in the Plan of Action (Appendix A) where a thorough description of activities and performance indicators are described.

The SCWDB confirms employer needs, challenges and issues in multiple ways:

- 1) The Board periodically convenes discussions with sector-based employer panels to validate labor market information, identify specific skill gaps, and assess the responsiveness of local educational and training programs to meet skill needs.
- 2) The Board also has Board Member representatives from each key industry sector, who frequently identify emerging workforce trends and issues that need to be addressed.
- 3) The Business Services Team (BST) canvases local employers and assists in the development of customized workforce solutions.
- 4) The SCWDB has regularly presented labor market data, workforce trends and analytics as well as best practices in engaging untapped, focus populations to company representatives in coordination with local Chambers of Commerce.

Additionally, the Board provides a variety of products and services to employers:

- 1) Real-time information on the quantity and quality of available talent and trainees in the system, which will vary with changes in local economic conditions.
- 2) An exhaustive electronic “Toolkit” menu of services available to employers from local service & training partners with contact information and links to national resources and best practices
- 3) Convene and participate in meetings where employers can communicate needs and opportunities to broad audiences of educators, students, and the general public
- 4) Integration of work ethics curriculum into occupational training programs, as employers have identified the lack of “soft skills” as a major impediment for hiring
- 5) Information on local resources and sharing of best practices in work-based learning and employer/education partnerships

3. Better coordinate workforce development programs with economic development partners and programs.

The SCWDB works closely with all regional economic development organizations to coordinate efforts and share knowledge related to retention/expansion of existing employers and attraction of new employers. The foundation for coordination is a general agreement on targeted industry sectors, followed by development of career pathways that align with employers’ needs.

At the planning and program development level, the SCWDB and economic development organizations coordinate on convening sector-based employer panels and conduct surveys that develop projections on job needs for both replacement and expansion, determine skill needs related to the jobs, establish timetables for meeting needs, and develop deeper insights below the level of published labor market data. Information gained from employers is used to ensure alignment between employers and the programs offered by education, training and workforce development organizations, addressing the most common and most critical needs first.

A recent example of coordination between workforce development programs and economic development is the EV Battery Coordinator—a dedicated Business Services Representative role that serves as a bridge between federal, state and local public workforce agencies, educational institutions, labor organizations and regional stakeholders. This position works cooperatively with Blue Oval SK, AESC and their industry supplies to ensure the EV battery workforce development efforts, which are expected to generate 5,000 or more jobs in and near our region, have supported recruitment activities and identified, diverse talent pipelines.

4. Strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs.

The SCWDB and One Stop Operator track the reasons for walk-in traffic at the comprehensive Kentucky Career Center. Year after year, the primary reason people visit the KCC is related to Unemployment Insurance (UI). In fact, since FY 22 -23, there have been over 11,500 visitors at the Kentucky Career Center (located in Bowling Green, KY), and 72% of the visitors came for UI-related needs. Often, the individuals have a primary concern of getting their UI issue(s) resolved and have often not been receptive to employment services. However, the SCWDB in coordination with the Career Development Office and the WIOA Direct Service provider (Career TEAM) have revamped the processes, flow and overall approach to serving UI claimants that has improved their receptivity to employment services. In addition, the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program, a state-run program that identifies and assigns certain UI claimants for extra assistance has been a great example of strengthening linkages between the One-Stop delivery system and the UI program. RESEA participants have access to regular workshops (which are also open to the public) which include presentations from Wagner-Peyser staff, employers and community partners. In addition, the CDO staff organize regular on-site hiring events aimed at RESEA participants and the public. Presently, the SCWDB and CDO are planning to utilize a texting platform that can provide text follow up for groups who attended workshops and KCC hiring events.

However, for linkages and quality employment services to truly improve, the SCWDB and CDO staff recognize that more resources from the Kentucky Office of Unemployment Insurance are necessary. During the past three years, there have been multiple, unplanned shifts that have occurred where staff were designated towards or away from their ability to assist individuals with their UI claims. These shifts and assignments were not instigated by the SCWDB or local CDO office; however, the SCWDB, CDO and One Stop Operator have regularly collaborated to respond to those shifts and still ensure all walk-in visitors can receive quality services and be connected to services and partners within the One-Stop delivery system.

5. Increase competitive, integrated employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Include the implementation of incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, work-based learning programs, apprenticeship models, customized training programs, industry and sector strategies, career pathway initiatives, or use of effective business intermediaries and other business services and strategies that support the local board's strategy. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(4)(A) and (B)].

In South Central Kentucky, roughly 60% of individuals 20 – 64 years old who report a disability / health condition (according to American Community Survey data) are not employed—this equates to just over 18,000 people. The SCWDB identified this phenomenon and explored it at length in 2022 by convening multiple Vocational Rehabilitation Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) providers in our region. Feedback from CRP providers and Vocational Rehabilitation staff revealed that employer engagement has been a tremendous challenge. Further investigation uncovered that Kentucky’s largest provider of integrated employment services, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), did not have an established public awareness campaign, outreach materials or dedicated outreach personnel to increase statewide or regional employer engagement. By March 2025, there were over 20 individuals on the staff of Vocational Rehabilitation and nearly 20 CRPs serving individuals in the South Central region. **The SCWDB regularly attempts to partner with local Vocational Rehabilitation staff members to coordinate outreach and service delivery.** This includes the Targeted Orientation Services sessions (described above) as well as invitations for Rapid Response activities (described below). OVR staff regularly participate in Business Services meetings with the SCWDB, its WIOA Direct Services provider and Career Development Office staff to learn about and hear updates pertaining to various business engagement strategies. In addition, OVR and CPR providers are invited to the monthly Community Partner Team meetings hosted by the SCWDB to hear about and collaborate on various job seeker engagement opportunities in the region. In addition, candidates identified for OVR services are regularly referred to the local offices in Bowling Green and Glasgow. In addition, the WIOA Direct Services Provider, Career TEAM, enrolled and supported individuals who disclosed a disability over the period of the most recent Strategic Plan.

The SCWDB has engaged, is presently engaged and will continue to be engaged in efforts to implement a variety of strategies designed to meet the needs of regional employers. Recent examples include:

- On-the-Job Training: the SCWDB has supported individuals through On-the-Job training programs. This program, combined with the Work Experience (WEX) program, served nearly 200 participants over the previous Strategic Plan period, and both programs will remain viable business service strategies.
- Career Pathway Initiatives: See Chapter 3B for an example of a High School and Adult career pathway initiative that was launched during the previous Strategic Plan period. In addition, the SCWDB, in coordination with its “sister” non-profit MyWorkforceFuture, has created a week-long training “bootcamp” designed to provide financial literacy and soft skills training in combination with OSHA-10 and CPR/First Aid/AED certification. The bootcamps have primarily focused on justice-involved and youth participants who have barriers to employment and need a short-term pathway training to improve their success attaining a good paying job in the region. Finally, the SCWDB in coordination with its WIOA Direct Services provider has organized cohorts of graduating High School seniors to enroll and complete short-term industry-recognized training programs in the summer immediately following their high school graduation.
- Utilization of effective business intermediary: The EV Battery Coordinator—a dedicated Business Services Representative role that serves as a bridge between federal, state and local public workforce agencies, educational institutions, labor organizations and regional

stakeholders. This position works cooperatively with Blue Oval SK, AESC and their industry supplies to ensure the EV battery workforce development efforts, which are expected to generate 5,000 or more jobs in and near our region, have supported recruitment activities and identified, diverse talent pipelines.

- Other Business Service Strategies: please see Plan of Action” (Appendix A) for many other descriptions of business service strategies that have been implemented in the past and / or are planned.

D. (L) Describe local and regional efforts to support and/or promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services in coordination with economic development and other partners. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(5)]

The South Central Kentucky region is fortunate to have the WKU Innovation Campus which serves as a dynamic hub for collaboration, problem-solving, and talent development, driving economic growth in the region. By connecting industry partners, faculty, and students, the campus fosters innovation and entrepreneurship. It provides state-of-the-art labs, collaborative workspaces, and expert resources, enabling meaningful engagement between businesses, researchers, startups, and investors. Through strategic partnerships, the campus offers students hands-on experience and career opportunities while supporting businesses in developing cutting-edge technologies and solutions. With a focus on advanced manufacturing, engineering, and applied sciences, the Innovation Campus strengthens the region’s business community and technological advancement. For the past 2.5 years, a partnership and Industry 4.0 grant provided a shared data research analyst who assisted the SCWDB in uncovering underlying trends and reasons why tens of thousands of residents in South Central Kentucky were not participating in the workforce.

Kentucky Career EDGE, a web-based platform to deliver virtual career services, provides a Professional Development Toolkit that is equipped with numerous tools to assist all job seekers, regardless of where they are on their professional journey. The Business Plan Builder helps prepare and build a brand for each participant. The modules gather ideas and promote critical thinking about how to start a business by working through developing a business plan foundation, competitive landscape, marketing plan and organizational structure.

The SCWDB, in coordination with its sister nonprofit MyWorkforceFuture, has supported individuals to obtain relevant, industry-recognized skills in web development and cyber security—both of which have provide opportunities for individuals to obtain full-time or microenterprise / gig work opportunities.

E. (L) Describe the type and availability of youth workforce activities, including activities for youth with disabilities. Identify successful models and best practices for youth workforce activities relevant to the local area. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(9)]

Youth workforce activities are addressed in multiple sections of this Strategic Plan. Strategic Goal #3: Workforce Education & Preparation, found in Appendix A “Plan of Action” sets the stage for how the South Central Workforce Board intends to educate and provide career pathways for individuals, including students and youth. The “14 Elements of Youth Engagement” (listed in Chapter 3I, below) address youth workforce activities in much more specific terms. Contained within this section of

the Local Strategic Plan are numerous ideas, initiatives and programs being pursued by the SCWDB. Additional context:

Youth staff work with local high schools, area technology centers, post-secondary institutions, local libraries, and other non-profits to provide events such as Career Exploration Days, workshops, and interactive events. Staff are also a continuous presence at school “Parent Night” activities and high school career fairs as well as Career Center career fairs and hiring events. Staff work closely with school counselors to identify specific students in need. Youth services staff members provide intake, eligibility and case management directly to participants while referring youth to competitively procured or partner agencies for specialized services such as GED preparation or mental health services.

Services for youth with disabilities are coordinated with partners at the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and other local non-profits specializing in disability services. The Board, One-Stop Operator and Business Services Team reach out to employers in the region to enlist them as partners in work-based learning initiatives, mentoring, and other means of engaging out-of-school youth. This population segment is a critical component of the talent pipeline as many out-of-school young adults are not working, have dropped out of the official labor force, or are recipients of public assistance.

The SCWDB, Career TEAM and its staff have been heavily involved in a successful model aimed at launching graduating High School seniors straight into local job and career opportunities. The Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce has organized a multi-school district, multi-employer networking, interviewing and hiring event (termed SCK LAUNCH) at the conclusion of each academic school year. SCWDB and Career TEAM staff have leveraged support to meet with students individually and in groups to prepare their resumes and offer interview preparation and advice. The SCWDB has attempted to mimic the success of this event by organizing its own multi-school and multi-employer networking, interviewing and hiring event for the remaining school districts not served through the BG Chamber’s SCK LAUNCH senior hiring event.

F. (L) Describe how the LWDB coordinates education and workforce investment activities with relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(10)]

The South Central region is home to a strong network of higher education institutions, including Southcentral Kentucky Community and Technical College (SKYCTC), Western Kentucky University (WKU), The Medical Institute of Kentucky, and Lake Cumberland CDL Training School. These institutions have a proven track record of collaborating with economic development leaders and businesses to create a seamless, employer-driven work-based learning environment. Their efforts ensure that education and career pathways are strategically aligned—starting early in the education pipeline and continuing throughout lifelong learning opportunities.

Building on these strong partnerships, the South Central Workforce Development Board (SCWDB) is committed to scaling up successful workforce strategies across its ten-county region. Examples over the years include: summer CDL cohorts designed to attract graduating High School seniors in the region and put them into CDL training immediately after High School; a refugee vocational

training grant that was designed to promote in-demand industry trainings and increase access and strengthen the ability for individuals to progress into in-demand career fields; and the Heavy Equipment Operator Sciences project that the SCWDB participated in strategic discussions and ultimately secured financial resources to obtain educational equipment (heavy equipment simulators). These highly involved collaborations and efforts exemplify how the SCWDB aims to meet employer demands across key industry sectors, leveraging sector-based strategies and career pathways as the foundation for workforce coordination. For additional coordination examples, please see our Plan of Action Strategic Goal 2: Workforce System Alignment in Appendix A.

G. (R) Describe efforts to coordinate supportive services provided through workforce investment activities in the local area, including facilitating childcare, transportation, and other appropriate supportive services for customers. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(11)]

Efforts to coordinate supportive services through workforce investment activities in the local area focus on maximizing resources and removing barriers to employment for participants. Currently, there is not a region-wide approach to coordinating services for childcare, transportation, and supportive services. Childcare, particularly, is a large area of supportive services for which Kentucky's workforce development boards do not have much capacity. An efficient way for workforce boards to support childcare services, which are often a critical element of enabling workforce participation, would be to give local workforce boards the ability to issue childcare vouchers, such as what is done in Texas. Up until now and for the foreseeable future, each region has taken its own approach.

Career TEAM, the SCWDB WIOA Title I Direct Services Provider, collaborates with local and national vendors to secure discounted items and services, ensuring WIOA funding is allocated efficiently to benefit more participants. Additionally, alternative funding sources, including grants, are pursued to supplement WIOA funding and address needs beyond its typical scope.

Supportive Services Provided

- **Transportation & Auto Repairs:** Assistance with travel to and from work or training programs, as well as minor vehicle repairs necessary for reliable transportation. Career TEAM staff facilitate warm handoffs to trusted transportation providers and automotive repair vendors. Participants are also referred to community partners for additional transportation assistance, such as access to vehicles, bicycles, and fuel cards.
- **Childcare & Dependent Care Assistance:** Support for participants requiring childcare while engaging in workforce activities. Career TEAM connects parenting participants with trusted childcare providers offering discounted or subsidized services.
- **Housing, Food, & Utility Support:** Assistance to ensure stable living conditions for participants. Career TEAM coordinates warm handoffs to area shelters in emergency situations before enrollment, as well as landlords offering affordable housing options. Utility start-up or reconnection support is provided, and referrals are made to community partners for additional assistance with gas, electricity, and water services. A partnership with a worldwide vendor provides access to essential household items, such as beds and bedding, at no cost. While direct food assistance is not provided, Career TEAM refers

participants to SNAP programs, shelters, and food pantries offering free or low-cost sustenance.

- **Medical & Prescription Aid:** While WIOA covers Department of Transportation (DoT) physicals and drug screenings, Career TEAM refers participants to community partners and state agencies for medical treatments and prescription assistance.
- **Work Attire, Hygiene, & Material Costs:** Professional clothing and personal care items are covered under WIOA. Career TEAM leverages vendor discounts and price matching to maximize purchasing power, ensuring the most efficient use of funds to support a greater number of participants.
- **Licensing & Certification Fees:** Financial assistance for industry-required certifications and memberships is available through WIOA. Career TEAM collaborates with community partners to share costs for participants who qualify for their services.
- **Translation Services:** While WIOA does not fund translation services, Career TEAM refers participants to community organizations for language support, including enrollment in ESL programs.
- **Support for Disabilities & Accommodations:** Accessibility items and workplace accommodations are typically covered by community partners and state agencies. WIOA funding may be used for specific items such as glasses and specialized footwear, with Career TEAM identifying the most cost-effective solutions.
- **Job Search & Relocation Assistance:** Career TEAM provides job search assistance at no additional cost, connecting participants with trusted employers that align with their skills and career goals.
- **Incentive Payments:** Financial incentives for program completion and milestone achievements are coordinated through the Youth Coordinator with the local workforce board.

Vendor Agreements & Cost-Saving Strategies

Career TEAM has established agreements with vendors to provide discounts on essential work-related items, ensuring funds are used efficiently. Examples include:

- A partnership with a local shoe vendor that provides a 25% discount on new boots and a 10% discount on already marked-down items. If the 10% discount results in a higher cost than the 25% discount on the original price, the vendor adjusts pricing to maximize savings.
- National vendor partnerships offer a 10% discount on equipment and tools, with additional price matching to secure the lowest possible costs.
- A collaboration with a worldwide vendor that allows Career TEAM to collect returned but unused work attire, tools, and household items at no cost. These items can be distributed in emergency situations before WIOA enrollment, as they do not require program funding.

Beyond vendor agreements, Career TEAM refers participants to regional partners that provide funding for both WIOA-covered and non-WIOA-covered services. This approach ensures a comprehensive support network that effectively removes barriers to employment and training, maximizing the impact of workforce investment activities in the local area.

In the Cumberland Area, all partners are listed on the CWDB website to allow visibility to customers. The CWDB currently leverages community programs, services and partners to provide supportive services. Appropriate referrals are made to other agencies to provide supportive services such as childcare and transportation.

In addition, the workforce board Directors of both the CWDB and SCWDB regularly partner to share insights and expertise with each other. They have also championed state elected officials to expand opportunities for entities to provide driver's license testing appointments back to local (instead of regional) locations. The ability to obtain a driver's license is critical towards increasing the number of teenagers who can enter and remain in the workforce in the South Region.

H. (L) Describe strategies to implement the operational goals of the local one-stop system, maximizing the coordination of services provided by DWD merit staff and the LWDB's contract providers to improve services and avoid duplication. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(12)]

The SCWDB has strategically partnered with Career TEAM as its One-Stop Operator and provider of WIOA-funded services through a competitive procurement process. With extensive expertise and resources, Career TEAM plays a crucial role in driving operational success and enhancing service coordination across workforce partners.

To ensure seamless collaboration, the Board has established Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) and cost-sharing agreements with core partners, aligning resources as mandated by WIOA. This structured approach maximizes funding and fosters a cohesive service network.

The One-Stop Operator's leadership is pivotal in streamlining resource management, clarifying roles, and reducing service duplication. The One-Stop Operator and SCWDB actively recruit new workforce partners and, under the guidance of the SCWDB President / CEO and in collaboration with Career Development Office local and regional leadership, are continuously exploring fresh funding opportunities to expand and strengthen customer experiences and the workforce system.

In addition, the SCWDB has endeavored for many years to create a co-located site in Bowling Green to build a fully functional One Stop Center. Presently, there is an opportunity to create this at a partner agency facility. The comprehensive Kentucky Career Center located in Bowling Green, while providing a great downtown location, is an aging building that needs constant repairs, and its lack of an elevator prohibits all available space from being maximized. The strategies to realize a co-located facility will require coordination and agreement from WIOA mandated partners' state leadership just as much as coordination and agreement from local partners that wish to share space.

I. (L) Describe how the local board will collaborate with WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy consistent with the local plan (as described in WIOA Sec. 107(d)(11) and WIOA Sec. 232. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(13)]. This will include a discussion of how the local WDB will consistently review local applications submitted under Title II with WIOA sec. 107(d)(11) (A) and (B) (i) and WIOA sec. 232.

Presently, in the South Central area, the fiscal agents for Title II Kentucky Adult Education (KYAE) funding are: Southcentral Kentucky Community & Technical College (SKYCTC) for Barren, Metcalfe,

Simpson, Warren counties; the Edmonson County Board of Education (ECBOE) for Allen, Butler, Edmonson, Logan, and Monroe counties; and the Hardin County Board of Education (HCBOE) for Hart County. The SCWDB has collaborated with these Title II programs in our shared Primary Goals in a myriad of ways:

- a. Employer Engagement: SKYCTC AE staff has participated in efforts to expand on-site workplace literacy and specifically collaborated to offer on-site classes for refugee populations when the SCWDB managed an employer engagement program seeking to expand those opportunities in our region. ECBOE through Butler County’s KYAE program has regularly hosted career fairs and hiring events that SCWDB has supported.
- b. Educating & Preparing Jobseekers: All KYAE College and Career Navigators have worked closely with the SCWDB's various Navigators which have included focused populations such as New Americans, Justice-Involved and Youth. SCWDB Navigators regularly visit Adult Ed classrooms and identify student candidates to promote short-term credential training programs available in our region. The SCWDB also seeks to create opportunities for early-, mid- and late-career learning for job seekers to grow, upskill and adapt to changing workplace environments, and candidates served through the One Stop system are regularly referred to local KYAE programs for education services. In addition, SKYCTC has a Navigator co-located at the Kentucky Career Center one day a week. KYAE also regularly participates in Rapid Response activities when they occur throughout the region. All KYAE counties have been official “Access Points” to the regional One-Stop system (including WIOA services, staff and events) are active partners in the monthly Community Partner Team meetings and active guests in the Board meetings. In addition, KYAE staff are present at local and regional hiring events and in some cases have hosted hiring events supported by the SCWDB.
- c. Removing Barriers to Increase Workforce Participation: the KYAE programs across the South Central region were among the original programs to collaborate on what is now a statewide initiative overseen by the Kentucky Office of Adult Education that seeks to connect and serve KY’s justice-involved population to workforce services. Dubbed “Putting Kentuckians First,” the program involves coordinated referrals and monitoring individuals’ enrollment and progress with various workforce system partners to achieve coordination of wrap-around services and ultimately successful employment for participants. This alignment has strengthened and increased outreach and recruitment and has led to better student retention and employment outcomes.

The SCWDB was able to review the most recent local applications submitted under Title II per WIOA requirements; however, the SCWDB was not provided with any KYAE applications during the prior Request for Proposal process. The SCWDB presently has 2 KYAE staff members (representing two different organizations/fiscal agents) as active Board Members who were also involved in the development of this Local Strategic Plan.

J. (L) Please describe any plans to follow the strategies of the state and the direction given by the local WDB to the one-stop operator to ensure priority for adult career and training services will be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income

individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient consistent with WIOA sec—
134 (c) (3) (E).

Our Board policy on priority of service, as provided to the One-Stop Operator, outlines the order in which individualized career and training services are offered to residents of the South Central Workforce Area, regardless of funding levels:

- 1) First Priority: Veterans and eligible spouses who also receive public assistance, are low-income, or basic skills deficient receive top priority for services funded by WIOA adult formula funds.
- 2) Second Priority: Non-veterans who meet the same criteria (public assistance recipients, low-income individuals, or those who are basic skills deficient).
- 3) Third Priority: Veterans and eligible spouses who do not fall under the above categories.
- 4) Fourth Priority: All other individuals who do not meet any of the above criteria.

Implementation & Compliance: WIOA Case Managers must document priority determinations in customer files, supported by detailed case notes. The SCWDB fiscal agent will monitor compliance through internal reports and a compliance monitoring tool. Contractors will actively conduct outreach to ensure priority service groups are reached, particularly if performance goals are not being met. This structured approach ensures that workforce resources are effectively directed to those who need them most, supporting equitable access to career and training opportunities.

K. (L) Please describe how the Kentucky Career Centers are implementing and transitioning to an integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information system for programs carried out under WIOA and by one-stop partners.

The Kentucky Career Centers have been using and will foreseeably use the official statewide WIOA case management system KEE Suite for numerous years. Unfortunately, KEE Suite is still not the uniform case management system adopted by all WIOA partners and there is yet to be another universal case management system that has been provided to WIOA partners.

Chapter 4: Program Design & Evaluation

A. (L) Describe the one-stop delivery system in the local area, including:

1. The local board's efforts to collaborate with employers, to provide continuous improvement of business services, and to operate a "job-driven" delivery system.

Business services are primarily led by our Business Solutions Team (BST)—a dynamic, experienced, diverse group of personnel representing many SCWDB staff and focus population Navigators, the Career TEAM Director and Business Services Representatives, the Local Veterans Employer Representative, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, the KY Office of Employer and Apprenticeship Services, and the One Stop Operator. The BST meets weekly to discuss current and future opportunities to tackle workforce challenges at the grassroots level. More than just a service, the BST is a powerhouse of connectivity, innovation, and problem-solving, serving as the single point

of access for businesses to tap into the full potential of the public workforce system under the leadership of the South Central Workforce Development Board (SCWDB).

The BST is more than a resource—it’s a movement. Acting as a networker, convener, and advocate, the BST is committed to forging strong partnerships between employers and the workforce system, ensuring that businesses have the tools, talent, and training they need to thrive. A strong business community fuels economic vitality, and the BST is the bridge between employers and workforce solutions, driving prosperity for South Central Kentucky and beyond. BST members track all their engagements in the Salesforce system and attain over 1,000 distinct engagements in the South Central region each year. See Strategic Goal #1: Employer Services & Solutions in Appendix A Plan of Action for more details on our efforts to collaborate with employers.

2. The local board’s efforts to ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services, including contracted services providers and providers on the eligible training provider list, through the system and ensure that such providers meet the employment needs of local employers, workers, and job seekers. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(6)(A)]

Contracted services providers who are designed to assist with meeting the employment needs of employers, workers and job seekers are the two primary WIOA services contracts—the WIOA Direct Services Provider and the One-Stop Operator. For over six years, both contracts have been awarded and maintained by Career TEAM. The SCWDB has developed thorough quality control measures to monitor the goals and effectiveness of the Direct Services Provider, including a case management scoring system for Career Advisors and an annual Mid-Year Review of overall organizational effectiveness. The SCWDB Quality Control Coordinator conducts and reports the case management scoring, and the SCWDB President / CEO reports the SCWDB’s assessment of overall effectiveness annually to the Board of Directors. In addition, an Annual Internal Monitoring process is conducted each year which reviews 30 random case files representing a mix of Youth, Adult, Dislocated Worker and (if applicable) National Dislocated Worker Grant enrolled and exited participants and their associated financial expenditures. Several interviews are conducted with Direct Service Provider staff, participants, and employers who received services (such as host sites for Work Experience interns) to collect diverse feedback on the quality of services and ideas for improvement.

Regarding eligible training providers, we align with the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) system and rely on the state’s processes to ensure that providers of training services are delivering quality training. The Board has adopted a “Demand Occupation Requirement for Training” in its local Individual Training Accounts Policy. The stated requirement in the policy is: “The South Central Workforce Development Board (SCWDB) is committed to increasing income levels and creating employment opportunities for customers in the South Central Kentucky Region. The SCWDB has established priorities for High Demand, High Growth and High Wage employment opportunities in the region. It is the policy of the SCWDB to work with the Kentucky Career Development Office Labor Market Information (LMI) section to identify targeted industries and occupations prioritized for WDB funding. Occupations must be identified through local labor market information as having the potential for high entryways and projected growth and/or significant job openings in the area. To

be considered for funding through WIOA, a training program must lead to a recognized credential defined by WIOA. The term ‘recognized postsecondary credential’ means a credential consisting of an industry-recognized certificate or certification, a certificate of completion from an apprenticeship, a license recognized by the State or Federal governments, or an associate or baccalaureate degree.” Refer to our WIOA [Eligible Training Provider Policy](#) (policy number 2016-14) for additional details.

In addition, the SCWDB meets regularly with its Direct Service Provider staff to evaluate WIOA Outcome Measures and has periodically identified gaps or made decisions to no longer enroll participants who were not achieving sufficient levels of success completed training programs that are already approved on the ETPL.

3. How the local board will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system in remote areas with technology and other means. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(6)(B)]

The SCWDB regularly attempts to improve access to all One-Stop services in the region. Please see specific and detailed examples of how this is achieved through social media marketing, mobile staff who meet with participants in-person, Access Points, events and more in Appendix A “Plan of Action” Strategic Goals 2 & 3.

4. How entities within the one-stop delivery system, including one-stop operators and the one-stop partners, will comply with WIOA section 188, if applicable, and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(6)(C)]

Refer to South Central Workforce Development Board’s [Accessibility and Reasonable Accommodation Policy](#) (policy number 2016-11), Revised June 11, 2020.

5. Describe the process used by the local board to provide an opportunity for public comment, including comments by representatives of businesses and representatives of labor organizations, and input into the development of the Local Plan, prior to submission of this plan.

Please see our response in Chapter 1A which describes the process undertaken in the development of the Local and Regional Plans, including how public comments were promoted and collected.

- B. (L) Describe the local board’s assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local area. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(7)]

As previously described, the SCWDB is committed to creating and maintaining a jobs-driven workforce development system in the region. This begins with a common intake process to assess the skills and needs of job seekers related to the needs identified by labor market information and

employers in the priority sectors. Career counselors work with the job seekers on transferability of skills and on identification of education and training needs that lead to accessing high-demand occupations. Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) are a primary option for developing new skills, and priorities for accessing ITA funds are previously described. Other options include on-the-job training (OJT), incumbent worker training, transitional jobs, customized training, and other work-based learning experiences. The SCWDB is committed to identifying employers who will partner directly with training providers in strategies such as apprenticeship to address skill gaps in the region. In the previous strategic plan period, the SCWDB was involved in launching a Heavy Equipment Operator program as well as a state-wide web development and cyber security program (Commonwealth Coders, which is now overseen by Kable Academy). Admittedly, there are not an overall high number of available short-term training programs available or that WIOA ITA funding can support. The SCWDB has had the largest public interest, completion rates and employment success rates with the two Commercial Driver's License (CDL) programs offered in our region, with dozens of participants completing these programs and attaining careers each year. In addition, there are several of Kentucky's present top five in-demand sectors that do not presently offer a short-term training credential or training program that is considered in-demand from regional employers (examples include Manufacturing, Education, and Professional/Scientific/Technical Services). The SCWDB plans to participate in the activities described in KY Statute 158.6455, Section (1)(e) in which local workforce boards will annually compile a list of industry-recognized certifications, licensures and credentials specific to our state and regional workforce area and rank them for demand before providing to the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board.

C. (L) Describe how the local board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with statewide rapid response activities. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(8)]

The WIOA Direct Service Provider's Business Services Representatives (BSRs) are charged with organizing local rapid response activities and coordinating activity with the state's Rapid Response Unit. The BSRs are the main point of contact for notification of all impending layoffs or closures. When the SCWDB and / or BSRs are notified of a qualifying activity, the BSRs contact the employer to arrange the details of an initial session at the impacted business. The BSRs serve as the local point of contact for the state's Rapid Response Unit throughout the process, record all activities in the state's data tracking system, and organize a response in coordination with other WIOA Title Partners and Community Partners that include Kentucky Career Center staff, Office of Vocational Rehab, Goodwill, WKU TRIO, Adult Education, and sometimes other partners. Whenever possible, all local engagement with the employer and the impacted workers occurs prior to the layoff date. The BSRs first step with the employer to ensure that the services and the process are understood, and that information is gathered from the employer to design a successful engagement. Using information gained from the employer, a customized service plan is developed which generally and ideally includes a 3-phased approach: 1) bring a team of teams onsite to inform employees of the resources and services they have access to. We coordinate with company management to bring the WIOA and Community Partners to meet with employees; 2) bring a small team of Kentucky Career Center staff back onsite to offer Resume Prep and Career Services to interested employees; and 3) organize a

hiring event specifically for the affected employees. Some employers have allowed this onsite, while others have asked for this service, but at an offsite location.

D. (L) Provide an analysis and description of youth workforce activities, including activities for youth with disabilities. Identify successful models and best practices for youth workforce activities relevant to the local area. Describe strategies the LWDA will use to increase the minimum WIOA out-of-school youth expenditure rate to 75 percent. Provide information on types of work-based learning activities planned for youth. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(9)]

The Workforce Investment Act requires that 14 program elements be made available to all youth who are served by the WIOA youth system, including those who disclose a disability. These program elements are designed to fill the gaps in the lives of youth who lack the family, educational, and social frameworks to meet their essential needs. Achieving the 14 Elements of Youth Engagement requires a collaborative effort across the community of stakeholders that make up the public workforce system:

1) Tutoring, Study Skills Training, Instruction, and Dropout Prevention Activities: In accordance with the Kentucky Essential Workplace Skills legislation passed in 2018, SCWDB and their Direct Services Provider will continue to partner with high schools across the region to provide resume and workforce instruction through workshops & KY Career EDGE modules and real-world work experience opportunities to participants, the Direct Services Provider will incorporate WIN Learning courseware into their curriculum with KY Career EDGE modules

2) Alternative Secondary School & Dropout Recover Services: Lighthouse Academy, Beacon Academy, The Academy at 11st Street and BAVEL provide alternative school programming and formats. Additionally, Kentucky Adult Education can offer programming to young adults who are no longer enrolled in their high schools via the GED program.

3) Paid and Unpaid Work Experiences: There are a variety of paid and unpaid work experience programs in the region. The WIOA Work Experience Program (WEX) and YourTern are examples of paid work experience programs. With few exceptions, most internship programs within the region are paid. Lastly, the SCWDB is strongly encouraging apprenticeship programs with employers and job seekers.

4) Occupational Skills Training: We have multiple educational partners in the region that offer Occupational Skill Training to youth, to include: WKU, SKYCTC, Lake Cumberland CDL School, BC Skills Development Academy, Barren-Metcalf EMS, KY Skills U, TMIKY, American National University and Ross Medical.

5) Education Offered Concurrently with Workforce Preparation: SCWDB will engage school boards across the region to help meet the Kentucky Essential Workplace Skills mandate and to help our communities qualify as Work Ready Communities. Additionally, several of our high schools run “co-op” programs that allow students to spend part of their day at work, in lieu of school. KY Adult

Education programs have opportunities for GED-seeking students to have integrated education and training leading to GED attainment and industry certifications.

6) Leadership Development Opportunities: Youth enrolled in the Work Experience (WEX) program develop leadership skills while supporting career Connection events, Expungement Fairs and resume training for high school students.

7) Supportive Services: WIOA-enrolled youth may be eligible for five supportive services: mileage reimbursement, GED exam reimbursement, work clothing, work equipment and childcare expenses.

8) Adult Mentoring: Adult mentoring is addressed by numerous organizations including both Job Corps and our Direct Services Provider. Mentorship is a component of OJT, WEX and other training programs. WIOA-enrolled youth receive adult mentorship from their respective case managers and counselors.

9) Follow-up Services: In compliance with WIOA standards, Case Managers follow up with youth participants every month for one year to monitor employment outcomes and additional needs.

10) Comprehensive Guidance & Counseling: Guidance and counseling is addressed by numerous organizations that include KY Adult Education, Job Corps and the WIOA Direct Service Provider. Guidance and counseling are a component of OJT, WEX and other training programs. WIOA-enrolled youth receive guidance and counseling from their respective case managers and counselors.

11) Financial Literacy Education: Financial literacy is offered to youth by several partners in our region. KY Career EDGE learning platforms has a Budgeting class. In addition, the local Housing Authority office partners with local bankers to offer a financial literacy class.

12) Entrepreneurial Skills Training: In the past, there had not been strong emphasis on providing entrepreneurial skills to youth. To help remedy that, KY Career EDGE has added a Business Plan Builder as part of their curriculum.

13) Services that Provide Labor Market Information: The SCWDB shares labor market information (LMI) data with our Independent School systems and well as Job Corps. LMI is incorporated into High School seminars offered by the Direct Services Provider. LMI is provided to WIOA-enrolled youth following their Career Assessment survey.

14) Postsecondary Preparation & Transition Activities: SCWDB and partners analyze post-secondary trends within the region to better serve and advise youth who are pursuing post-secondary education opportunities. SCWDB assists students and parents with identifying program availability, completing the FAFSA, admissions and scholarship applications and with the navigation to resources and personnel at post-secondary institutions. Our partners at KY Adult Education provide transition and post-secondary preparation services and make appropriate referrals to postsecondary admission offices.

The SCWDB President / CEO was among the lead champions for the KY State Legislature to provide state funds (in addition to the regular, pass-through federal WIOA funds) specifically for youth employment activities. The SCWDB has reactivated a previously successful mobile Navigator model that is focused on serving and assisting “disconnected” and “opportunity” youth ages 16 – 24 years old who are presently not in the workforce to job and career opportunities. This position, dubbed the Youth Career Coach, is engaging youth throughout the 10-county area and focusing primarily on graduating high school seniors and youth who visit and are connected to our Kentucky Career Center or enrolled in WIOA services. Additionally, a texting platform has been deployed to better reach and engage youth as well as a financial incentive program aimed at verifying and rewarding youth who maintain their employment for 90 days. Other successful strategies have included outreach and enrollment of Job Corps participants who complete ITAs that complement their Job Corps career training. In addition, the SCWDB and its WIOA Direct Service Provider have enrolled young adults who are part of the WKU LifeWorks program—a supportive living and learning community for autistic young adults as they transition to independent living and employment. Please see Appendix A Strategic Goal #3: Educating & Preparing Jobseekers for more detailed information on youth engagement activities.

The SCWDB has made intentional efforts to proportionate the out-of-school youth funding to 75% or more. In fact, the SCWDB, along with the WIOA Direct Services Provider Career TEAM, attempt to allocate 100% of youth funds to out-of-school youth each year.

E. **(L)** Describe how training services will be provided in accordance with WIOA Sec. 134(c)(3)(G), as well as the process and criteria for issuing individual training accounts. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(19)]. This should include how contracts will be coordinated with the use of Individual Training Accounts and how the LWDB will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs.

Refer to South Central Workforce Development Board’s Individual Training Account Policy (policy number 2016-06), Revised October 8, 2020.

Chapter 5: Compliance / Performance / Administrative Cost

A. **(R)** Describe the replicated cooperative agreements, as defined by WIOA 107(d)(11), between the local board and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) to enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities and other individuals. This may include cross training of staff, technical assistance, use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers, and other efforts of cooperation, collaboration and coordination. WIOA Sec. 108(b)(14)

A Memorandum of Understanding with all Kentucky Career Center partners and applicable Resource Sharing Agreement and a Memorandum of Understanding between the required partners, including the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, has been executed for participation on Business Service Teams, Standard Operating Procedures for Business Services and Job Seeker Services.

B. **(R)** Describe the establishment of the administrative cost arrangement, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate for the region.

The South Region has an established track record of collaborating to launch innovative workforce programs. During the previous strategic plan period, the South Region partnered on multiple occasions to obtain and oversee various initiatives funded by the Governors “Statewide Reserve” fund as well as a National Dislocated Worker Grant. The initiatives involved launching 4 distinct and dedicated “navigator” positions that provided focused services throughout the region—one position was high school and college student focused, two positions were reentry/justice-involved focused and one position was focused on assisting individuals who were long-term unemployed and/or affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The three-year successful outcomes from the justice-involved program were the foundation for what would become a statewide model that was adapted by the Kentucky Office of Adult Education. **Both the SCWDB and CWDB endeavor to continue to pilot innovative workforce projects that focus on hard-to-serve and hard-to-reach populations.**

Currently, an effort is being proposed to share the administrative costs and oversight of a Quality Control Coordinator. This role, which has long been administered by the SCWDB, is a full-time position dedicated to reviewing, measuring and ensuring compliance of all WIOA Title I services delivered. The position provides daily monitoring of legal and programmatic compliance pertaining to client eligibility and required case management components. The SCWDB is looking to share this position with the CWDB to provide consistency in the South Region’s programmatic compliance and participant experience and outcomes.

In addition, a labor market research platform’s license subscription costs are shared between the two regions which further demonstrates the region’s collaboration and responsible stewardship.

C. (R) Describe the establishment of an agreement concerning how the planning region will collectively negotiate and reach an agreement with the Governor (via the Department of Workforce Development) on local levels of performance for and report on the performance accountability measures described in WIOA sec. 116(c) for local areas or the planning region.

Each year, a comprehensive review will assess the success and impact of the One-Stop System in building strong employer relationships and meeting key performance benchmarks set by each Local Workforce Area (LWA). This ensures that services remain effective, high-quality, and responsive to workforce needs. Performance measures will be strategically negotiated between the Governor and Local Workforce Boards to track local progress accurately. These metrics must be clear, measurable, and fully aligned with the overarching goals of each region, while also meeting state performance standards. The success of the local workforce system directly reflects its ability to serve businesses effectively. When local operations meet employer needs, job seekers are seamlessly guided through the workforce development system, creating a thriving, results-driven ecosystem for businesses and workers alike.

D. (L) Identify the local grant recipient of Title 1 responsible for the disbursement of grant funds. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(15)]

Local elected officials, operating through the authority provided by WIOA, selected the National Able Network as the Fiscal Agent for receipt and disbursement of WIOA funds for the South Central workforce area. The Fiscal Agent disburses funds in accord with decisions made by the Board and

the local elected officials per their agreement. Presently, the Fiscal Agent contract is in a competitive Request for Proposals process that is expected to be concluded by the outset of this Strategic Plan.

E. **(L)** Describe the competitive and non-competitive processes, as well as the method for sole sourcing, used for procuring goods and services within the local area. This includes but is not limited to the method used to award funds to a one-stop operator and other sub-recipients/contractors of WIOA Title I adult, dislocated worker, and youth services. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(16)]

Refer to South Central Workforce Development Board's Procurement Policy (policy number 2017-15), dated December 5, 2017

F. **(L)** Describe the indicators currently used or intended by the local board to measure the performance and effectiveness of the regional fiscal agent (where appropriate), eligible providers, and the one-stop delivery system in the local area. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(17)]

Note: *This description may include when, how, and by whom the indicators are being employed and if the measured performance and effectiveness are used in a continuous improvement process.*

Program performance is closely monitored through each provider's sub-contract, with key performance indicators regularly reviewed by the SCWDB President/CEO and Quality Control Coordinator. Additionally, WIOA common performance indicators are assessed throughout the year by SCWDB and its Direct Service Provider, Career TEAM, with insights discussed in monthly performance meetings.

To ensure transparency and accountability, WIOA Common Measure performance is also periodically shared with the Board of Directors. By integrating contract performance with common measure performance, SCWDB effectively evaluates and strengthens the one-stop delivery system, ensuring it meets workforce development goals and employer needs.