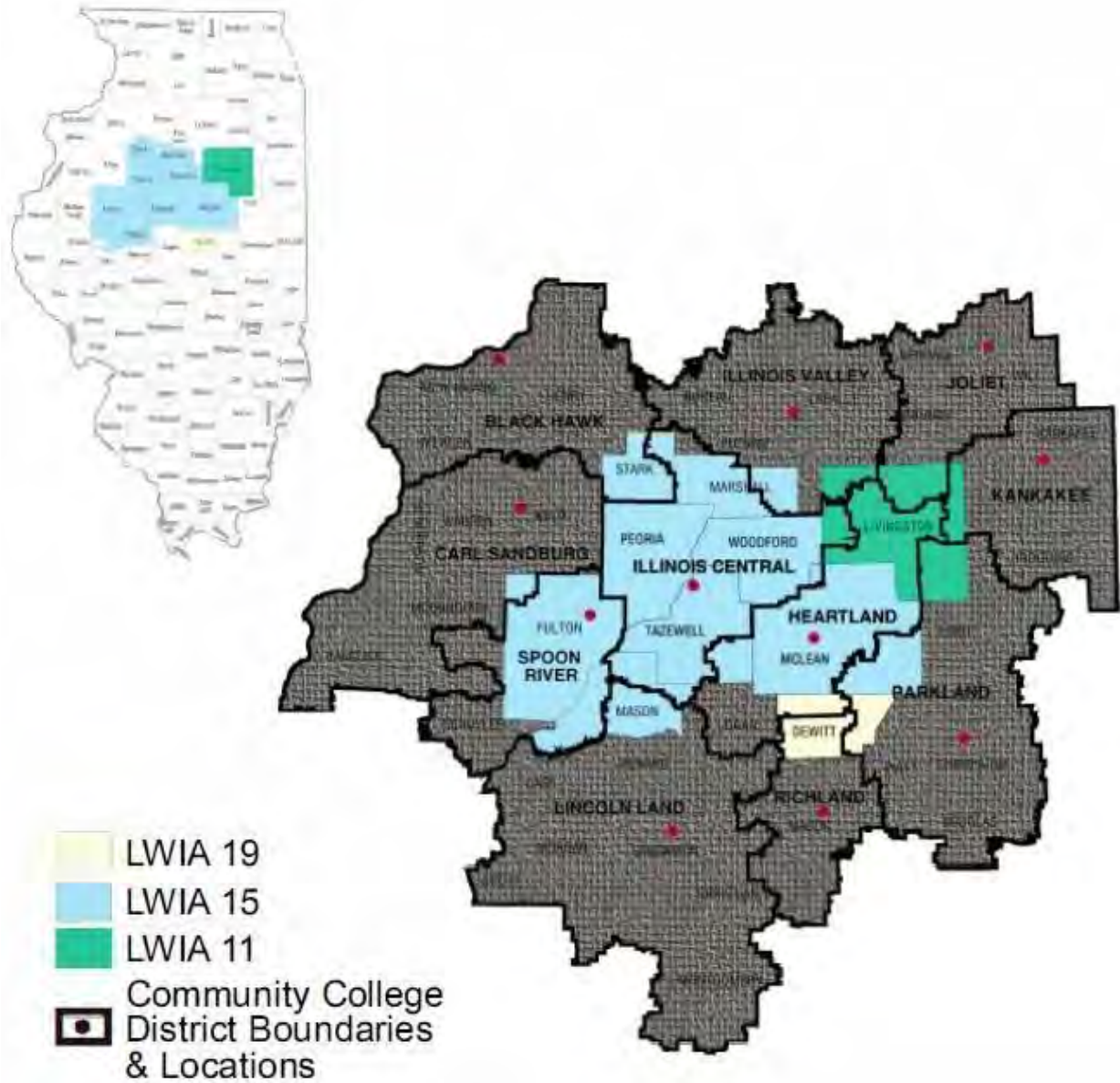


North Central Economic Development Region 3

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act – 2024 Regional Plan

Local Workforce Innovation Area 15 – 2024 Local Plan



**North Central Economic Development Region 3
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act - 2024 Regional Plan
Local Workforce Investment Area 15 - 2024 Local Plan**

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Executive Summary

This Plan was developed in accordance with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Guidelines and State of Illinois Requirements issued in November of 2023. WIOA requires that Local Workforce Innovation Areas complete a Regional Planning Process. In Illinois, the Governor has designated the following counties: DeWitt, Fulton, Livingston, Marshall, Mason, McLean, Peoria, Stark, Tazewell, and Woodford as the North Central Economic Development Region 3 (EDR). The Region plans to build on proven practices such as sector strategies, career pathways, regional economic approaches, and work-based learning models to serve both employers and job seekers in the area effectively.

The Plan supports the vision to meet employers, job seekers, and community members where they are, centering the customer experience in an interoperable, equitable, and accessible manner to ensure all customers achieve their goals. We will support employers by building diverse, quality career pathways and provide effective training, education, and economic opportunities for job seekers and communities to thrive.

Vision Statement:

EDR 3 is adopting the State of Illinois' vision, which is to meet employers, job seekers, and community members where they are, centering the customer experience in an interoperable, equitable, and accessible manner to ensure all customers achieve their goals. We will support employers by building diverse, quality career pathways and provide effective training, education, and economic opportunities for job seekers and communities to thrive.

EDR 3 is adopting the 11 strategies of the WIOA State Plan:

1. The Workforce Development System uses a customer-centered approach to service delivery.
2. The Workforce Development System advances diversity, equity, inclusion, and access.
3. WIOA partners and other workforce and education systems in Illinois enhance coordination and collaboration.
4. Job seekers and employers have a broader awareness of the Workforce Development System.
5. The Workforce Development System improves local service delivery through enhanced support of frontline workers.
6. The Workforce Development System supports, informs, and enhances employers' talent strategies.
7. The Workforce Development System sets a good-job standard for training programs and employers that work with the Workforce Development System.
8. The Workforce Development System will build out tools and practices that can help employers adopt a culture that promotes equity and accessibility.
9. The Workforce Development System educates and supports job seekers regarding how to navigate the labor market.

10. The Workforce Development System interacts with job seekers in the places where they live and visit.
11. The Workforce Development System will use a data-informed approach to reduce barriers to services for job seekers who have historically been underserved.

In practical terms, the Workforce Innovation Boards of Areas 11, 15, and 19 and the regional workforce system partners will work together to enhance the productivity and competitiveness of our communities by linking employers and individuals to the employment and training services that they need.

Background:

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act envisions a workforce system that better aligns workforce, education, and economic development partners. The regional workforce efforts of Bloomington, East Peoria, Normal, Pekin, Peoria, and Pontiac, as well as the rural counties and towns in DeWitt, Fulton, Marshall, Mason, Stark, and Woodford counties, will benefit greatly from a unified workforce team that can act quickly to address workforce needs of both employers and job seekers.

In furtherance of the plan development for the EDR 3, the Partners will build a system that:

- Is employer-centric and built upon common efforts of our economic development partners with strong industry partnerships in place;
- Is holistically focused on the industry sectors that are being targeted;
- Uses regional labor market data to have an up-to-date understanding of both the supply and demand sides of our regional economy, including the talent needs and qualifications of employers and our education and training systems effectiveness in meeting them;
- Builds upon educational efforts throughout the planning region to identify and create job relevant career pathways for all on-ramps within a given industry sector and their associated occupations;
- Advances opportunities for all job seekers including low-skilled adults, youth, individuals with disabilities, veterans, and other individuals with multiple barriers to employment; and
- Creates a system of workforce, education, and economic development partners that provide excellence in meeting the needs of businesses and individuals thus growing a vibrant and robust regional economy.

Plan Development:

The North Central Economic Development Regional Plan has been developed in accordance with WIOA and State of Illinois Regional Planning guidelines. EDR 3 will undertake the processes and strategies outlined in this plan over the next four years.

The Regional Planning Process will include:

- The establishment of regional service strategies, including use of cooperative service delivery agreements (§ 679.510(a)(1)(ii));

- The development and implementation of sector initiatives for in demand industry sectors or occupations for the region (§ 679.510(a)(1)(iii));
- The collection and analysis of regional labor market data (in conjunction with the state), which must include the local planning requirements at § 679.560(a)(1)(i), (ii) and (iv);
- The coordination of administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate (§ 679.510(a)(1)(v));
- The coordination of transportation and other supportive services as appropriate (§ 679.510(a)(1)(vi));
- The coordination of services with regional economic development services and providers (§ 679.510(a)(1)(vii)); and
- The establishment of an agreement concerning how the Region will collectively negotiate and reach agreement with the Governor on local levels of performance for, and report on, the performance accountability measures described in WIOA Sec. 116(c) for local areas or the region (§ 679.510(a)(1)(viii)).

The Local Planning Strategies will include:

- Direct investments in economic, education, and workforce training programs to focus on providing relevant education and training to ensure that individuals, including youth and individuals with barriers to employment, have the skills to compete in the job market and that employers have a ready supply of skilled workers (§ 679.500(a)(1));
- Applying job-driven strategies in the one-stop system (§ 679.500(a)(2));
- Enable economic, education, and workforce partners to build a skilled workforce through innovation in, and alignment of, employment, training, and education programs (§ 679.500(a)(3)); and
- Incorporate the local plan into the regional plan per § 679.540. At the end of the first 2-year period of the 4-year local plan, each local board shall review the local plan and the local board, in partnership with the chief elected official, shall prepare and submit modifications to the regional and local plans to reflect changes in labor market and economic conditions or in other factors affecting the implementation of the local plan (§ 679.560(a)).

Chapter 1 – Economic and Workforce Analysis – Regional Component

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

Chapter 1 Section A: Provide an analysis of the factors listed below:

1. Economic conditions, including existing and emerging in demand industry sectors and occupations (§ 679.560(a) (1) (i));

Chapter 1 Section A Question 1a: What are the targeted industries, high-impact industry clusters, and in demand occupations in the region?

The regional partners met to review data from the planning packets provided by the State of Illinois. Based on an analysis of this data we determined which sectors, industries, and occupations were most important to our region’s employers. Data on maturing, leading, and emerging industries was reviewed to answer the questions associated with development of Chapter 1 of the Regional Plan. Some customized data was also developed and utilized to answer some questions such as occupational growth due to replacement.

Table 1: Industry Employment Projections – Long-Term (2020-2030)

NAICS Title	2020 Employment	Projected 2030 Employment	Net Employment Change 2020 - 2030	Percent Employment Change	Concentration (Location Quotient)
TOTAL ALL INDUSTRIES	418,923	438,717	19,794	4.7%	
Self Employed Workers	17,882	16,766	-1,116	-6.2%	
Agricultural Production	9,723	9,889	166	1.7%	1.68
Natural Resources & Mining	356	377	21	5.9%	0.24
Construction	17,194	18,110	916	5.3%	1.73
Manufacturing	47,463	49,463	2,000	4.2%	1.00
Wholesale Trade	14,381	14,650	269	1.9%	0.96
Retail Trade	42,547	43,879	1,332	3.1%	1.26
Utilities	4,076	4,200	124	3.0%	1.99
Transportation & Warehousing	16,807	18,174	1,367	8.1%	0.91
Information	3,522	2,936	-586	-16.6%	0.65
Financial Activities	33,395	33,327	-68	-0.2%	1.09
Professional & Business Services	40,206	43,164	2,958	7.4%	0.33
Educational Services	38,292	40,055	1,763	4.6%	1.27
Healthcare & Social Assistance	61,002	64,313	3,311	5.4%	1.00
Leisure & Hospitality	34,302	41,872	7,570	22.1%	2.15
Other Services	17,278	17,816	538	3.1%	1.22
Government	20,497	19,726	-771	-3.8%	1.35

[Employment Projections \(illinois.gov\)](#)

Leading Maturing Emerging

The table below lists the Tier 1 Targeted Industries and their associated high-impact industry clusters as well as their associated in demand occupations in the region. The industries, clusters, and occupations were derived based on customized data from the Illinois Department of Employment Security. The data in the tables list those industries and occupations with the highest number of annual job openings in the region. There are other industry clusters and occupations that may be filled through the Region’s focus on the targeted industry.

Table 2: Targeted Industries and Occupations

Targeted	
Industries	Occupations
1. Healthcare and Social Assistance a. Ambulatory Healthcare Services b. Hospitals c. Social Assistance d. Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	1. Registered Nurse 2. Nursing Assistant 3. Personal Care Aides 4. Home Health Aides 5. Medical Assistant 6. Respiratory Therapists
2. Manufacturing a. Food Manufacturing b. Machine Manufacturing c. Transportation Equipment Manufacturing (including EV manufacturing and development)	1. Machinists 2. Welders 3. Mechanical Engineers 4. Electrical Vehicle Technician 5. Battery Production 6. Software Developers
3. Transportation and Warehousing a. Truck Transportation b. Transit and Ground Passenger Transportation c. Warehousing and Storage	1. Truck Drivers, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer 2. Laborers/Freight/Stock and Material Movers 3. Bus/Truck/Diesel Engine Mechanics

We recognize, as a region, that the construction, professional and business services, and self-employment are emerging industry sectors in the region. Although information technology (IT) is not a stand-alone sector of the regional economy, occupations requiring it are embedded in companies from all sectors. Because of their high-growth projections, we are identifying these as Tier 2 targets of opportunity for the region.

Clean energy is a growing industry sector in the region. Employment in clean energy is difficult to quantify at the regional level, due to limitations in the standard state and federal data collections by industry and occupation. The standard data products do not clearly distinguish businesses involved in renewable energy as compared to non-renewable. Region 3 is committed to supporting clean energy employers in the area, as well as the State’s workforce and contractor programs under the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA).

The Region is also interested in working with businesses to identify jobs that could be done remotely and as a system train for them. Figure 1 on the next page, sourced from Bureau of Labor Statistics, shows the popular occupations for remote jobs.

Figure 1: Popular Occupations for Remote Work

Job	Workers who can work remotely
Sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, technical and scientific products	83.60%
Market research analysts and marketing specialists	63.60%
Software developers	62.80%
Computer network architects	62.40%
Lawyers	60.80%
Fundraisers	60.70%
Computer programmers	59.90%
Computer and information systems managers	58.90%
Sales managers	56.30%
Computer systems analysts	54.70%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics



Chapter 1 Section A Question 1b: What industries have favorable location quotients?

Per the data packet supplied by the Illinois Department of Employment Security for the 2024 regional planning cycle, a value greater than 1.0 means that sector's employment is more heavily concentrated here than in the nation, while values less than 1.0 indicate employment is less concentrated than in the nation. The farther away from 1.0, the greater the difference between what is happening in that county compared to the nation. The industries with the highest location quotient in Region 3 are listed below.

Table 3: Industries with Favorable Location Quotients

North Central Region					
Employment by Major Industry Category					
NAICS Title	2018 Employment	Projected 2028 Employment	Net Employment Change 2018-2028	Percent Employment Change	Concentration (Location Quotient)
Agricultural Production	8,811	9,038	227	2.6%	2.91
Utilities	2,050	2,064	14	0.7%	1.89
Financial Activities	28,432	28,909	497	1.7%	1.70
Manufacturing	29,805	29,581	(214)	-0.7%	1.20
Education	29,328	26,250	(3,078)	-10.06%	1.06
Healthcare and Social Assistance	42,799	42,714	(85)	-0.2%	1.04

Chapter 1 Section A Question 1c: What industries and occupations have favorable demand projections based on growth?

Table 4: Industries with Favorable Demand based on Growth

North Central Region					
Employment by Major Industry Category					
NAICS Title	2018 Employment	Projected 2028 Employment	Net Employment Change 2018-2028	Percent Employment Change	Concentration (Location Quotient)
Agricultural Production	8,811	9,038	227	2.6%	2.91
Transportation and Warehousing	10,815	11,071	256	2.4%	0.92
Self-Employed Workers	12,981	13,273	292	2.2%	0.69
Financial Activities	28,432	28,909	497	1.7%	1.70
Professional and Business Services	33,498	33,967	469	1.4%	0.82

Table 5: Occupations with Favorable Demand based on Growth

SOC Code	Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Title	Average Annual Openings due to Growth
00-0000	Total, All Occupations	2,276
29-1000	Health Diagnosing & Treating Practitioners	64
11-0000	Management Occupations	57
53-0000	Transportation & Material Moving Occupations	54
53-7000	Material Moving Workers	50
39-0000	Personal Care & Service Occupations	41
41-3000	Sales Representatives, Services	36
39-9000	Other Personal Care & Service Workers	35
29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners & Technical Occupations	33
11-3000	Operations Specialties Managers	26
17-0000	Architecture & Engineering Occupations	24
49-0000	Installation, Maintenance & Repair Occupations	23
11-9000	Other Management Occupations	20
17-2000	Engineers	20
47-0000	Construction & Extraction Occupations	18
47-2000	Construction Trades Workers	16
15-0000	Computer & Mathematical Occupations	12

Chapter 1 Section A Question 1d: What industries and occupations have favorable demand projections based on replacements?

Industries associated with favorable demand projections based on replacement include:

- Business and Professional Services
- Construction
- Healthcare and Social Assistance
- Transportation and Warehousing

Table 6: Occupational Openings due to Replacement

Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Title		Average Annual Job Openings due to Separations		
Code	Title	Exits	Transfer	Replacement
43-0000	Office & Administrative Support Occupations	2,020	2,862	4,882
41-0000	Sales & Related Occupations	1,742	2,707	4,449
35-0000	Food Preparation & Serving Occupations	1,801	2,629	4,430
11-0000	Management Occupations	1,034	1,770	2,804
35-3000	Food & Beverage Serving Workers	1,104	1,582	2,686
41-2000	Retail Sales Workers	1,154	1,507	2,661
53-0000	Transportation & Material Moving Occupations	879	1,546	2,425
51-0000	Production Occupations	763	1,503	2,266
25-0000	Education, Training & Library Occupations	759	900	1,659
13-0000	Business & Financial Operations Occupations	457	1,135	1,592
11-9000	Other Management Occupations	715	860	1,575
39-0000	Personal Care & Service Occupations	646	779	1,425
43-4000	Information & Record Clerks	524	844	1,368
53-7000	Material Moving Workers	459	909	1,368
37-0000	Building & Grounds Cleaning & Maint. Occupations	570	743	1,313
29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners & Technical Occupations	526	612	1,138
47-0000	Construction & Extraction Occupations	332	799	1,131
43-9000	Other Office & Adm. Support Workers	502	617	1,119
49-0000	Installation, Maintenance & Repair Occupations	357	744	1,101
13-1000	Business Operations Specialists	311	786	1,097
41-3000	Sales Representatives, Services	330	655	985
43-5000	Material Recording/Schedule/Dispatchers	370	604	974
35-2000	Cooks & Food Preparation Workers	378	594	972
47-2000	Construction Trades Workers	280	687	967
31-0000	Healthcare Support Occupations	424	532	956
39-9000	Other Personal Care & Service Workers	422	515	937
37-2000	Building Cleaning & Pest Control Workers	448	485	933

It should be noted that openings due to replacement is not the current nomenclature being used by labor market analysts. The following terminology and definitions are in use.

Total openings = Growth Openings + Separations

Definitions:

Growth Openings – difference between the base and projection year employment

Separations – the need to replace those who have exited the labor market, or have changed occupational fields/categories = Exits + Transfers

Exits - leaving the labor force entirely

Transfers – change in occupational field/category, permanently leaving an occupation to go to a different field, or to a different occupational category (defined as a different Major SOC group)

Chapter 1 Section A Question 1e: What industries and occupations are considered mature but still important to the economy?

Manufacturing occupations are considered mature, but still important to the economy.

Chapter 1 Section A Question 1f: What industries are considered emerging in the regional economy?

Table 7: Industries Considered Emerging in the Regional Economy

North Central Region					
Employment by Major Industry Category					
NAICS Title	2018 Employment	Projected 2028 Employment	Net Employment Change 2018-2028	Percent Employment Change	Concentration (Location Quotient)
Self Employed	12,891	13,273	292	2.2%	0.69
Professional and Other Business Services	33,498	33,967	469	1.4%	0.82
Construction	11,333	11,439	106	0.9%	0.8
Wholesale Trade	10,777	10,783	6	0.1%	0.94

Table 8: Occupations Associated with Emerging Industries

North Central Region	
Occupations Associated with Emerging Industries	
Industry	Occupations
Wholesale Trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Man., Except Tech. and Sci. Products • Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand • Light Truck Drivers • Office Clerks, General • General and Operations Managers
Professional and Other Business Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer Systems Analysts • Software Developers and Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers • Accountants and Auditors • Office Clerks, General • Paralegals and Legal Assistants • Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks
Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction Laborers • Carpenters • Electricians • Plumbers, Pipefitters, Steamfitters • Office Clerks, General
Transportation & Warehousing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Truck Drivers, Heavy & Tractor Trailer • Laborers/Freight/Stock & Material Movers • Industrial Truck & Tractor Operators • Light Truck Drivers • Passenger Vehicle Drivers, Except Bus Drivers, Transit and Intercity

Chapter 1 Section A Question 1g: What is the projected regional key in demand occupations?

Table 9: 2023 Top Posted Occupations EDR 3: Dec. 2022 – Nov. 2023, source: Lightcast

Occupation	Unique Postings	Median Posting Duration
Registered Nurses	6,963	27 days
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	2,704	28 days
Retail Salespersons	2,648	28 days
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	2,032	28 days
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	1,883	24 days
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	1,810	29 days
Customer Service Representatives	1,619	27 days
Fast Food and Counter Workers	1,611	28 days
Software Developers	1,606	26 days
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers	1,478	28 days

Key in demand occupations in Illinois Central College (ICC) District #514 are focused in four key industries: healthcare, IT, manufacturing, and transportation/logistics. Specific occupations within these industries include emergency medical technician, licensed practical nurse, cybersecurity/secure software, network technicians/administrators, computer numerical control, welders, HVAC, and CDL truck drivers.

Based on employer relationships and feedback, additional in demand occupations are in the construction and solar industries.

Chapter 1 Section A Question 1h: What sources of supply and demand data were used to determine the targeted industries occupations and skills?

Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Illinois Department of Employment Security, and McLean County Chamber of Commerce was used to analyze the supply and demand in the determination of targeted industries, occupations, and skills. [Lightcast](#) was also used to analyze the supply and demand in the determination of targeted industries, occupations, and skills.

Chapter 1 Section A Question 2: Employment needs of employers in existing and emerging in demand industry sectors and occupations (§ 679.560(a)(1)(ii));

Tables 10 and 11 analyze the employment needs of employers for existing and emerging industries, indicating the in demand occupations.

Table 10: Occupations Associated with Existing Industries

North Central Region	
Occupations Associated with Existing Industries	
Industry	Occupations
Agricultural Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural Equipment Operators • Farmworkers and Laborers, Crop, Nursery, and Greenhouse • Farmworkers, Farm, Ranch, and Aqua cultural Animals • Farmers, Ranchers, and other Agricultural Managers • Veterinary Technicians
Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial Engineers • Machinists • Mechanical Engineers • Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators • Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers
Educational Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational/Vocational School Counselors • Elementary Teachers, Ex. Special Ed. • Secondary Teachers, Ex. Spec/Voc. Ed.
Financial Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer Systems Analysts • Customer Service Representatives • Insurance Sales Agents • Insurance Underwriters • Software Developers and Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers
Healthcare and Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Medical Technician • Licensed Practical Nurse • Medical Health Service Mgrs., Medical Records and Health Info. Tech. • Nursing Assistant • Radiological Technologists • Registered Nurses

Table 11: Occupations Associated with Emerging Industries

North Central Region	
Occupations Associated with Emerging Industries	
Industry	Occupations
Wholesale Trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General and Operations Managers • Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand • Light Truck Drivers • Office Clerks, General • Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Man., Except Tech. and Sci. Products
Professional and Other Business Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountants and Auditors • Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks • Computer Systems Analysts • Office Clerks, General • Paralegals and Legal Assistants • Software Developers and Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers
Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction Laborers • Carpenters • Electricians • Office Clerks, General • Plumbers, Pipefitters, Steamfitters
Transportation & Warehousing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial Truck & Tractor Operators • Laborers/Freight/Stock & Material Movers • Light Truck Drivers • Passenger Vehicle Drivers, Except Bus Drivers, Transit and Intercity • Truck Drivers, Heavy & Tractor Trailer

Chapter 1 Section A Question 3: Knowledge and skills needed to meet the employment needs of the employers in the region, including employment needs in demand industry sectors and occupations (§ 679.560(a)(2));

ICC utilizes the Greater Peoria Essential Abilities and Knowledge (GPEAK) program developed in partnership with our regional employers. This program is incorporated into workforce training programs and provides education in essential employability skills that contribute to success in the workplace. In addition, industry-recognized credentials are offered in OSHA Safety, CPR, AWS, EPA, and ESCO credentialing for HVAC, CDL Licensing, North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP), and National credentialing for EMT and LPN to meet employment needs based on employer feedback.

Chapter 1 Section A Question 3a: What are the targeted career pathway clusters in the region?

The targeted career pathway clusters in Region 3 are:

Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources

Agribusiness Systems

Occupations involved in the coordination of all activities that contribute to the production, processing, marketing, distribution, financing and development of agricultural commodities, plant and animal products, and other natural resources.

Food Products and Processing Systems

Occupations involved in bulk food production, the discovery of new food sources, the analysis of food content, and the development of ways to process, preserve, package or store food according to consumer needs, and. Includes those who monitor compliance with industry and government regulations.

Plant Systems

Occupations related to growing food, feed, and fiber crops, and the study of plants and their growth to help producers meet consumer demand while conserving natural resources and maintaining the environment. Work might include nutritional analysis or genetic engineering.

Power, Structural and Technical Systems

Workers apply knowledge of engineering, hydraulics, pneumatics, electronics, power, structures, and controls to the field of agriculture. They design agricultural structures as well as machinery and equipment.

Business and Finance

Accounting

Occupations that record, classify, summarize, analyze, and communicate a business' financial information and business transactions for use in management decision-making. Includes bookkeeping, systems design, analysis, and interpretation of accounting information.

Health Science

Therapeutic Services

Occupations focused primarily on changing the health status of patients over time through direct care, treatment, counseling, or health education information.

Diagnostic Services

Occupations related to the tests and evaluations that aid in the detection, diagnosis, and treatment of diseases, injuries or other physical conditions.

Health Informatics

Workers involved in all aspects of managing healthcare agencies, patient data and information, financial information, and computer applications related to healthcare processes and procedures. Workers usually have limited interaction with patients.

Information Technology

Cybersecurity/Secure Software

Occupations related to computer programming, software assurance, and database development to create software that is secure from vulnerabilities and cyber-attacks.

Information Support and Services

Occupations related to IT deployment, including implementing computer systems and software, database management, providing technical assistance, and managing information systems.

Network Systems

Occupations related to network analysis, planning, and implementation; including design, installation, maintenance, and management of network systems.

Programming and Software Development

Occupations involve the design, development, implementation, and maintenance of computer systems and software, requiring knowledge of computer operating systems, programming languages and software development.

Web and Digital Communication

Workers involved in the creating, designing and producing of interactive multimedia products and services, including development of digitally-generated or computer-enhanced media used in business, training, entertainment, communications, and marketing.

Manufacturing and Engineering, Technology, and Trades

Production

Occupations related to the making or assembling of electronic parts, constructing or assembling modular housing, performing welding jobs, or printing various materials.

Engineering

Occupations related to manufacturing engineering. Includes industrial maintenance technology, machining, CNC operators, CNC programmers, and tool and die makers.

Logistics and Inventory Control

Occupations related to the maintenance and transportation of raw materials and finished parts inventories. Includes moving raw materials to the production line, unloading trucks with raw materials, wrapping pallets of finished products for shipment, and communicating with traffic managers.

Chapter 1 Section A Question 3b: What are the skills that are in demand in the region?

Table 12: Skills in Demand in the Region

North Central Region	
Skills in Demand in the Region	
Industry	Skills
Healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Critical Thinking • Education: Certificate, Associate and Bachelor’s Degrees • Job Readiness • Observational Skills • Science and Math
Information Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to Work with Diverse Teams • Communication • Critical Thinking • Education: Technology-specific training, Certificates/Credentials/Associate Degrees • Interest and Aptitude in Technology • Job Readiness • Math
Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to Cross Train • Ability to Work with Diverse Teams • Basic Math • Critical Thinking • Education: On-the-Job Training, Certificates, Associate and Bachelor’s Degrees • Interest and Aptitude in Technology • Job Readiness
Transportation and Warehousing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Education: On-the-Job Training, Certificates, and Associate Degrees • Job Readiness • Physical Strength • Teamwork

Chapter 1 Section A Question 3c: How well do the existing skills of job seekers match the demands of local business?

The following data tables were supplied by IDES for the 2024 planning cycle. They indicate that the Region is on par with the rest of the state in educational attainment levels. The tables provided illustrate the skills gaps in the area for occupations requiring certificates, associate degrees and bachelor’s degrees or higher.

The data indicates that there are significant supply gaps for occupations requiring certificates, associate degrees, and bachelor's degrees. These shortages are in areas such as healthcare, IT, and education.

The data supplied did not cover occupations requiring on-job-training. These types of training programs continue to be a priority in the region. Assistance for this type of training is available through partner programs including Title 1, community colleges, and Bureau of Apprenticeships.

Figure 2: Supply Gap Analysis for Occupations Requiring a Certificate or License

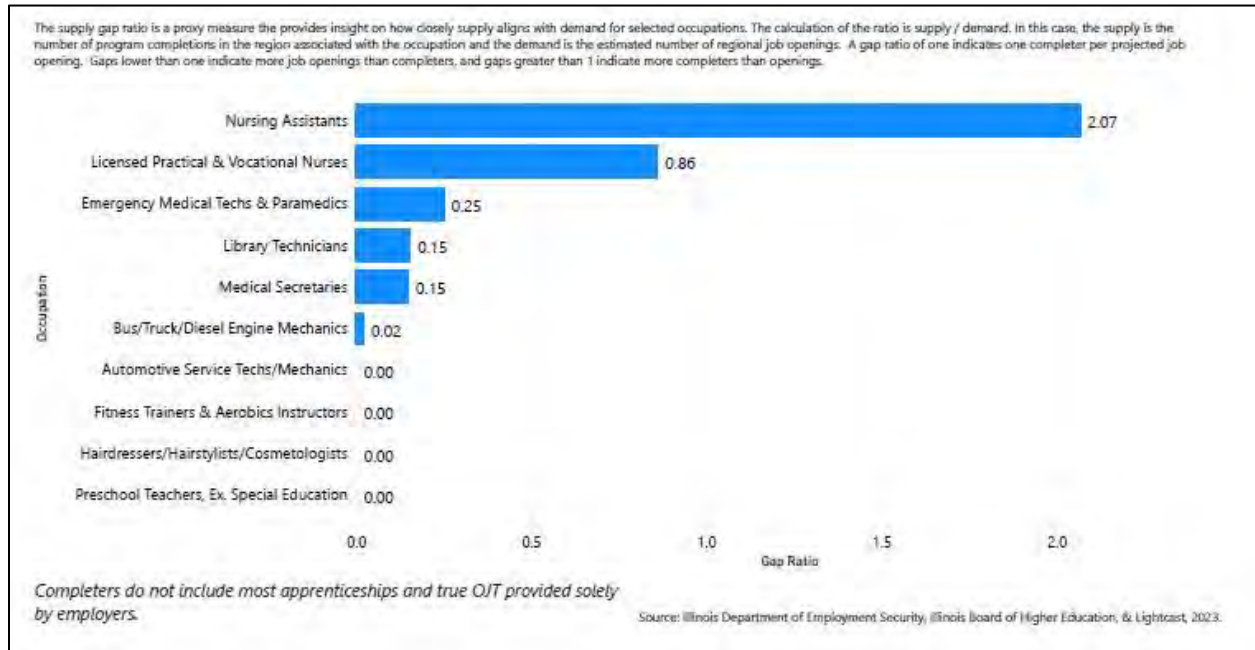


Figure 3: Supply Gap Analysis for Occupations Requiring an Associate Degree

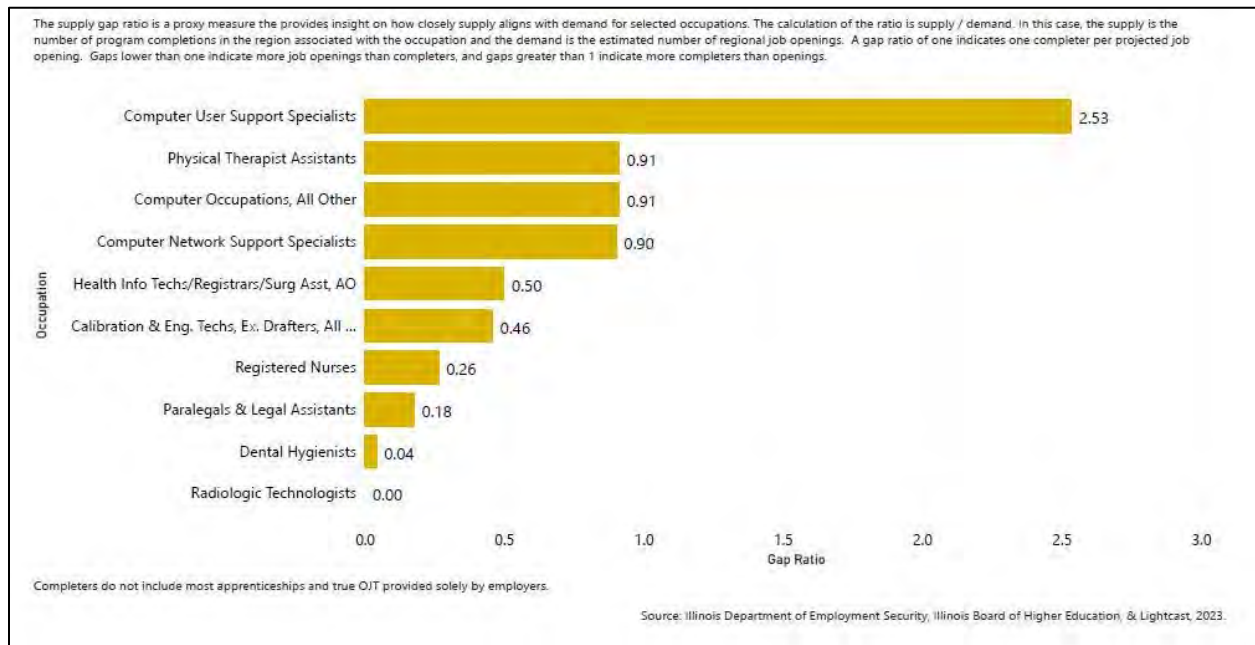


Figure 4: Supply Gap Analysis for Occupations Requiring a Bachelor's Degree

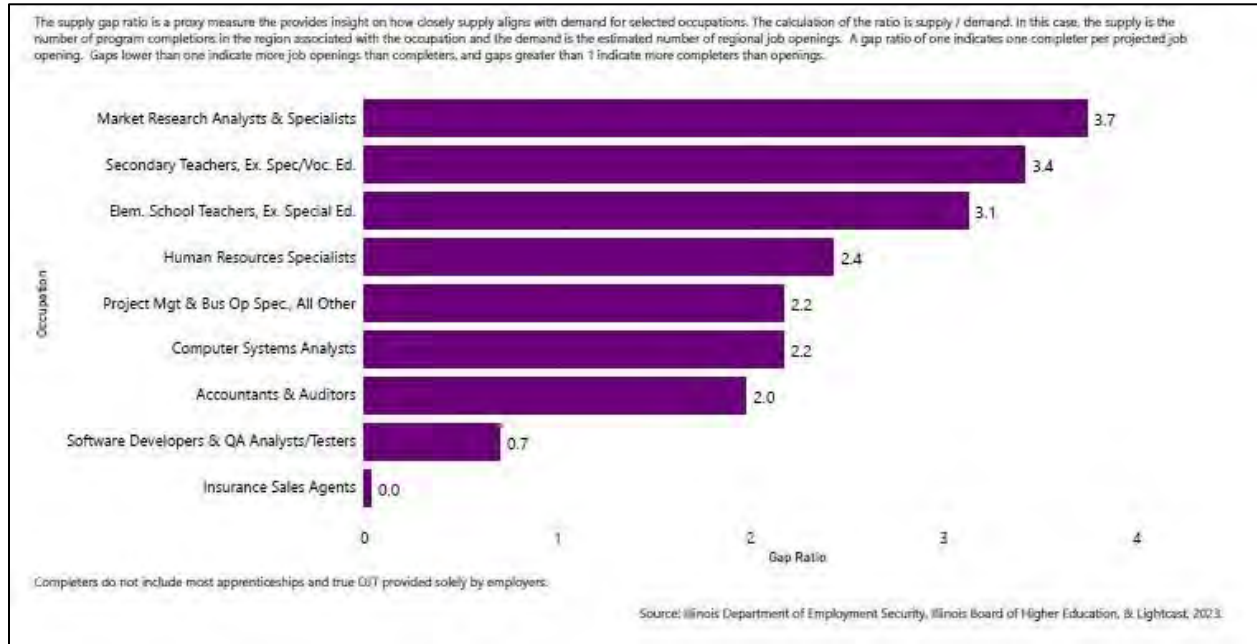
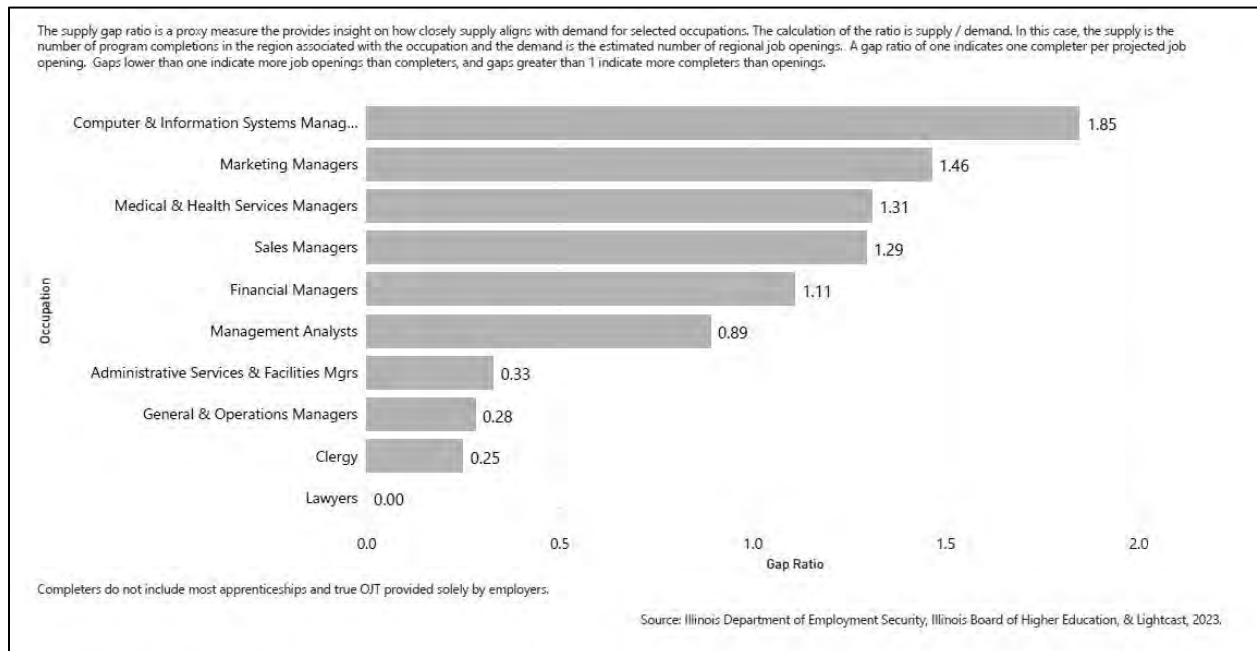
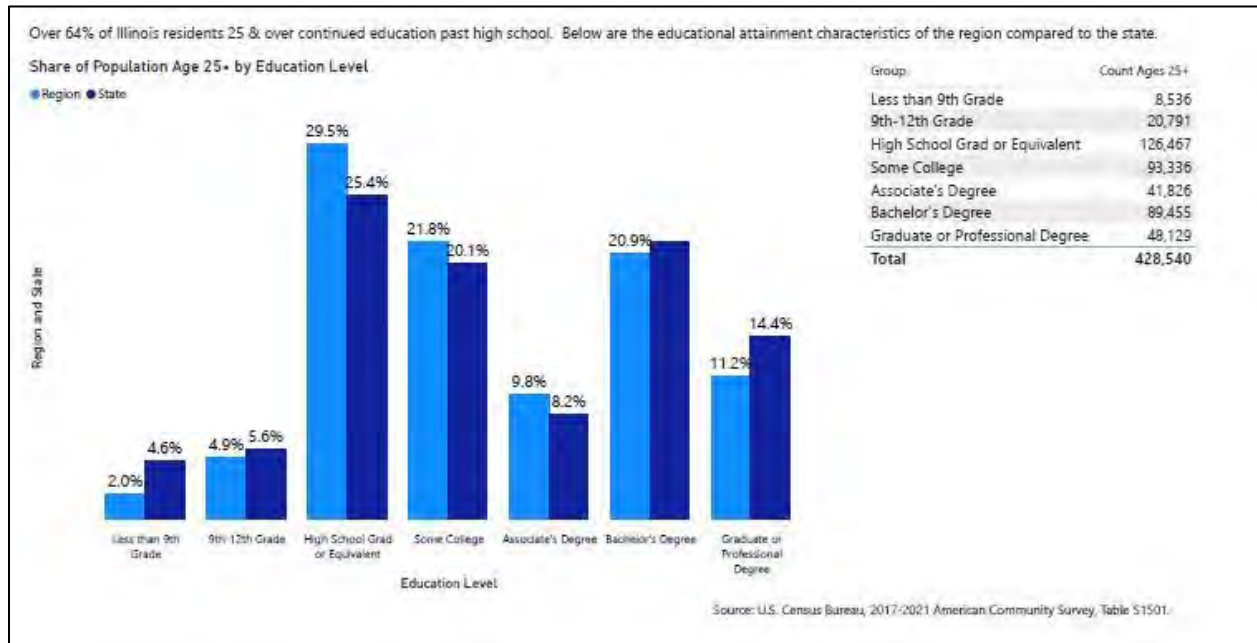


Figure 5: Supply Gap Analysis for Occupations Requiring Education Beyond a Bachelor's Degree



Fortunately, the Region is well-positioned to work with employers to help fill these gaps. As demonstrated by the chart below, 93% of the population in the region have attained a high school diploma or higher. Of these, 25% of the population has attained a bachelor's degree.

Figure 6: Education Attainment of Population 25 & Over



The region is rich in educational institutions that offer training for occupations in the industry sectors that we are targeting. Universities and colleges in the region offering four-year degrees include:

- Bradley University – Private Non-Profit Institution
- Eureka College – Private Non-Profit Institution
- Illinois State University – Public Institution
- Wesleyan University – Private Non-Profit Institution

The region also has eight (8) community colleges that offer both certificate and associate degree programs in the sectors of focus. These institutions include:

- Heartland Community College (HCC)
- Illinois Central College (ICC)
- Illinois Valley Community College
- Joliet Junior College
- Kankakee Community College
- Parkland Community College
- Richland Community College
- Spoon River College

In addition, the region has six (6) colleges focused on nursing and health sciences. These include:

- Graham Hospital School of Nursing
- Illinois Wesleyan School of Nursing

- Mennonite School of Nursing – Illinois State University
- Methodist College
- OSF St. Francis Medical Center
- St. Francis Medical Center College of Nursing

Region 3 also has numerous private business schools with programs focused on industry sectors such as welding, healthcare, commercial truck driver, and emergency management services. Two private schools that are widely used are Capital Area School of Practical Nursing and Midwest Technical Institute.

When taken together these institutions have the potential to meet the needs of business for skilled workers in the region. EDR 3 plans to more fully understand the programs of study offered through these schools and work with business to improve upon their effectiveness in meeting the skills that are in demand in our regional economy.

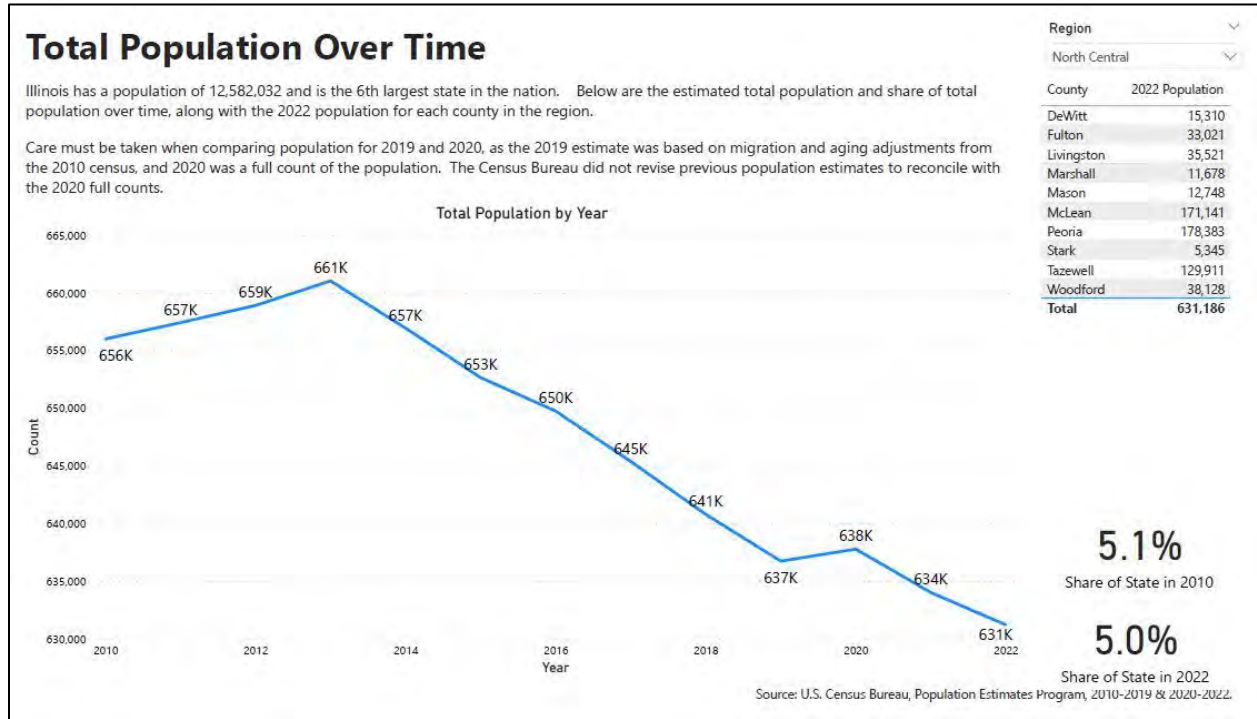
Question A 1a of this chapter identifies the specific high-demand occupations within each of the targeted industry sectors. Question A 3b identifies the skills that are in demand in for those occupation in the region. Many of these occupations require a certificate, associate degree, or bachelor’s degree for successful candidates, or extensive on-the-job training. Many healthcare occupations also require passage of a state or national licensing exam. The Regional Partners will continue to work with the post-secondary education community to expand opportunities for our residents to gain the necessary credentials for those in demand occupations that require them. We also will continue to work to expand apprenticeship opportunities for those occupations where on-the-job learning is required.

Chapter 1 Section A Question 4: Regional workforce considering current labor force employment and unemployment data, information on labor market trends, and educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment (§ 679.510(a)(1)(iv) and § 679.560(a)(3)).

Chapter 1 Section A Question 4a: How is the region changing in terms of demographics, labor supply, and occupational demand?

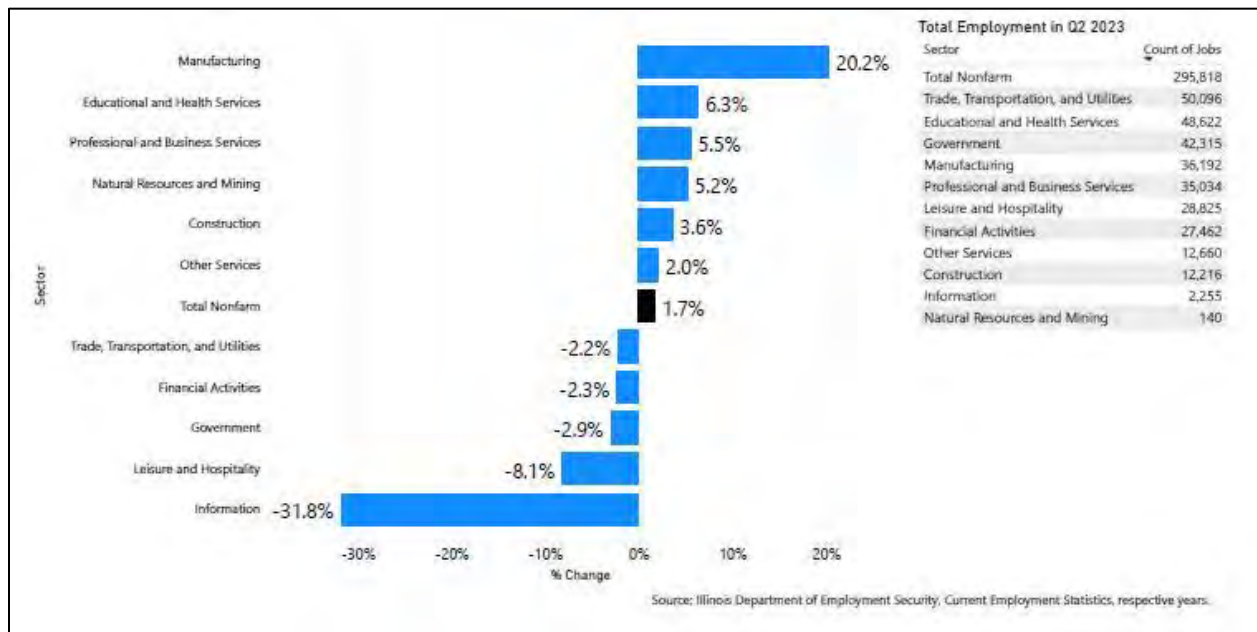
Region 3 has experienced changes in overall population, labor force, and age of population all of which affect the labor supply. The figure shows that there has been a general decline in the population of the region with a loss of approximately 6,000 individuals between 2019 and 2022. The population 55 and over makes up 31% of those living in Region 3.

Figure 7: Population Trends in EDR 3



Occupational demand in the region does not show significant change. It is expected that there will be a greater need of elementary and secondary teachers in the region as well as healthcare workers. Both of these industries and their associated occupations were greatly impacted by the pandemic.

Figure 8: Percent Change in Regional Sector Employment, Q2 2019 – Q2 2023 (Not Seasonally Adjusted)



Chapter 1 Section A Question 4b: What special populations exist in the region, what is their magnitude, and what are the policy and service implications to meet the needs of these individuals?

Table 13 below contains information provided by the State identifying special populations that exist in the region. The table quantifies the magnitude of the estimated need for these targeted populations. Policy and Service implications for these targeted individuals include:

- A special focus on equity lens initiatives that will provide assistance to those most in need of increased access to programs and career pathways that lead to in demand occupations.
- Increased coordination of services between partners
- To the extent possible integrated case management
- Promoting existing partner services to these population as well as creating new programs to meet their unique needs
- Collaboration is often difficult, but needed.

Table 13: Additional Target Population Characteristics of EDR 3

Target Population Characteristics	
DeWitt, Fulton, Livingston, Marshall, Mason, McLean, Peoria, Stark, Tazewell, and Woodford Counties	
Low-income Indicators	
SNAP Cases, April 2023	115,800
SNAP Households, April 2023	60,963
TANF Persons, May 2023	6,175
TANF Cases, May 2023	2,145
Foster Care Indicators	
Total Foster Youth, July 31, 2023	1,968
Foster Youth – Foster Care	727
Foster Youth – Relative Care	1,154
Foster Youth – Institution or Group Home	42
Other Foster Youth	44
Justice-Involved Populations	
Adult Prison Population by Sentencing Region, June 30, 2021	2,367
Adult Parolee Population by Region of Residence, June 30, 2021	1,176
Average Daily Juvenile Detention Population, February 2022	33
Other Indicators	
Foreign Born Population	40,342
Age 18+ without high school diploma	36,591
Female Single Parents	15,738
Male Single Parents	5,627

Chapter 1 Section B: Describe the development and implementation of sector initiatives for in demand industry sectors or occupations for the planning region (§ 679.510(a)(1)(iii)); Plans must answer the following questions:

Chapter 1 Section B Question 1: How will the workforce partners convene or support the convening of regional employers, foundations, institutions, and other stakeholders to create or maintain sector partnerships?

Employers are critical partners in the effort to develop sector partnerships in the region. The LWIAs of EDR 3 collaborate with local economic development agencies to support local employers. Local economic development agencies are LWIB members and help develop strategy to support employers. Likewise, foundations and regional institutions interested in workforce development are key players in the coordination of services that bridge the gap between workers and employer needs. To benefit from the expertise of these groups, there must be formal opportunities for their voices to be heard. In EDR 3 there are many opportunities and initiatives in place to convene employers, foundations, and regional institutions to help lead sector partnerships.

Examples of these include:

The Greater Peoria Economic Development Council convenes employers in many ways to support the development and attraction of a ready workforce:

- **Participation in the Workforce Alliance:** This is a regional public-private consortium led by ICC (District 514), the Greater Peoria EDC, and a partnership called the CEO Council (a group of over 70 business leaders). The group is comprised and led by a diverse group of 20+ unique employers, K-12 and post-secondary education leaders, and community-based organizations including the HOI United Way and Community Foundation of Central Illinois. It oversees three, population-based strategies pertaining to the development and coordination of workforce readiness initiatives:
 - Population 1 - Emerging Workforce: focused on supporting implementation of shared, regional K-12 College and Career strategies to students are work ready and schools are aligned to new State expectations.
 - Population 2 - Adult Up-Skilling: focused on identifying and recruiting working adults into training programs connected to in demand, living-wage careers as a way to improve lives and close workforce gaps.
 - Population 3 - Adults with Multiple Barriers: focused on coordinating direct workforce services between community-based organizations to address

systemic barriers allowing working-age adults to pursue training for an in demand, living-wage career in our region.

- **Greater Peoria CareerSpark Strategy Teams:** As a strategy of the Emerging Workforce committed listed above, GP CareerSpark, a shared, region-wide 8th grade career expo led by the GPEDC and Junior Achievement of Central Illinois convenes over 120 unique employers annually to provide hands-on career exploration to over 4,500 eighth-graders. CareerSpark has been meeting virtually during the pandemic.
- **Greater Peoria Essential Abilities and Knowledge (GPEAK) Assessment:** GPEAK measures an individual's demonstration of essential skills and knowledge needed for meaningful employment, while encouraging participants to reflect on their growth and development of essential skills.
- **HelloGP Talent Attraction Strategy Team:** This strategy team is comprised of a smaller cohort of approximately 15 employers, representing our most critical industries, coordinates and implements shared attraction strategies aimed at bringing new workforce into our region and retaining existing workforce.
- **Talent Pipeline Management (TPM):** Greater Peoria is implementing TPM. We are also championing SkillBridge to attract and serve transitioning service members from the US Armed Forces.

HCC convenes or supports the convening of regional employers, foundations, institutions, and other stakeholders to create or maintain sector partnerships through the following:

- CTE Program Advisory Committees to inform program and curriculum development and revision to maintain alignment with industry demand for high-tech, high-skill, and high-wage talent.
- Industry Focus Groups comprised of regional industry leaders to engage in demand planning to meet current and projected workforce needs. The College uses this feedback to create new programming in advance to have online to coincide with real-time demand.
- Business and Industry Solutions through Continuing Education delivers on-demand customized educational and training programs, strategic planning, process mapping, asset mapping, facilitation, onboarding, and assessment services for businesses and employers.
- The Heartland Foundation Board of approximately 40 regional leaders provides governance for the Heartland Community College Foundation and input on priorities and activities to advance the mission of the institution.

The HCC Adult Education department works with other partners to help assist students as they enter the workforce or post-secondary education. We work with community employers to provide job shadowing and volunteer opportunities for our students. The partners in the local Area Planning Council hold regular meetings with HCC Adult Education department. There is a referral process established between Area Planning Council members to ensure our constituents are provided with necessary services.

The following are highlights of recent HCC expansion/revision efforts related to workforce development:

- In response to local demand, HCC developed an Electric Vehicle Technology Associate Degree program and an Agriculture Associate Degree program, each with four stackable certificates. The College also developed certificates in Cannabis Cultivation and Dispensary Operations and Data Analytics, and is currently expanding HVACR and Medium- and Heavy-Duty EV Technology. HCC works with Career Link to ensure new eligible programs are added to the State's Eligible Training Provider List.
- Essential Workplace Skills (EWS) series – Creation and deployment of Essential Workplace Skills series providing incumbent worker training for critical soft skills, in response to collective employer needs and the McLean County Chamber of Commerce and aligned with ICSPS framework for student employability skills.
- Complete and Connect – program for HCC GED students to gain employability skills and workplace experience, with support from Career Link.
- Work Ready program expansion – creating short-term Work Ready programs, which stack to an associate degree.
- Creation and Deployment of Incumbent Worker Trainings – enhanced ability to design trainings, activities, and assessments based on regional employer needs for current workers.

ICC convenes or supports the convening of regional employers, foundations, institutions, and other stakeholders to create or maintain sector partnerships through the following:

- Business Solutions Breakfast convened twice each year to discuss the success of existing programs, identify needs for new training and employer initiative programs.
- Members of Industry Advisory Committees throughout the region to build and maintain employer partnerships, stay current on trends, and incorporate information to enhance and innovate training programs to meet employer needs.
- Individual employer meetings to assess needs regarding training and apprenticeship opportunities including DOL registration and sponsorship.
- Connect with local workforce boards and community-based organizations to understand the regional need and utilize services to connect students to employers.

Additionally, Richland Community College's CTE Recruiter visits Clinton High School and attends their college fairs. CTE invites Clinton High School to all CTE events, and Clinton High School attends Farm Progress Show every other year at Richland Community College.

Chapter 1 Section B Question 2: Identify the established and active sector partnerships in the region (as defined in Illinois' Next Generation Sector Strategies Guide). If any exist, are they business-led, and what is their role in WIOA planning?

The regional partners met in December 2023. During that meeting it was determined that there are no current established or active industry sector partnerships in the region that meet the definition of Next Generation Sector Strategies.

The representative from the Greater Peoria EDC did indicate that there may be a couple of initiatives that could meet this requirement but that would need to be determined through further communication with the state.

These include:

- **Manufacturing Network:** Along with our support of the Illinois Defense Industry Network diversification strategy, this committee may qualify as a sector initiative focusing on diversifying manufacturing businesses away from mining machinery manufacturing.
- **Regional Workforce Development Alliance:** The working goal of the Alliance is to create the regional workforce required to stabilize and grow our economy by systemically connecting employers, educations, community based organizations with high school graduates, the under-credentialed and multi barriered adults to ensure 70% of our population has the required certifications to obtain gainful employment.
- **Talent Pipeline Management:** Focused on gaining employer support, TPM seeking to form a committed industry-led group of employer champions. The group is convened by the EDC's and the LWIA's. It is action-oriented, focused on improving industry sector competitiveness. It is still a work in progress.

Chapter 1 Section B Question 3: What public-private partnerships exist in the region that could support sector strategies, and what is their role in planning?

Business-led sector-based partnerships that exist in the region include:

- **Strategic Manufacturing Group:** To develop our region's future workforce, GPEDC's Strategic Manufacturing Group connects area manufacturers with educators to plan events and activities that inspire and prepare students for manufacturing careers. During our annual Discover Manufacturing Career Expo, approximately 800 students from over 20 area schools are introduced to manufacturing career pathways each year.
- **Discover Manufacturing:** This is designed to bring awareness to youth about the quality of today's manufacturing jobs and to promote opportunities within the industry. Technology is changing like never before. Tomorrow's manufacturing will look different from today's. Modern manufacturing requires people who value creativity, problem solving, and innovation.

At the Discover Manufacturing Career Expo, the student is immersed in a hands-on experience featuring a variety of manufacturing careers. They learn what employers are really looking for: honesty, optimism, hard work ethic, communication, teamwork, judgement, and adaptability.

- **Regional Workforce Alliance:** Addressing challenges and opportunities for Emerging Workforce, Upskilling, and addressing Multiple Barriers to employment.
- **Peoria Pathways to Prosperity:** Peoria Pathways to Prosperity is an innovative State of Illinois-led STEM education initiative designed to support college and career readiness for all students. Supported by a partnership between the State of Illinois and a group of local organizations Peoria Pathways to Prosperity supports local programs that empower students to explore their academic and career interests while also supporting new statewide, public-private partnerships known as Learning Exchanges that better coordinate investments, resources and planning for those programs.
- **BN STEM Initiative:** The BN STEM Initiative is community driven by the local business community to support and invest in the workforce of tomorrow. BN STEM supports local programs, curriculum development, and internship opportunities for students interested in the STEM fields.

Individuals that serve on these groups are also involved in the Regional planning process. Their work within these sector partnerships helps inform the work done on the Regional Plan. There are several ways in which these groups will be incorporated into the WIOA regional planning efforts. We will:

1. Leverage their existing employer outreach efforts to better understand the skill needs of employer within their respective sectors.
2. Coordinate WIOA regional strategies with economic development plans.
3. Leverage their expertise in development of program models such as career pathways, talent pipelines, and earn and learn models.

The other public-private partnerships that exist in the region that could support sector strategies include:

- **Adult Education:** HCC offers several bridge programs for High School Equivalency (HSE) students and low and high intermediate ESL students. All students in both ESL and HSE classrooms are experiencing Blended Learning in the curriculum as well as contextualized instruction focusing on Workplace Technology and Education and Training career pathways. In addition, we have a College and Career Readiness ICAPS program for students to receive a short-term certificate in several career pathways. This program also helps students to transition either into the workplace or into further post-secondary education to earn an associate degree. We are planning to expand our bridge offerings to better prepare students transition into other career pathways.
- **CEO Regional Workforce Alliance:** Working goal: create the regional workforce required to stabilize and grow our economy by systemically connecting employers, educators, community-based organizations with high school graduates, the under-

credentialed and multi-barriered adults to ensure 70% of our population has the required certifications to obtain gainful employment.

- **Essential Employability Skills Alignment Project:** Brings together key stakeholders to develop a common approach to determine performance indicators and associated levels for each of the State's Essential Employability Competencies outlined in the Post-secondary and Workforce Readiness Act. These performance indicators will provide a common approach to validate the competencies and skills individuals acquire through work-based learning experiences, as well as consistent methods for measuring and communicating what they learned. This is a collaborative project between the Regional Workforce Alliance, ICC, Northern Illinois University Education Systems Center, and Jobs for the Future to align and address essential employability skills and to provide robust work-based learning opportunities that prepare individuals for fulfilling careers and meaningful employment.
- **Manufacturing Greater Peoria:** Greater Peoria has an extensive history in heavy metal manufacturing. This five-county region represents a population of 408,266. Over 15% of our workforce is employed in the manufacturing industry, which is 50% higher than the national average.
- **Peoria Innovation Hub:** A public-private partnership between the University of Illinois, Greater Peoria EDC, and OSF HealthCare. Through the State of Illinois Innovation Network, our region has begun building partnerships to support a physical innovation lab in downtown Peoria that will include workforce training programs in STEM and innovation centers.
- **Workforce Equity Initiative:** ICC is the lead college of an \$18.7 million Workforce Equity Initiative collaborating with 14 additional Illinois community colleges. The initiative addresses local workforce gaps and employment barriers in an effort to prepare underserved individuals with a decent and equitable employment opportunity. The initiative focuses on developing our area's workforce by providing participants with a credential and a living wage. It addresses high demand-careers and targets low-income individuals, those living in high crime and high poverty areas, unemployed individuals, and minorities. The Workforce Equity Initiative will train participants in the high-demand occupations of computer numerical control (CNC) operator, welder, CDL truck driver, CompTIA A+, CompTIA Network+, Local Area Network (LAN) technician, licensed practical nurse (LPN), emergency medical technician (EMT), and paramedic. The end goal is for participating students to secure employment with a full-time job paying at least 30% above the regional living wage.

Individuals that serve on these groups are also involved in the regional planning process. Their work within these sector partnerships helps inform the work that is being done on the regional plan. These groups will be incorporated into the WIOA regional planning efforts in several ways. We will:

1. Leverage their existing employer outreach efforts to better understand the skill needs of employer within their respective sectors.
2. Coordinate WIOA Regional strategies with economic development plans.

3. Leverage their expertise in development of program models such as career pathways, talent pipelines, and earn and learn models.

Chapter 1 Section B Question 4: What neutral conveners with the capacity to help establish sector partnerships exist in the region, and what is their role in planning?

The region has numerous organizations and entities that could potentially function as neutral conveners to help establish sector partnerships in the region:

- **BN Grows:** The business retention and expansion program for the Bloomington-Normal (McLean County) EDC with a proactive approach designed to keep current business here in the community. A healthy and vibrant local economy depends on the well-being of a community's existing firms. We want to help our businesses thrive in Bloomington-Normal for the following reasons: existing firms create up to 80% of all new jobs; businesses that stay competitive are more likely to remain and expand in the community; and retaining businesses is less costly than attractive new ones. The Bloomington-Normal workforce is young, well educated, and eager to meet the needs of a broad range of business and industry.
- **DeWitt County Development Council:** Values the partnerships that we have with private industry. As stakeholders and investors in our community, these private industry partners, have a stake in the economic growth of our County. Their knowledge, experience, and leadership is invaluable.
- **Greater Livingston County Economic Development Council:** Dedicates its purpose to supporting the retention and expansion of existing enterprises and to attracting new businesses. Additionally, the GLCEDC recognizes the importance of a highly trained and competent workforce and works diligently with HCC, the Livingston Area Career Center, and the Grundy, Kankakee, Livingston County Workforce Investment Board to respond to the needs of current and prospective employers. Furthermore, as a respected advocate of the business community, the GLCEDC works with elected officials at the federal, state, and local levels to advocate for more business friendly policies pertaining to workers' compensation insurance, tax reform(s), and other pro-business initiatives as directed by our Board of Directors. The GLCEDC also serves as a liaison between a business and government agencies to facilitate and expedite the development of new projects
- **Greater Peoria Data Hub:** Greater Peoria is investing in its future by creating the strategies and framework to connect our region's employers with a skilled workforce. These efforts are driven by a driven partnership of economic development organizations, regional K-12 public education districts, ICC, industry partners, and community-based organizations.
- **Greater Peoria Economic Development Council (GPEDC):** Convenes employers in many ways to support the development and attraction of a ready workforce. The Workforce Alliance is a regional public-private consortium led by ICC (District 514), the GPEDC, and a partnership called the CEO Council (a group of 70 business leaders). The group of 20+ unique employers, K-12 and post-secondary education

leaders, and community-based organizations including the HOI United Way and Community Foundation of Central Illinois.

- **Heartland Community College Workforce Development Center:** Collaborates with area employers to help build the skills of 21st century workers. HCC offers training, degrees, and certificates in many fields that are in high demand, including computer networking and technology, nursing, construction, maintenance, and manufacturing.
- **Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center (IMEC):** Works with manufacturing firms throughout the State to link long-term plans with on-site implementation services by identifying performance gaps, solving these gaps, and building a culture to support sustained improvements towards a competitive future. IMEC helps these organizations optimize operating capacity, implement advanced product and process innovations, increase sales, enter new markets and improve profitability.
- **Illinois Wesleyan University Action Research Center (ARC):** ARC works with not-for-profit organizations, faith-based groups, businesses, civic groups, local government, neighborhood groups, and many others. ARC facilitates collaborative relationships that leverage the strengths of all parties to produce a successful project outcome. ARC has a close working relationship with large employers, has internship programs, and has the capacity to provide data proven contributions to workforce issues.
- **LWIA 19 Workforce Board:** A representative from John Warner Hospital is on the LWIA 19 Workforce Board and continues to reach out to the Clinton Chamber.
- **McLean County CEO Council:** Collectively leveraging passion, relationships, and resources to influence business growth and a financially thriving Bloomington-Normal. This includes a specific focus on the future success of secondary education that meets the needs of local employers.
- **McLean County Community COMPACT:** The McLean County Community COMPACT creatively enlists the support of community stakeholders from business, government, labor, education, and the community to further its purpose. Among the benefits of COMPACT membership is the ability to learn first about countywide initiatives and to network with colleagues in each of these sectors.
- **Peoria NEXT Innovation Center:** Home to researchers, investors, and entrepreneurs that are transforming new technologies and innovations into commercial enterprises. The 48,000 square foot center opened its doors in 2007 and can house up to 27 companies. Companies in the fields of medical devices, mechanical engineering, molecular studies, biofuels, and IT are currently tenants. River City Labs is a local Makerspace with a membership of 40 paying local innovators and 100+ non-paying members. The lab is located in the Peoria Warehouse District and is currently seeking to expand to support its growing membership.
- **Spoon River College Office of Community Outreach:** The Office of Community Outreach is truly committed to creating partnerships with business and industry and other public agencies. By working cooperatively with business and industry we

can jointly address many of the workforce and training needs of the region and community. Ask us about training opportunities. We have state-of-the-art facilities available or we can provide training on-site “at your place.”

- **Workforce Innovation Board of Local Area 15:** A core partner under WIOA. They are leading the regional planning efforts and function as the One-Stop Operator for the local area. They have decades of experience convening employers and working with them to develop programs that meet the needs of employers for a skilled workforce.

Chapter 1 Section C: If any employer collaboratives are engaged in the U.S. Chamber’s Talent Pipeline Management initiative, describe the following:

Chapter 1 Section C Question A: What is the focus of the collaborative(s)?

The Business Service Team (BST) works with multiple employer-led collaboratives throughout the region. These groups allow the local partners to identify local businesses’ needs, and to educate and connect businesses with all resources available to address those needs.

In each collaborative, the BST members, community partners, and employers unite to streamline the public workforce system by creating career pathways to supply the talent required to meet the businesses needs and to create a thriving community.

Greater Peoria Manufacturing Network: A subset of the Greater Peoria Economic Development Council (GPEDC) that encourages collaboration between local manufacturers. We learn about new businesses, new opportunities, and have lots of time to network with our local manufacturing businesses partners to hear what they have going, where they need help, and try to see if there is help available with other businesses for supply chain, logistics, or other manufacturing related challenges that may arise.

McLean County Community COMPACT: Creatively enlists the support of community stakeholders from business, government, labor, education, and the community to further its purpose. Among the benefits of COMPACT membership is the ability to learn first about countywide initiatives and to network with colleagues in each of these sectors. The group is dedicated to addressing workforce issues in the Bloomington-Normal area, and is currently focused on the issues identified in the employer survey recently conducted by the McLean County Chamber of Commerce. At this time, we are discussing the Chamber survey results and other workforce needs that we feel are relevant in order to form sub groups to address particular topics.

McLean County Reentry Council: Primarily comprised of local non-profit agencies and various employers to educate each other on the specific barriers faced by those with criminal backgrounds. The intent is to reduce both the barriers and stigma often associated with these individuals to provide them more services towards gaining self-

sustaining employment, and to encourage and support employers in hiring with a focus on more equity in their organization.

Regional Upskilling Committee: Formed of the GPEDC, training providers, local professionals, local community college representatives, and sector partners to encourage the upskilling and development of talent for our local region. These meetings discuss the local climate for business talent needs and the local talent available.

Strategic Manufacturing Group: Meets to work out details for CareerSpark (a huge annual event for 8th grade students to explore and discover local careers and businesses) that occurs every October at the Peoria Civic Center. This group also collaborates to host Discover Manufacturing for high school juniors and seniors to take guided tours of clean manufacturing facilities and to tour and ask questions at these facilities. This group also has an active role in supporting both apprenticeships and TPM initiatives at the meetings.

Workforce Development Committee: Formed with the GPEDC, Peoria Chamber of Commerce, secondary and post-secondary training providers, local professionals, and sector partners to educate each other and develop streamlined educational pathways to increase the skills of local labor force. The group seeks creative ways to entice individuals to move to this area or retain youth to remain in this area to fill open employment opportunities. It also discusses and evaluates other workforce-related challenges, such as the lack of affordable housing, infrastructure to build new housing developments, and affordable transportation for potential employees, etc.

Chapter 1 Section C Question B: How is the workforce system supporting the needs of these employers?

The workforce system is working with the local community college, training providers, and EDC to help encourage the development of apprenticeships and will leverage WIOA funding to encourage this growth. We continue to fund apprenticeships, meet with businesses on a regular basis, share Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) funding for training, meet with workers when allowed during business closings, and collaborate to find innovative ways to discover talent.

The workforce system is collaborating with a large assortment of other local non-profits as well as the local community college, other local training providers, EDC, and Chamber to listen to and address the needs of each individual employer. Businesses are guided by many supporting agencies on resources available to them. Local agencies are not operating in silos in our area. We are focused on the big workforce picture in order to streamline the services of all agencies to create and sustain a cohesive flow in our workforce system from education to employment.

IDES offer employers tax credits, Illinois Job Link Accounts, State programs for Veterans, and Fidelity Bonding to encourage second chance hiring. The local community college Business Service Representative collaborates with us to offer training solutions, upskilling, leadership, and manufacturing opportunities. Career Link offers funding opportunities for Apprenticeships, OJT, and IWT.

Chapter 1 Section D: Describe any broad economic development opportunities in the region within the context of the workforce, education, and economic development plans.

EDR 3 Business Service Team (BST) members are engaged in TPM Strategy 1, and have been working with local economic development agencies to conduct surveys of manufacturers in the area.

We have received a few surveys back, and will be working to aggregate the data into a report. We plan to share the aggregated report with the employers, and then engage the training partners including the local colleges, technical schools, high schools, and industry-training champions to see what kind of talent we have locally to help meet the demands of the employers. The data can be used by the local training providers to better align offerings to solve employer needs. We will offer employers WIOA funding using IWT funding to help pay for Apprenticeship, upskilling, and training needs by the local employers. We will look for opportunities to place any dislocated workers with skill sets matching the company data provided to seamlessly transition workers from a previous job to a new role. We can use OJT funding to assist with positions where we can leverage WIOA dollars to help offset training costs and encourage the hiring of dislocated workers, reducing the chances they will be on unemployment.

Illinois PaCE (Postsecondary and Career Expectations) Framework implementation for Greater Peoria schools, CareerSpark, RWA initiatives, IT Workforce Accelerator, TPM (for manufacturing /logistics, as well as healthcare), and Workforce Equity Initiative.

The McLean County Chamber of Commerce issued an employer survey earlier this year. Upon receiving the results, they released the information to the public including local workforce development agencies, secondary schools, colleges/universities, and employers.

The BST is working on strategies to address the employer needs identified in the survey. WIOA funding will be utilized to encourage the development of Apprenticeships and OJTs, as well as to upskill employees through IWT. We are also looking at creative ways to engage employers in creating new opportunities for work based learning and aligning the direct hire of applicants graduating from local educational institutions.

Chapter 1 Section E: Describe any broad economic development challenges in the region's workforce, education, and economic development plans.

The region includes rural areas, which lack the quality of life to attract and retain workers. Rural areas are challenged to attract workers, especially younger workers. Additionally, there is a lack of internet access in rural areas, which creates a problem for economic development.

We continue to have a significant skills gap for the available talent available compared to the technical jobs that are required at the employers. There are several large employers that have taken away employees from other employers locally. The Region received news recently that a large Maui Jim Corporate campus will be built in Peoria. This will be

challenging to find enough skilled workforce to meet this employer's demands. There continues to be a shortage in education professionals, specifically in CDL, compared to the local demand for drivers.

Lack of skilled and available talent continues to be a challenge in our workforce area. Employers are determining ways to upskill talent within their organization, but lack of talent to backfill the rolls vacated by upskilled employees and continue to fill highly skilled rolls is limited. Incentives such as funding for IWT is also limited. Managers at manufacturers are finding themselves filling in for missing employees instead of performing needed management duties. Employers are also seeing issues between generations of workers. Leadership and conflict resolution training would be helpful for both managers and laborers in order to better respect the differences in workers nearing retirement versus those entering the workforce for the first time.

We are also seeing great shortages in certain areas such as teachers, nurses, Paramedics, etc. Lack of classes and teachers to expand the number of qualified individuals to fill those roles are a problem. A nurse makes a decent wage, but there is no incentive to become a teacher to help grow the number of nurses coming out of the school district. The same can be said for other roles. The programs exist, but we don't have enough turnaround of the students to fill the current openings quick enough.

Also, rate of pay for some roles is an issue. Public school teachers are one of the lowest paid groups and most stressed. Teachers are leaving those roles quickly and with a low wage, there aren't a lot of people looking to fill those roles. Some employers are unable to raise their pay either, which is causing them to be extremely short-staffed when larger companies like Rivian move into the area to hire 7,000+ workers at a much higher wage than other local companies.

The Greater Peoria Economic Development Council is compiling data on impact/outcomes of past initiatives from the Regional Workforce Alliance (RWA) to highlight employer involvement, to reinvigorate the mission and vision of the RWA, and to get employers reengaged or engaged for the first time.

GPEDC is completing a labor-shed study via Newmark to have a better understanding and more in-depth, actionable insights on the workforce for Greater Peoria.

Chapter 1 Section F: Describe how a *workforce equity lens* is incorporated into the local planning requirements for collecting and analyzing labor market information.

Incorporating a workforce equity lens into local planning requirements for collecting and analyzing labor market information is crucial to ensuring fair and equitable workforce development. By applying this lens, data collection efforts will be focused on identifying and addressing disparities among different populations in the labor market, such as women, racial and ethnic minorities, individuals with disabilities, or those from low-income backgrounds. This approach considers not only the overall workforce trends but also the specific barriers and challenges faced by these marginalized groups. By emphasizing equity, local planning can target resources and interventions towards

reducing disparities in employment opportunities, wages, and career advancement, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and equitable workforce system for all members of the community.

It is anticipated that during the next year, State-level partners will develop reporting capabilities for use at the local level that support workforce equity lens analysis of labor market information. All partners agree that the information exists within their automated systems and could be made available to the local level. Data such as race, disability status, gender, age, and poverty level could be used to assess those being served and associated outcomes.

Below is a table depicting the type of information available from partners in the Region. The data shown is for Title 1 and is a total population report from IDES of the Peoria MSA and Title 1 Registrants served by Career Link between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023. The table compares the percentages of the gender and ethnicities of the Peoria MSA population and our customer base.

As you can see, there is a large discrepancy of the male/female ratio in our customer base compared to the population at large. In the past, this ratio has been much closer to the population’s break down. In the past, we have noticed that more of our male customers are dislocated workers, particularly from layoff events in the manufacturing industry. In recent years, we have received fewer and fewer dislocated worker applications. At the same time, we have served a higher number of Adult customers, which tend to be female.

As you can see from the data, the percentage of Black customers is well above the percentage of Black individuals in the population. Also, the percentage of Hispanic or Latino customers is slightly above the percentage of Hispanic or Latino individuals in the population.

Table 14: Demographics of Career Link Customers – PY22

Category	IDES Report Total Pop.	IDES %	Registrants	Reg. %
Total	404,226	100%	153	100%
Male	199,8388	49.4%	44	28.1%
Female	204,388	50.6%	109	71.8%
White	340,740	84.3%	85	56%
Black	35,457	8.8%	55	36%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	243	0.6%	0	0
Am. Indian/Alaskan Native	610	0.2%	4	0
Asian	9,671	2.4%	3	2%
Hispanic	14,820	3.7%	9	6%
Declined			1	1%

Chapter 2 – Strategies for Service Integration – Regional Component

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

Chapter 2 Section A: Provide an analysis of workforce development activities, including education and training, in the region. This analysis must include the strengths and weaknesses of workforce development activities and capacity to provide the workforce development activities to address the education and skill needs of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment, and the employment needs of employers (§ 679.560(a)(4)). Plans must address the following areas:

Chapter 2 Section A Question 1: Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of workforce development activities in the region.

Workforce Development Analysis

The EDR 3 Partners identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) pertaining to workforce development in the region. The results of this analysis are shown in the Table below.

Table 15: EDR 3 Workforce Development SWOT Analysis

North Central Region		
Workforce Development SWOT Analysis		
Internal Origin	<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large Number of Job Openings • Collaboration Among Partners • Focus on Training in Demand Occupations • Creation of Electronic Referral on Partner Website • Improved Economic Conditions • Community Colleges working Regionally 	<p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People not Looking for Work • Limited Access to Broadband • No Common Customer Information System • Limits to Training Capacity (Faculty and Space) • Reporting Systems Between Partners
External Origin	<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large Number of Job Openings • Connecting Employers to Non-Traditional Employees • Plans to Report Performance to Board • Increased Earn and Learn Models • Employers more Engaged in Out-of-the-Box Solutions 	<p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workers not committed to employers due to inflexibility and wages • Loss of large employers • Economic downturn • Possible lack of funding from both State and other sources

Strengths:

Regional partners identified the large number of job openings in the area as an overarching feature of the post-pandemic economy. It has wound up being all things, a strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat.

Partners agree to work collaboratively to serve both job seekers and employers. In the post-pandemic economy, the web-based referral system for partners continues to increase communication among partners and job seekers. Those things that made the system strong in the past will continue to be the foundation (e.g., sector-focused and demand-driven).

Weakness:

Lack of digital literacy and access to technology are also major weaknesses. Many partners identify instances where those with significant barriers could not access services. Many rural areas do not have broadband. Many customers do not have computers or lack the basic knowledge of how to utilize mobile applications. The Partners will look for resources to address these issues.

Opportunities:

Once again, the large number of job openings means there are many opportunities for employment. Partners will promote the hiring of non-traditional employees such as the disabled, returning citizens, low income, etc., and will discuss with employers what training might encourage out-of-the-box solutions to their workforce needs. Apprenticeships and other Earn and Learn models are increasingly used to provide a quicker route to employment in high demand occupations.

Threat:

In the post-pandemic job market, workers value flexible hours, remote work opportunities, and higher wages. Considering the shortage of skilled and/or experienced workers across most industries, employers must adapt to the modern job market, along with the increased minimum wage, in order to attract job seekers.

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

Capacity:

The region is well positioned to provide workforce development activities to address the education and skill needs of the workforce.

By taking a holistic approach to collaboration with core partners, the Region will be able to better serve at risk populations. These WIOA partners include Titles I, II, III and IV, ICCB – Perkins CTE, IDES, Aging, Corrections, and Community Action Agencies.

In furtherance of WIOA requirements, Priority of Service in the region includes:

1) Veterans and eligible spouses in the following order or priority:

- a) First, to veterans and eligible spouses (who are included in the groups given statutory priority for WIOA adult formula funds). This means that veterans and eligible spouses who are recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals*, or individuals who are basic skills deficient would receive first priority for services provided with WIOA adult formula funds.
 - b) Second, to non-covered persons (individuals who are not veterans or eligible spouses) who are included in the groups given priority for WIOA adult formula funds.
 - c) Third, to veterans and eligible spouses who are not included in WIOA's priority groups.
 - d) Fourth, to any other populations identified by the Governor or Local Workforce Development Board for priority.
 - e) Last, to non-covered persons outside the groups given priority under WIOA.
- 2) Recipients of Public Assistance such as those participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Security Income (SSI). And/or any other State or local income-based public assistance.
- a) Other Low-Income Individuals, including those who:
 - b) Are in a family with total family income that does not exceed the higher of—(I) the poverty line; or (II) 70 percent of the lower living standard income level;
 - c) is a homeless individual (as defined in section 41403(6) of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994), or a homeless child or youth (as defined under section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act);
 - d) receives or is eligible to receive a free or reduced-price lunch under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act;
 - e) is a foster child on behalf of whom State or local government payments are made; or
 - f) is an individual with a disability whose own income meets the income requirement, but who is a member of a family whose income does not meet this requirement.
- 3) Individuals who are basic skills deficient such as those who
- a) are a youth with English reading, writing, or computing skills at or below the 8th grade level on a generally accepted standardized test; or
 - b) are a youth or adult, that is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English, at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society.

There is a need for marketing resources from the State on a scale aligned with the state and community colleges.

Chapter 2 Section A Question 3: Analyze the capacity of the regional partners to provide activities to address the needs of employers.

The Region's capacity to serve employers is robust. Each LWIA in the region has a Business Service Team (BST) made up of education, workforce development, and economic development partners in the area. These teams meet regularly to understand the needs of employers and work collaboratively to address them. Each partner program has resources that they bring to the table that can address specific needs. For instance, Adult Education programs will continue to offer bridge and IET programs for low-skilled and low literate youth and adults. Areas of concentration will continue to be manufacturing, healthcare, and IT as it relates to those fields. Workplace Literacy activities will be developed to offer credentials for specific skills (e.g., MOS Word, Excel, Advanced Forklift training, etc.) Essential Employability Skills through career foundations curriculum will continue to be contextualized into adult education programming.

We will take or have taken the following steps to continue to serve employers:

- Virtual BST meetings held monthly.
- Partnering with IDES for virtual job fairs on Illinois workNet. Development of a partner website with an internal referral system for all partners (CentralIllinoisHelps.com).
- Increased outreach to job seekers and businesses utilizing social media, cable, and newspapers to promote training services.
- Coordination with IDES to send weekly email blasts to UI claimants for recruitment to the dislocated worker program.
- Marketing of Incumbent Worker Training (IWT), OJT, and Apprenticeship training by Career Link Business Service Representatives (BSRs), area colleges, and EDCs.
- BST members have attended Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) training to better serve business needs throughout the region.

Chapter 2 Section A Question 4: How well do existing training programs in the region and local areas prepare job seekers to enter and retain employment with regional businesses?

IDES stopped using gap analysis of On-the-Job Training and Certificates education level because it is difficult to accurately map OJT occupations to specific educational programs. One of the core outcomes measures for WIOA partners is completion of GED and enter post-secondary or employment. Median wage information and employment after 2nd quarter data is collected. These measures show that the system is meeting their goals, which reflects on their ability to meet employer's needs.

Figure 9: Supply Gap Analysis for Occupations Requiring a Certificate or License:

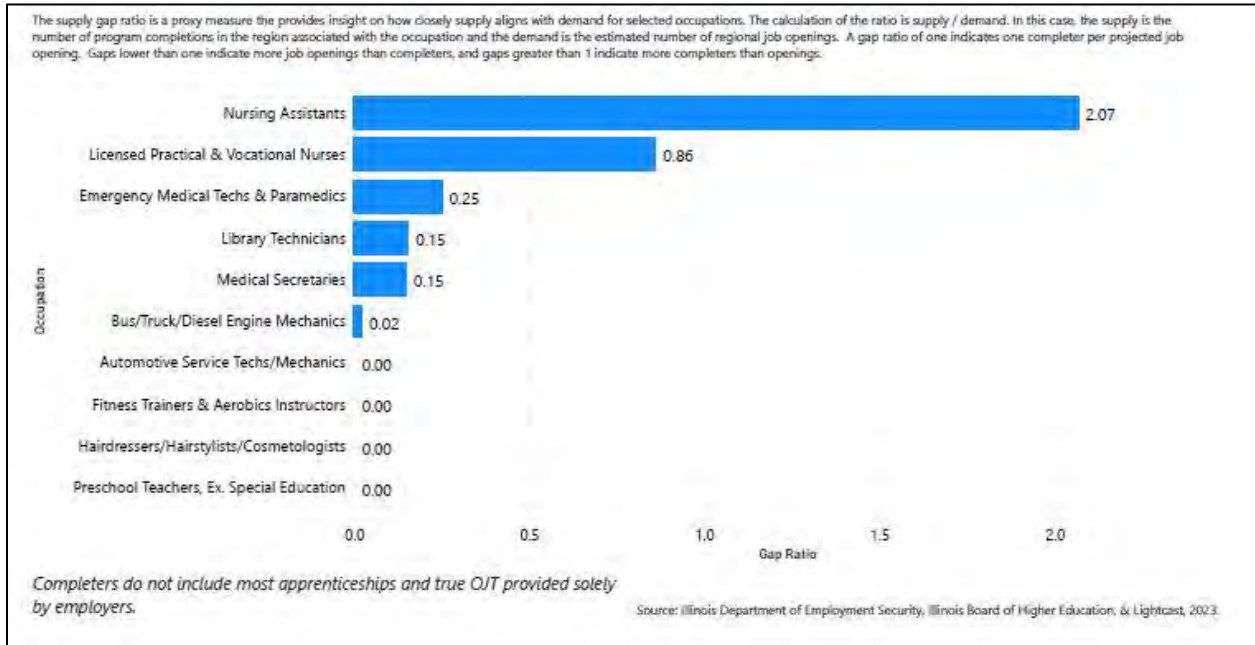


Figure 10: Supply Gap Analysis for Occupations Requiring an Associate Degree

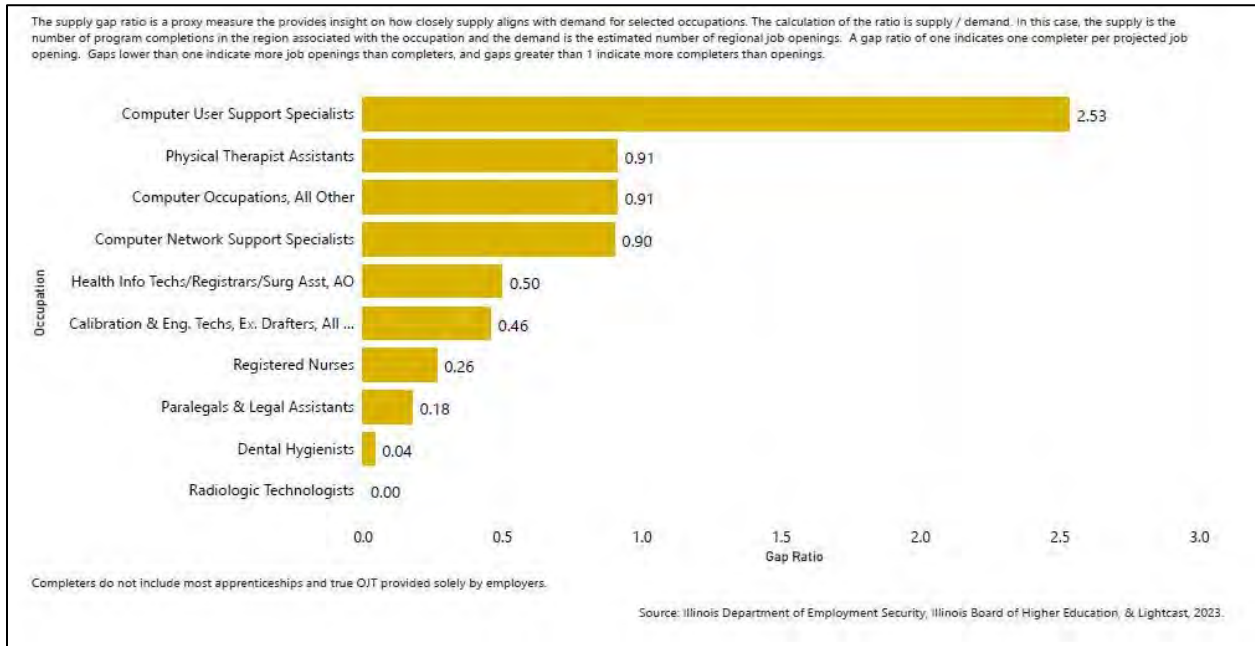
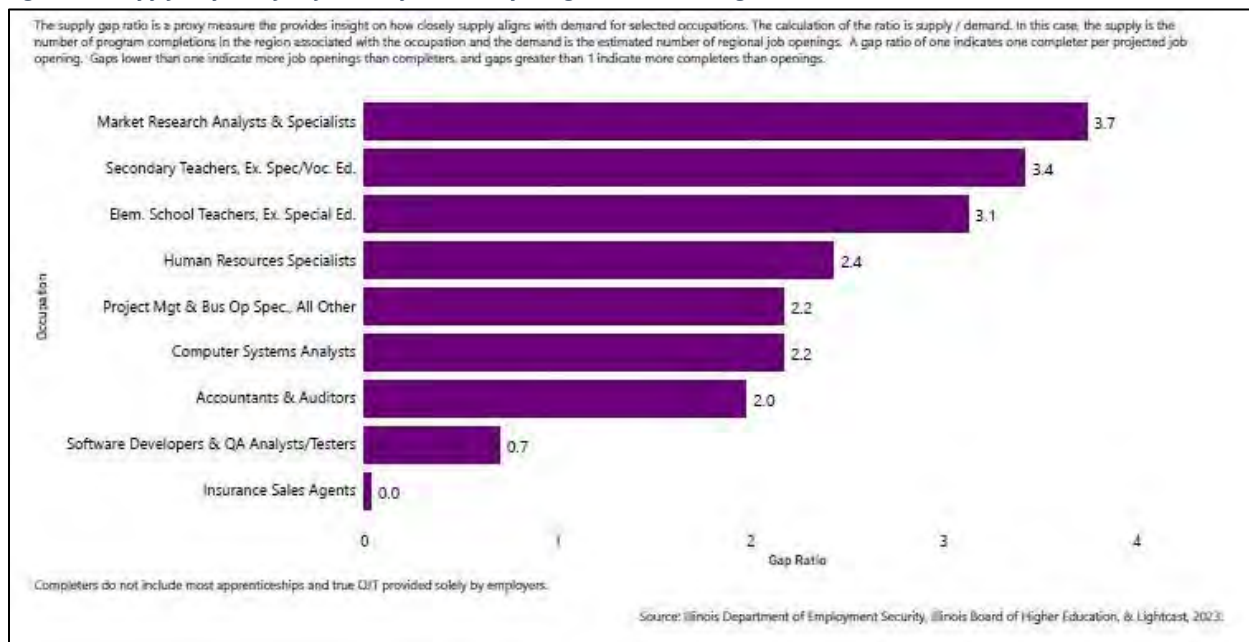


Figure 11: Supply Gap Analysis for Occupations Requiring a Bachelor's Degree



Chapter 2 Section A Question 5: Summarize the commitments of each program partner to implement the selected strategies described in the “Action Plan for Improving Service Integration in the Region.”

Through the MOU development process, each program partner in their respective LWIA has committed to the integration of workforce development services. The LWIA Partners reached agreement on and submitted Action Plans for Improving Service Integration within their LWIAs to the State of Illinois in the fall of 2023.

In accordance with the Regional Planning guidelines, the Partners to EDR 3’s plan commit to the implementation of their respective Service Integration Plans. The Partners recognize that the Service Integration Plans will change over time and this document formalizes the commitment at the LWIA level to continue the work of integration as it evolves.

Below is the summarization for each LWIAs commitments to current integration plans.

LWIA 11:

- Customer Centered Design
- Cross Training of Partner Staff
- Intake and Assessment
 - Develop Sign-in Process that Captures Service Needs
- Updated Services Schedule and Referral Form
- Career Pathways
 - More Staff Training
 - More Information on Web Page
 - Increase Board Engagement

- Evaluate and Increase use of Social Media to Distribute Information

LWIA 15:

- Customer-Centered Design
 - Use Customer Feedback to Shape Service System
 - Keep the LWIB informed with regular updates and by adding Partner Updates to meeting agendas.
 - Develop One-Stop System-wide Complaint Procedures
- Partner Staff
 - Monthly Partner Meetings
 - Review Frequency and Depth of Cross Training Plans
 - The partner website (CentralllinoisHelps.com) includes an internal referral system for all partners and a section dedicated to cross training materials.
- Intake and Assessment
 - Create a Common Intake and Assessment Tool
 - Create a Service System Disclosure Statement
 - All partners will participate in cross training of frontline staff.

LWIA 19:

- Customer Input
 - New Tools - Customer Surveys
 - Update Customer Profile Form
 - Develop Customer Flow Charts
 - Use Customer Feedback to Shape Service System
- Staff Capacity
 - Establish a Vision for Customer Service
 - Establish Core Set of Competencies for Staff
 - Community Resource Academy
 - Develop Sharing Culture Among Partners
- Systems Communication
 - Finalize Referral Tracking System
 - Create Universal Consent Form
 - Create Schedule for Regular Meetings of Front Line Staff
 - Notify Staff of Changes in Service Design
- On-Going Systems Improvement
 - Complete Planning Process and Incorporate into Other Documents
 - Keep LWIB Informed on Implementation Progress.

Chapter 2 Section B: Describe how transportation and other supportive services are coordinated within the region (§ 679.510(a)(1)(vi)). Plans must respond to the following sections:

Chapter 2 Section B Question 1: What regional organizations currently provide or could provide supportive services?

EDR 3 has numerous organizations and programs assisting individuals that help support their success in pursuing education, training, and employment.

Table 16: Regional Supportive Service Organizations

TRANSPORTATION	CHILDCARE	BOOKS, UNIFORMS, CAREER WEAR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CityLink • Connect Transit • Department of Human Services • Mid Central Community Action • Salvation Army • Show Bus Public Transportation • Title 1 Agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childcare Assistance Program • Childcare Connection • Childcare Resource and Referral Network • Mid Central Community Action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Human Services • Dress for Success • Goodwill • Mid Central Community Action • Mission Mart • Perkins Programs • Title 1 Agencies

Chapter 2 Section B Question 2: What policies and procedures will be established to promote coordination of supportive services delivery?

The Region will identify gaps in coordinated services. Through integration planning, we will cross train staff to assure that staff who provide services across programs are knowledgeable of the supportive services that are available. The Region will facilitate a learning exchange where WIOA partners and other key support service providers can share.

Most of EDR 3 is served by two 2-1-1 hotline systems. Both 2-1-1 hotlines identify supportive service providers and maintain information on how to access these resources. Heart of Illinois 2-1-1 serves Marshall, Peoria, Stark, Tazewell, and Woodford counties. Illinois 2-1-1 serves McLean County. The hotline will continue to serve as the information system for training supportive services in EDR 3. In addition, a directory of all social service agencies in McLean, DeWitt, and Livingston Counties is maintained by PATH – Providing Access to Help. This includes references to mental health, housing, transportation, medical, vocational, and educational services.

Local Workforce Innovation Board policies strive to prevent duplication of services so WIOA supportive services are utilized after other sources have been exhausted.

Chapter 2 Section C: Describe the coordination of services with regional economic development services and WIOA service providers (§ 679.510(a)(1)(vii)). Plans must answer the following questions:

Chapter 2 Section C Question 1: What economic development organizations, WIOA service providers, or businesses are actively engaged in regional planning?

The following economic development organizations were involved in the regional planning process: Bloomington-Normal Economic Development Council; City of Pekin Chamber of Commerce; Greater Peoria Economic Development Council; and Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development.

These organizations provide strong leadership within their respective geographic areas of service to meet the needs of business and grow their local economies. Each of the representatives on the committee is involved in economic development activities that helped inform the plan development process so that we can respond as a region to business needs. A brief overview of these organizations is provided below:

- **Bloomington-Normal Economic Development Council (BN-EDC):** The BN-EDC helps businesses succeed in Central Illinois – from start-ups and small businesses to large corporations. Our area boasts one of the youngest, most educated and talented workforces in the Midwest. Centrally located and rich in resources, Bloomington-Normal has been voted “one of the best” for families, singles, and businesses. The EDC of Bloomington-Normal has many programs and services to help businesses thrive. Our services include; site location assistance, resources for entrepreneurs, financial assistance, and research assistance.
- **City of Pekin Economic Development:** Ideally located about halfway between Chicago and St. Louis; easy access to highways, river ways and air travel; an abundant and skilled work force; a vibrant local economy; an exceptional quality of life - these are just a few of the reasons why so many businesses thrive in Pekin. The City of Pekin offers many different economic incentives and tools to new and expanding businesses. These include a Pekin Area Enterprise Zone, one Tax Increment Financing district (TIF), Build Illinois Loan Program, EDFAP Loans, and Riverway Business Park.
- **DeWitt County Development Council (DCEC):** Our Mission is to actively engage current and potential businesses to market DeWitt County to attract commerce and encourage job growth. DCDC promotes ideas for local business expansion and workforce development, and provides direction for new and existing businesses or commerce seeking resources to enhance business operations
- **Greater Livingston County Economic Development Council (GLCEDC):** GLCEDC dedicates its purpose to supporting the retention and expansion of existing enterprises and to attracting new businesses. Additionally, the GLCEDC recognizes the importance of a highly trained and competent workforce and works diligently with HCC, the Livingston Area Career Center, and the Grundy, Kankakee, Livingston County Workforce Investment Board to respond to the needs of current and prospective employers. Furthermore, as a respected advocate of the business community, the GLCEDC works with elected officials at the federal, state, and local levels to advocate for more business friendly policies pertaining to workers’

compensation insurance, tax reform(s), and other pro-business initiatives as directed by our Board of Directors. The GLCEDC also serves as a liaison between a business and government agencies to facilitate and expedite the development of new projects

- **Greater Peoria Economic Development Council (GPEDC):** The five counties of Logan, Mason, Peoria, Tazewell, and Woodford are collectively a designated Economic Development District (EDD) by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). The GPEDC is the organization that manages that designation. Every five years, the GPEDC develops and submits a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to the EDA. One of the core strategies within the CEDS has been, and will continue to be, the improvement of the region's workforce development system. We provide annual updates showcasing the progress of our region on the implementation of that strategy. Strategies and projects included in our CEDS are more likely to successfully receive EDA grants. The current CEDS expires in 2025.
- **Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development:** Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development is the lead agency in the Canton area to focus on business and economic development and actively works with the City of Canton, Chamber of Commerce, Canton Main Street, Spoon River College, Fulton County, and other local and regional stakeholders to promote economic development within the Canton area. These activities focus on business attraction, entrepreneur and small business development, retention and expansion of existing businesses, and other community and economic development activities.

Chapter 2 Section C Question 2: What economic development organizations, WIOA service providers or businesses were invited to participate but declined?

None of the invited economic development organizations or business declined to participate.

Chapter 2 Section D: Describe the coordination of administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate (§ 679.510(a)(1)(v)).

The North Central Region partners have entered into negotiations regarding the administrative and other costs for the One-Stop Center infrastructure and shared system costs, following the Governor's Guidelines to State and Local Program Partners Negotiating costs and Services Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, and the Supplemental Guidance for Program Year 2024 (State FY 2025). A draft budget has been prepared and presented to partners, along with a proposed cost allocation using the cost allocation process recommended by the State. Discussions among the Partners are ongoing with a view toward reaching agreement on an equitable arrangement for allocation of shared costs. Under the revised guidelines, this draft budget is due to DCEO on April 15, and the outcome report on the MOU negotiation is due on April 15 as well. The MOU and the budget are both due by May 31, with the fully executed MOU in place by June 30. The

North Central Region partners expect to meet these deadlines. The Partners will work together during the coming year to implement the cost coordination agreements and will monitor the costs of the One-Stop Center infrastructure and other shared system costs.

Chapter 2 Section E: Describe how a *workforce equity lens* is or will be incorporated in the regional service integration strategies, including the coordination of service delivery strategies to job seekers and employers.

Workforce Equity will be achieved by creating pathways that provide access to childcare and transportation so customers can engage outside the home. Those most in need may also lack access to technology within their homes. Identification of resources to provide internet and computers within the home will help these individuals work remotely. Some may also need training on how to use technology for remote access to work and education. The Partners will meet periodically to review their progress in implementing regional service integration strategies, including equity outcomes. The Partners will:

- Design services that are inclusive and accessible to individuals with various backgrounds and abilities. This may involve providing language support, accommodating different learning styles, and ensuring physical accessibility.
- Forge partnerships with educational institutions to ensure that workforce development programs and services are accessible to all individuals, regardless of background or socio-economic status.
- Engage with diverse stakeholders, including community organizations, advocacy groups, and representatives from underrepresented communities, in the planning process. This ensures that the strategies are informed by the experiences and needs of a wide range of individuals.
- Engage with employers to promote inclusive hiring practices. This includes providing resources and training to employers on creating diverse and equitable workplaces and connecting them with a diverse pool of qualified candidates.

Chapter 3 – Vision, Goals and Implementation Strategies – Regional Component

This section will outline how the Local Board(s) will coordinate the regional workforce, education, and economic development activities with regional activities that are carried out in the local areas. The responses must illustrate that business, education, and workforce development stakeholders have provided input and are involved with the development of the strategies and to ensure alignment with other plans.

Chapter 3 Section A: Describe the local strategic vision to support state and regional economic growth (§ 679.560(a)(5)). Describe how this aligns with the State of Illinois' vision and principles (page 1). Include a description of how the region and local areas will accomplish the local strategic vision and support state and regional economic growth.

The Local Workforce Innovation Boards of the North Central Economic Development Region 3 will achieve alignment through the adoption of the State's strategic vision and principles to support regional economic growth, which are stated below.

Vision

The State's strategic vision is accomplished through the WIOA public workforce development system and its community partnerships.

EDR 3 is adopting the State of Illinois' vision, which is to meet employers, job seekers, and community members where they are, centering the customer experience in an interoperable, equitable, and accessible manner to ensure all customers achieve their goals. We will support employers by building diverse, quality career pathways and provide effective training, education, and economic opportunities for job seekers and communities to thrive.

EDR 3 is adopting the eleven (11) strategies of the WIOA State Plan:

1. The Workforce Development System uses a customer-centered approach to service delivery.
2. The Workforce Development System advances diversity, equity, inclusion, and access.
3. WIOA partners and other workforce and education systems in Illinois enhance coordination and collaboration.
4. Job seekers and employers have a broader awareness of the Workforce Development System.
5. The Workforce Development System improves local service delivery through enhanced support of frontline workers.
6. The Workforce Development System supports, informs, and enhances employers' talent strategies.

7. The Workforce Development System sets a good-job standard for training programs and employers that work with the Workforce Development System.
8. The Workforce Development System will build out tools and practices that can help employers adopt a culture that promotes equity and accessibility.
9. The Workforce Development System educates and supports job seekers regarding how to navigate the labor market.
10. The Workforce Development System interacts with job seekers in the places where they live and visit.
11. The Workforce Development System will use a data-informed approach to reduce barriers to services for job seekers who have historically been underserved.

Chapter 3 Section B: Describe the local goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce (including youth and individuals with barriers to employment) and goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on performance indicators (§ 677.155(a)(1)). Include a description of how the region and local areas will accomplish local goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce and goals relating to performance.

EDR 3 will prepare an educated and skilled workforce by aligning and integrating partner programs and services. This alignment will include programs that focus on employer needs for a skilled workforce. When possible, we will leverage funds across programs to better serve employers. The region will work to improve access to sector-based education and training services to those facing multiple barriers to employment.

The region will use a diverse array of training models to achieve our goals including:

- Development of career pathways that will focus on our primary targeted industry sectors of healthcare, TDL, and manufacturing. We will also explore pathway creation for our secondary targeted industry sectors of IT, finance, and business management. These pathways will contain multiple entry and exit points. This will allow individuals of varying abilities to have access to realistic pathways.
- Earn and Learn Opportunities will be created by leveraging the linkages that economic development partners have to employers in our targeted industry sectors. Integrated business services will be developed so that employers will have an understanding of training resources from all partners.
- Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) model reengineers the concept of education and training design. This model places the employer at the center of skill acquisition and training. The region will develop programs based on the concepts outlined in a talent pipeline approach. This includes the concept that each partner adds incremental value to the supply chain of a trained workforce.

Some examples of preparing educated and skilled youth and individuals with barriers are:

Two community colleges in the region have received workforce equity grants from the Illinois Community College Board.

- Heartland Community College's Workforce Equity programs focus on short-term stackable credentials, designed to get students into the workforce quickly, but can also be built upon to earn an associate degree. The grant is intended to engage African American, Latino, and low-income learners to get career training that can move them quickly into the workforce. The grant will focus on high impact programs to develop and foster the skills of individuals that are looking to retool their job skills or directly entering into the workforce. HCC's certificate programs such as EV Maintenance, Medical Assistant, Office Assistant, Truck Driver Training, and more are designed to create a quick pathway to occupations earning 30% above the area living wage.
- Illinois Central College's (ICC) Workforce Equity Initiative (WEI) seeks to prepare African American and other adults residing in "Disproportionately Impacted Areas", within College District #514, with a work credential and a living wage job. The WEI project will train participants in the high demand occupations of computer numerical control (CNC), production welding, welding operator, HVAC installer, HVAC technician, CDL truck driver, IT fundamentals (help desk), LAN technician, emergency medical technician (EMT), Paramedic, and licensed practical nurse (LPN). All participants will enter employment or be placed on a career pathway leading to a job paying at least 30% above the regional living wage. Since the WEI grant began in 2019, more than 900 individuals have been served in eleven (11) different training programs.

In order to ensure that individuals with barriers to employment have Earn and Learn Opportunities, ICC continues to address underserved populations by accessing grant opportunities in addition to collaborating with community-based organizations, employers and others. In addition to ICC's equity grant, current initiatives that addresses local workforce gaps and employment barriers in an effort to prepare underserved individuals with a decent and equitable employment opportunity include the CNA Solar Training Program and Highway Construction Training Program. These initiatives focus on developing the region's workforce by providing participants with opportunities for earning credentials and a living wage. These Earn and Learn Programs address high demand-careers and target low-income individuals, those living in high crime and high poverty areas, unemployed individuals and minorities.

In Greater Peoria, a number of workforce development initiatives are in motion through the Regional Workforce Alliance, a collaboration of over 40 educational and industry leaders working along the talent pipeline from middle school, to high school, and with adults.

- **Career Pathways:** Beginning in middle school with [CareerSpark](#), a free, hands-on career expo open to all 8th graders, we have exposed over 12,000 local students to

careers within in demand industries and occupations in Greater Peoria. This work continues through partnerships with regional high schools that has focused on creating high-impact internship and job shadow opportunities for students to engage with in the industries most critical to our region's economic sustainability. Our region is also supporting schools in aligning this work to the new post-secondary and career readiness expectations outlined in the [Post-secondary and Workforce Act](#). Our region has also been key in guiding the development of new state-standardized [College and Career Pathways](#) endorsements that will offer a transferable credential to students graduating high school with early college credit and work experience in an industry concentration. These new standardized pathways will provide our regional schools with a framework to align their coursework and career development experiences to ensure more equitable and efficient access to regional in demand careers.

LWIA 11 also organizes a career exploration event for eighth-grade students to meet with employers, act out careers through hands-on activities to visualize their future, and lay the foundation for high school studies, preparing them for a career path. The event highlights the area's most critical industry clusters and employers, including manufacturing, healthcare, innovation and technology, business and finance, and more.

- **Talent Pipeline Management:** Through this Regional Workforce Alliance framework, work is underway to reengineer the concept of education and training design. By bringing together industry leaders, educational partners, and community-based organizations, we will establish more intentional population-based strategies that support the unique needs of our K-12 students, our underemployed citizens, and those individuals with multiple barriers, placing skill acquisition and living wage careers at the center of our training. The region will develop programs based on the concepts outlined in a talent pipeline approach.

Other examples are the pre-apprenticeship programs LWIA 15 has collaborated with throughout the region:

- **Career Link's GED Recovery Programs:** Black Hawk College, HCC, ICC (North), Peoria Park District, Spoon River College GED recovery programs assist high school dropouts in obtaining their GED, provides career counseling, resume and job search skills, and post second training opportunities including on-the-job training and apprenticeship opportunities.
- **Carle Health Methodist Hospital:** Apprenticeship Plus Nursing Assistant to Medical Assistant Bridge Program Apprenticeship Scholarship. Provided a bridge from basic labor occupations to certified nursing assistant to medical assistant.
- **Peoria Public Schools:** The Pathways grant is focusing on construction internship opportunities. Students have or will soon gain their forklift certification through Goodwill Industries. Students will also learn about employability skills through Goodwill as well as participate in the American Hospitality Association. Over the next two years, it is expected that 25-30 students will be engaged in the

opportunities. Students will gain their certification by working at Ruyle, City of Peoria, and Morton Industries.

This grant will provide opportunities to work with the Carpenters' Union Hall. We use their curriculum in our program therefore, students will earn a union credential. Students will also receive credentials through Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC). The Carpenters' Union will give priority to interview students in this pre-apprenticeship grant to enter the apprenticeship program.

- **YouthBuild McLean County (YBMC):** Will operate an on-site healthcare training lab. Participants will learn practical skills, in-line with the certified, clinical medical assistant curriculum proposed in the NOFO. While working in the lab, participants will transition to work-based learning activities. We are also working with other local, non-profit healthcare organizations such as McLean County Nursing Home to develop additional work-based learning activities.

YBMC will operate an on-site construction training lab. Participants will learn practical skills, in-line with the residential construction, carpentry curriculum proposed in the NOFO. While working in the lab, participants will transition to work-based learning activities. YouthBuild McLean County has rehabilitated and constructed homes in McLean County for over 20 years.

YBMC will operate an on-site information technology (IT) training lab. Participants will learn practical skills, in-line with the COMPTIA curriculum. While working in the lab, participants will transition to work-based learning activities. This is a relatively new program at YouthBuild McLean county, but has been popular with program participants.

YouthBuild has been reestablished in Peoria County. The Partners anticipate learning more of their program focus.

Each partner program under WIOA will look at its own program design to see how they align with the goal of preparing an educated and skilled workforce. For programs under Title 1 and Title IV, this may mean a review of the current curriculum that they fund within our targeted industry sectors. Programs under adult education may want to expand contextualization of curriculum around workforce and academic readiness. As a region, partner programs will review current assessment processes and tools and develop, to the extent possible, common assessment practices that address the needs of our industry sectors of focus.

Core partners will work towards consistent program design that enables them to meet the WIOA performance measures of:

1. Percent Employed 2nd Quarter after exit (Adult Programs)
 - a. Placement in Employment/Education 2nd Quarter after Exit (Youth Programs)
2. Percent Employed 4th Quarter after exit (Adult Programs)
 - a. Placement in Employment/Education 4th Quarter after Exit (Youth Programs)

3. Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after Exit (Adult and Dislocated Worker)
4. Credential Attainment (up to one (1) year after exit-Youth)
5. Measurable Skill Gains (All Programs except Wagner-Peyser)
6. Effectiveness in Serving Employers (All Programs)

The regional plan must include establishing an agreement of how the region will collectively negotiate and reach agreement with the Governor on local levels of performance for the performance accountability measures (as described in WIOA Sec. 116(c)) to comply with § 679.510 (a)(1)(viii). Each year the Local Board and the Chief Elected Officials shall negotiate and reach agreement on local levels of performance based on the State adjusted levels of performance established under Section 116 (b)(3)(a). The local levels of performance were successfully negotiated for PY 22-23 on September 22, 2022 (see Attachment 20).

Chapter 3 Section C: Provide a description of the regional and local strategies that will achieve the vision and principles. This section must include a description of the strategies and services that will be used in the local areas:

Chapter 3 Section C Question 1: To facilitate engagement of employers in workforce development programs, including small employers and employers in in demand industry sectors and occupations (§ 679.560(b)(3)(i));

Career Link will meet with employers individually following the results of the TMP survey process and work to address their individual concerns regarding talent, upskilling, retention, and turnover. We will specifically target in demand sectors in our area such as manufacturing/logistics, healthcare, and IT.

EDR 3 plans to undertake the following efforts to engage employers in workforce development programs:

1. Work with the region’s economic development organizations to identify employers throughout the region from the identified sectors of:
 - a. Construction
 - b. Healthcare
 - c. Information Technology
 - d. Manufacturing
 - e. Professional Business Services
 - f. Self-employment
 - g. Transportation and Warehousing
2. Implement the State’s Framework for Next Generation Sector Partnerships that offers a vision for building sustainable employer-driven, community-supported

sector partnerships in Illinois, with a particular emphasis on the role that economic development organizations play in leading this work, and clarification on how workforce development and education organizations support it. We will work with economic development to create partnerships that are:

- a. Industry-led, driven by a committed group of employer champions,
 - b. Community-supported by a diverse range of public program partners,
 - c. Convened or facilitated by a credible third-party (or intermediary),
 - d. An organizing vehicle for multiple program partners to respond to industry priorities together,
 - e. Local or regional (not top-down or statewide), and
 - f. Action-oriented, focused on improving industry sector competitiveness, and not limited to just workforce issues.
3. Through a collaborative effort, partner agencies will investigate the viability of developing employer-led initiatives to create apprenticeship programs in the manufacturing, healthcare, and transportation sectors.

Strategies and Services to Facilitate Engagement of Employers:

Career Link organizes the LWIA 15 Business Service Team (BST) by hosting monthly meetings with partner agencies and small businesses within our eight (8) counties. These meetings showcase local businesses and get a glimpse of what assistance they can use. The Partners in attendance offer comprehensive services including on-the-job-training, grants, and workforce solutions. The featured businesses are connected to the resources. Monthly BST virtual meetings are held in both Bloomington and Peoria. We also discuss how the local businesses are doing, and try to identify any local businesses that would be interested in assistance. Career Link Business Service Representatives (BSRs) are also part of the State's Rapid Response Team. We offer retraining options to dislocated workers affected by business closures. This can include career services, education assistance, or simply a connection to a local opportunity at another business. Career Link also assists small- and medium-sized businesses by being a contact for virtual career fairs. We have collaborated with Illinois workNet.com to direct businesses to set up virtual career fairs. We also share local openings through Career Link's Facebook page and website. Career Link collaborates with ICC, DHS/DRS, and IDES to connect individuals to local jobs.

Chapter 3 Section C Question 2: To support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area (§ 679.560(b)(3)(ii));
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Local WIOA BSTs will continue to collaborate with the EDC's, Chambers, and local businesses to assist with local business needs and we will continue to provide rapid response services to provide services to any workers affected by layoff to connect them with training funding or direct access to local jobs.

To support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area the region's partners will take the following steps.

1. Coordinate business services among the Partners to improve on our existing models and expand on existing EDC retention models.
 - a. Meet with businesses to address barriers to growth.
 - b. Leverage regional resources to help businesses launch or accelerate international trade programs.
 - c. Identify technology transfer opportunities within the public and private sectors that may be leveraged for growth.
 - d. Share information on regional, state, and federal financial tools for business development on the EDC website.
2. Work with regional partners and economic development councils to foster a shared understanding of the needs of business and, in particular, the skill needs of businesses in our targeted sectors.
3. Improve outreach and recruitment of potential employee candidates by leveraging existing federal, state, and regional career guidance tools and expanding their use throughout the region. Examples of these tools include:
 - a. O*NET
 - b. IDES Career Information System (CIS)
 - c. Make Yourself Greater Peoria
 - d. Illinois Job Link
4. Improve skills assessment of job-seeker customers by expanding use of the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) and related tools.

The integrated BST of EDR 3/LWIA 15 will continue to develop and improve mechanisms to connect business to the full range of partner services regardless of sources.

Communication and coordination among partners allows for the most effective provision of services. The efforts of the BST are focused on delivering timely solutions to expressed business needs.

The BST has a standardized process for contacting businesses in each targeted industry sector and the capability of providing direct access to appropriate services or referral to other who can provide those services. BST members are knowledgeable of all available services. Appropriate team members are identified to serve as resources for the delivery of services. The BST will participate in community-based, business-focused events on a regular basis. The BST will partner with businesses to identify their needs and provide timely solutions. The BST will develop customized service proposals for business customers that detail a range of potential solutions to meet those customers' needs and challenges.

The BST offers services based on the five types of workforce issues that typically concern a business:

- Recruitment and Hiring Solutions
- Training and Education Solutions
- Transition Solutions

- Information Solutions
- Support Service Solutions

Closely tied to the solutions sought by businesses is the expanded use of work-based learning (Registered Apprenticeships, Youth Apprenticeships, Pre-Apprenticeships, Customized Training, On-the-Job Training, Incumbent Worker Training (IWT), and others). This emphasis recognizes work-based learning as often the most effective mechanism for delivering Training and Education solutions, in an environment that is directly shaped to and for the needs of the employer – their own business.

Partners have or will take the following approaches to meet the needs of businesses:

- Monthly BST meetings held virtually.
- Orientations are being planned in-person and virtually.
- IDES will refer all RESEA-eligible job seekers to Title 1 for services.
- Partnering with IDES for virtual job fairs on Illinois workNet.
- Development of a partner website with an internal referral system for all partners (CentralIllinoisHelps.com).
- Increased outreach to job seekers and businesses utilizing social media, cable, newspapers to promote training services.
- Coordinated with IDES, send weekly email blasts to UI claimants for recruitment to the dislocated worker program.

LWIA #19 will continue to work with the Clinton Chamber of Commerce to gain information regarding business needs.

Chapter 3 Section C Question 3: To better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development (§ 679.560(b)(3)(iii));

To better coordinate workforce program and economic development, the region will work to coordinate policy and program design. The State’s vision is to provide communities with the opportunity to prosper. Policy and program coordination between economic development, whose goal is economic growth and workforce development, the goal of which is training a skilled workforce, should help the State achieve that goal.

Career Link will continue our collaboration with our local partners at the GPEDC meetings, BNEDC meetings, local Chamber office, COMPACT, community colleges, State of Illinois Team Red newsletters and trainings, and State and local government officials to stay up to date of new opportunities to collaborate with current businesses that may be expanding or with new businesses considering our area.

Through the Regional Workforce Alliance, the Greater Peoria Economic Development Council has focused attention on upskilling workers to prepare them for steadier and more lucrative jobs. Coordinated systems for the unemployed to overcome the multiple barriers that prevent them from employment (transportation, health, childcare, etc.) are being created.

Chapter 3 Section C Question 4: To strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs (§ 679.560(b)(3)(iv));

Title 1 will strive to improve effective communication with our partners at IDES to provide seamless rapid response services to businesses closing or experiencing a downturn while being proactive with all other businesses to offer tax incentives, State programs, and WIOA funding as a single package to employers.

Those receiving unemployment insurance are primary customers of the one-stop system. Through co-location and direct linkages, those receiving unemployment insurance will be able to connect to all partner services in the region. Unemployment insurance clients are required to register on the state's job bank, IllinoisJobLink.com (IJL), for assistance with their job search. Partner programs can also reach out to clients through their IJL account to provide services, as well as track all services provided to the client.

Linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs will be strengthened through the enhanced career services offered through the one-stop. Enhanced career services include reemployment workshops, referrals to training and education providers, and direct referral to employment.

IDES is also receiving funds for the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) through USDOL. This program targets UI recipients that are most likely to exhaust benefits and requires them to receive assistance with their reemployment efforts. All RESEA-eligible individuals will be referred to Title 1 by IDES. Career Planners are using emails and postal mail contact. If participants are not answering their phone then the use of text messaging is employed. Facebook messenger can also be used to contact participants when possible.

IDES is also attempting to connect more clients to the one-stop system by utilizing the Benefit Payment System to run reports showing claimant that are fully registered both for unemployment insurance as well as on Illinois Job Link. Local offices are contacting these claimants to inform them of all services available to them at the one-stop and to encourage their attendance at workshops and hiring events hosted by the one-stop.

Chapter 3 Section C Question 5: To promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services (§ 679.560(b)(4)); and

Career Link will collaborate with local EDC and Chambers to reach out to any businesses seeking improvement in hard skills and will offer any available WIOA dollars to support training and microenterprise services as allowed within WIOA guidelines.

Regional strategies to promote entrepreneurial skills training will include:

1. A more coordinated effort between economic development agencies to cross promote each other's efforts in the region through regional links on their websites.
2. Explore regional incentives to attract and retain entrepreneurs.

3. Partners have identified the following initiatives that will help the region expand entrepreneurial and microenterprise services:
 - a. The Canton Area Chamber of Commerce has a leadership academy for high school sophomores through its Young Professionals group.
 - b. 1 Million Cups is a free weekly national program designed to educate, engage, and connect entrepreneurs. Developed by the Kauffman Foundation, 1MC is based on the notion that entrepreneurs discover solutions and network over a million cups of coffee. Presenters are allowed six minutes to tell their story, present their business model, share some obstacles they have had to overcome, or even some they haven't yet.
 - c. The George R. and Martha Means Center for Entrepreneurial Studies at Illinois State University serves as a research and consulting resource for local businesses. It is devoted to creating and implementing entrepreneur support programs for Illinois State University students, local high school students, and members of the Bloomington-Normal community.
 - d. Advantage Illinois - Enhancing access to capital for Illinois businesses is a top priority. The Brookings Institution has noted that more than 95% of new jobs are derived from business expansion or start up activity. Small businesses are the backbone of the Illinois economy, and the Advantage Illinois program is there to assist. By working with the State's banking community and venture capitalists, we'll help entrepreneurs and small businesses start up, expand, and create new jobs at a faster rate.
 - e. KeyStart is an idea submission and pitch competition which will award a \$5,000 investment to one new business idea per bimonthly program cycle. The purpose of this program is to provide entrepreneurs with fast access to capital in order to turn ideas into real companies.
 - f. The Turner Center for Entrepreneurship is a not-for-profit program located at Bradley University. It provides business counseling, technical assistance, training, and educational activities for individuals interested in owning their own businesses.
 - g. Illinois Wesleyan Design, Technology, and Entrepreneurship Program. This is a new program being offered for the first time in the fall of 2016. This unique interdisciplinary program incorporates creative and technical skills, material science, and finance and management. Students will make product prototypes, create business plans, and develop electronic portfolios of their finished products. Faculty and resources for the program will come from physics and other disciplines within the natural sciences, the College of Fine Arts, business administration, marketing, and accounting.
 - h. The Illinois Small Business Development Center at Illinois State University (SBDC) was established in March 2005 to help entrepreneurs start a new business or expand or improve an existing business. The Center offers one-on-one confidential counseling for all phases of business activities.

- i. Spoon River College and the Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development jointly sponsor the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Resource Expo. The Expo informs local small business owners about potential resources that can help their business prosper.
- j. Slingshot CoWork is a co-working space dedicated to the startup community in Bloomington Normal. Created to be a call to the community that the entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well. This space is dedicated to creating jobs for people in Bloomington-Normal.
- k. The Nest is a co-working space that provides a shared work environment that combines the flexibility independent professionals have with the connectedness they need. Co-working is a sustainable alternative to isolation and distraction from home offices and cafes.
- l. The Illinois Small Business Development Center at Bradley University provides free business counseling and low-cost training programs for existing and startup businesses in Central Illinois.
- m. Startup Peoria is a program of the Greater Peoria Economic Development Council. It exists to develop an ecosystem, for entrepreneurs and innovators, to launch successful ventures that contribute to the growth and sustainability of Greater Peoria.
- n. Peoria NEXT Innovation Center is the home of researchers, inventors, and entrepreneurs that are transforming new technologies and innovations into commercial enterprises.
- o. Central Illinois Angels is an investment organization focused on providing equity to opportunities that show a promise of significant return to its members.
- p. Innovative Entrepreneurs – is a high school program from Unit 5 school district in McLean County. This program connects students with local business owners so they can see day-to-day operations and hear their startup stories.

The region will use the above listed initiatives to help focus investments on the key sectors that have been identified for the region.

Entrepreneurship has skyrocketed during the past two years as people voluntarily or involuntarily adapt to a changing employment situation and economy. There will always be an emphasis on supporting scalable and high-growth start-ups, regional partners will also focus on more traditional small business start-ups, “gig-workers,” and “side hustles” to ensure they are viable businesses that support workers.

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

Local WIOA BST will continue to play an active role with all stakeholders relating to business functions in the eight counties we serve. We will look to expand apprenticeship efforts by partnering with experts such as SkillsUSA and technical schools to continue an expansion of our collaboration with expanding the talent pipeline. Career pathways will be established by exposing students to all the great businesses in our area through events like Discover Manufacturing, CareerSpark, high school job fairs, and by promotion of National Apprenticeship week and manufacturing month. We will continue to offer businesses solutions for funding training with IWT funding and promote our youth programs by partnering with GED programs and local high schools.

We are engaging in TPM Strategy 1 and have been working with the Greater Peoria EDC to send out surveys to the manufacturing sector. We have received a few surveys back, and will be working to aggregate the data into a report. We plan to share the aggregated report with the employers, and then engage the training partners including the local colleges, technical schools, high schools, and industry training champions to see what kind of talent we have locally to help meet the demands of the employers. The data can be used by the local training providers to better align offerings to solve employer needs. We will offer employers WIOA funding using IWT funding to help pay for Apprenticeship, upskilling, and training needs by the local employers. We will look for opportunities to place any dislocated workers with skill sets matching the company data provided to seamlessly transition workers from a previous job to a new role. We can use OJT funding to assist with positions where we can leverage WIOA dollars to help offset training costs and encourage the hiring of dislocated workers, reducing the chances they will be on unemployment.

To implement initiatives designed to meet the needs of regional employers, the region will undertake the following strategies:

1. **Work-Based Learning - Earn and Learn Models:** To increase the utilization of work-based learning in the region we will work through existing initiatives such as the Strategic Manufacturing Group, Healthcare Exchange, and Bloomington Advantage addressing our target industry sectors to promote these programs to regional employers. We will also work with our BST to standardize the promotion of these programs when meeting with employers.
2. **Sector Strategies:** The region plans to use both career pathway and TPM approaches to support our sector strategies. We will inventory the current information on career pathways in the region and evaluate how complete they are. It is our plan to create pathways with multiple entry and exit points, so that participants with varied levels of educational attainment can enter a career pathway at an appropriate entry point to obtain the skills and credentials that they need. These career pathways will also enable participants to exit into employment that is

relevant for the skills and credentials they have obtained or continue in further education and training to prepare for better-paying jobs that require more advanced skills. Registered and non-registered apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships that obtain industry-recognized credential programs will be used to establish talent pipelines that puts the employer as the primary consumer of the program. Incumbent worker programs will be utilized to upgrade the skills of the existing workforce. The region will explore these models and work to develop training programs using this approach.

3. **Coordinated Business Services:** Partners in the region will provide cross training on the programs and services that they offer to employers. The Economic Development Partners in the region will take the lead in developing common messaging and marketing of business services. The Partners will develop strategies that go beyond program silos to promote their employer services.

Chapter 3 Section D: Describe regional strategies that will increase apprenticeship and other work-based learning opportunities.

The Region will use the following strategies to increase apprenticeships and other work-based learning opportunities:

- Target industries such as manufacturing, transportation/warehousing, and construction that lend themselves to apprenticeship training as part of a Next Generation Sector Partnership.
- Identify occupations within the targeted Tier 1 and Tier 2 industry sectors that have the greatest skills gap and can be addressed by on-the-job learning.
- Include Registered Apprenticeship Programs on the Eligible Training Provider List, thus qualifying associated training for Title 1 funding.
- BSTs will promote work-based learning to meet employer needs for skilled workers.
- LWIA #19 shares information about the Illinois Works pre-apprenticeship grant with DeWitt County Board Chair.

Examples of current initiatives include:

1. Apprenticeships - Employer partners, education, and workforce development continue to work together to design new apprenticeship programs. ICC, working with regional stakeholders have established secure software and industrial maintenance apprenticeships and are working with partners on additional regional apprenticeship programs. ICC has developed apprenticeships for Industrial Electrical Technician, Industrial Maintenance Technician, Network Administrator, CNC Precision Machinist, and Secure Software.
2. Compete and Connect – HCC GED students gain employability skills and workplace experience, with support from Career Link. Goal is to continue the program in

McLean County and advance the model as a regional strategy by expanding in Logan and Livingston Counties.

3. Customized Apprenticeship Program-Information Technology (CAP-IT) Grant – ICC has received a CAP-IT grant that will provide apprenticeship programs to provide paid work-based learning and post-secondary education. The CAP-IT grant will benefit the regions efforts to expand apprenticeships in IT.
4. Department of Labor (DOL) Registered Apprenticeships Programs – HCC is expanding multiple DOL-registered apprenticeships for Industrial Maintenance Technician, Building Maintenance Repairer, Tool and Die Maker, and Electric Vehicle Maintenance.
5. Internships – Several of HCC’s applied programs require an internship to ensure work-based learning is part of the program of study.
6. Job Shadowing – Several of HCC’s applied short-term work-ready programs incorporate job shadowing to orient the students to the real-world environment.

Chapter 3 Section E: Describe initiatives to shorten the time from credential to employment and address how the area will work with the education system to begin putting training opportunities in place to meet this strategy.

Integrated Career and Academic Preparation System (ICAPS) - The adult education programs will continue to develop, expand, and enhance programming based on the employer need for Region 3. Programs will integrate Essential Employability Skills curriculum into all educational offerings. Bridge programs will contextualize content to pass the HSE and help students to improve their English Language skills. Efforts are being made to reduce enrollment into developmental education classes by offering a dual credit model that supports HSE and ESL students in general education coursework. The Local Board will provide data and labor market information from IDES and sector partnerships to allow Adult Education programs to make informed decisions. In addition, the Local Board will expand support services for adult learners. Adult Education programs will collaborate with Area Planning Councils to not duplicate services. Braided funding efforts with other core and required partners will include Perkins V, IDES, Career Link, and other agencies to provide scholarships and training opportunities. The local plan will align with State strategic plans to include pre-apprenticeship, along with Earn and Learn opportunities.

Adult Education at HCC offers several bridges for High School Equivalency (HSE) students and low and high intermediate ESL students. All students in both ESL and HSE classrooms are experiencing Blended Learning in the curriculum as well as contextualized instruction focusing on Workplace Technology and Education and Training career pathways. In addition, HCC has a College and Career Readiness ICAPS program for students to receive a short-term certificate in several career pathways. This program also helps students to transition either into the workplace or into further post-secondary education to earn an associate degree. HCC plans to expand bridge offerings to better prepare students transition into other career pathways.

ICC Adult Education currently offers four (4) bridge programs and two (2) ICAPS programs (Integrated Career & Academic Preparation). The four bridge programs are manufacturing, healthcare, entrepreneurship, and IT. ICC is currently exploring the opportunity to add a Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics (TDL) bridge offering. Illinois Central College has surveyed students to understand the demand for various bridge programs and there is significant interest in a TDL bridge program.

A goal for the region is to assist adults in obtaining credentials. Only 40% of the adults in the region currently have a post-secondary credential when 60% is required for economic vitality. Various initiatives throughout the region are designed to assist in assuring that 60% of the adults in the region obtain a post-secondary credential by 2025.

These initiatives include:

1. **Workforce Equity Initiative:** ICC is the lead college of an \$18.7 million Workforce Equity Initiative partnering with 14 additional Illinois community colleges. The initiative addresses local workforce gaps and employment barriers in an effort to prepare underserved individuals with a decent and equitable employment opportunity. The initiative focuses on developing our area's workforce by providing participants with a credential and a living wage. It addresses high demand-careers and targets low-income individuals, those living in high crime and high poverty areas, unemployed individuals, and minorities. The Workforce Equity Initiative will train participants in the high-demand occupations of computer numerical control (CNC) operator, welder, CDL truck driver, CompTIA A+, CompTIA Network+, Local Area Network (LAN) technician, licensed practical nurse (LPN), emergency medical technician (EMT) and paramedic. The end goal is for participating students to secure employment with a full-time job paying at least 30% above the regional living wage.
2. **Regional Workforce Alliance:** A monthly gathering of business professionals and educators, creating connections to align public and private sector resources across the region for the benefit of developing a qualified workforce for Greater Peoria. The Regional Workforce Alliance has three sub-committees that address:
 - a. The Emerging Workforce - addresses k-6, middle school/career exploration, high school career experiences/college credits, career decisions, post-secondary credentials (community college/trade school, apprenticeships, regional four-year colleges/universities, military, industry-specific) focused on retaining aligned workforce gaps and credential young adults.
 - b. Upskilling Working Adults - Targets underemployed and under credentialed adults with work experience to obtain credentials that address workforce gaps. Earn and Learn – short term to under three (3) years.
 - c. Individuals Facing Multiple Barriers - Focuses on adults who swirl through community-based organizations and support systems with

little to no credentials or work experiences to qualify them for entry-level job stabilization.

Each committee is aligning its efforts to increase the number of credentialed adults, grow the workforce, meet business needs, and expand economic vitality.

3. **Highway Construction Careers Training Program:** The Highway Construction Careers Training Program is a partnership between the Illinois Department of Transportation and ICC. This program is an intensive 12-week program to learn the skills necessary for acceptance in the trades and the opportunity for a career with high wage-earning potential. The goal of the program is to increase the number of minorities, women, and disadvantaged individuals working in the construction trades. The training includes, but is not limited to, first aid/CPR certification, job readiness, math for trades, OSHA 10-hour certification, and technical skills training.
4. **Solar Pipeline Training is part of the Future Energy Jobs Act:** ICC, in partnership with Commonwealth Edison, has developed the program that provides students the opportunity to compete for solar entry-level positions. Students gain the fundamental knowledge and hands-on experience necessary to analyze, design, sell, and install photovoltaic systems. Students earn OSHA certification and upon successful completion of the program have the ability to take the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) Photovoltaic Associate Certification.
5. **Complete and Connect:** A program for HCC Adult Education (GED prep) students to gain employability skills and workplace experience, with support from Career Link. It's goal is to continue the program in McLean County and advance the model as a regional strategy by expanding in Logan and Livingston Counties.
6. **Career Now:** this program is a part of HCC's Early College opportunities and offers high school seniors dual credit toward their high school diploma and a work ready program. The goal is to help those students in danger of not graduating on time or those without specific post-secondary plans. High schools participating will provide work-based experiences in addition to credit. HCC will provide college credit and work readiness for an entry-level job with a career path if a student chooses to return to post-secondary later.
7. **Apprenticeships, Internships, and Work-Based Learning:** HCC is seeking US Department of Labor approval to offer registered apprenticeship in several areas of manufacturing. The College also has numerous programs that incorporate either an internship or other form of work-based learning.
8. **Development of Academic Pathways:** HCC is mapping out academic pathways leading to specific careers. These maps provide clear guidance to students as to a course of study to pursue from high school through career.
9. **Work Ready Short-term Certificates:** HCC is developing a number of short-term (<1 year) programs that lead directly to employment and are stacked into larger certificate or degree programs that provide for career advancement.

Chapter 3 Section F: Describe the steps that will be taken to support the state’s efforts to align and integrate education, workforce and economic development including:

Chapter 3 Section F Question 1: Fostering the improvement and expansion of employer-driven regional sector partnerships to increase the focus on critical in demand occupations in key sectors that are the engine of economic growth for the state and its regions.

The partner community colleges in Region 3 engage with employers to identify knowledge and skills necessary to incorporate into training programs to align with State efforts. As discussed throughout the plan, the region will take the following steps to foster the improvement and expansion of employer-driven regional sector partnerships, including the development of Next Generation Sector Partnerships.

1. Identify existing economic development efforts throughout the region by industry sector.
2. Identify existing employers within the region by industry sector, both those that are currently “system engaged” and those that are not.
3. Inventory the current sector partnerships and career pathways by industry sectors.
4. Prioritize occupations within the targeted industry sectors.
5. Inventory existing career pathways and evaluate how complete they are. Conceptualize new career pathways where none exists.
6. Develop talent pipeline solutions, apprenticeships, IWT, and on-the-job training opportunities for targeted industry sectors.

Chapter 3 Section F Question 2: Expanding career pathway opportunities through more accelerated and work-based training and align and integrate programs of study leading to industry-recognized credentials and improved employment and earnings.

The region will take the following steps to expand career pathways:

1. Create employer driven models to recruit and place individuals in earn and learn opportunities on the pathway that are based on the skills requirements of the job.
2. In response to employer input, identify and/or design assessment tools that best identify the skills gap of individuals referred to employers for earn and learn training.
3. Develop Registered Apprenticeships with employers in our targeted industry sectors.

4. Develop dual credit transfer courses and dual credit work-based learning for high school students.
5. Develop strategies and structured industry-informed pathways that are regionally aligned so that high school students can more seamlessly transition to community college career technical education (CTE) certificates and/or transfer degrees.
6. Develop adult education programs that allow the student to earn a high school equivalency certificate while earning and industry-recognized credential in a short-term certificate program as a first step on a pathway to other careers.
7. ICC provides short-term programs resulting in industry-recognized credentials through non-credit and credit training programs. Examples include OSHA Safety, CPR, AWS, CDL Licensing, and National credentialing for EMT and LPN. Programs duration ranges from five weeks to one year to attain credentialing.

Chapter 3 Section F Question 3: Expanding career services and opportunities for populations facing multiple barriers to close the gap in educational attainment and economic advancement through career pathways and improved career services and expansion of bridge programs.

The Region has numerous initiatives designed to expand career services and opportunities for populations facing multiple barriers to help them close the gap in educational attainment. These include:

1. **Disabled:** The State VR program honors customer informed choice. This methodology includes an interactive process between DHS-DRS and the customer that provides sufficient, objective information and options that are designed to empower the customer in selecting services, providers and outcomes. The VR Counselor provides career counseling and vocational guidance which includes utilization of information from The Career Index, Career Information Systems, or O*Net, as well as counselor knowledge of the local labor market and current employment activity. The planned employment goal should be consistent with the customer's unique strengths, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, career interests and informed choice. The employment outcome chosen by the customer should be supported by the counselor unless the assessment clearly contraindicates the customer's choice.

The concept of customer informed choice does not necessarily mean that the customer will use information to choose an employment goal in a growth sector. The VR counselor will discuss the issues in finding employment that will occur as a result of choosing a vocational goal in a low-growth sector, but unless there are limitations or concerns that specifically contradict the vocational choice by the customer the customer's informed choice should be honored.

2. **Offenders:** The Re-entry Employment Service Program (RESP) consists of IDES Employment Service Representatives working with ex-offenders who may be on parole and/or living in an Adult Transition Center (ATC), which may be known as a halfway house. RESP workshops are offered on a weekly basis to the ex-offenders

and help them in the areas of creating targeted resumes, dressing for success, and being prepared for interviews, informing them of programs that are available to employers (e.g., Fidelity Bonding, Work Opportunity Tax Credit, and Illinois State Tax Credit for hiring ex-offenders) that should be mentioned when the ex-offender is interviewing for a job.

Through the PROWD program, Career Link's Re-entry Career Planners provide career services on-site at the prisons. We provide orientation to workforce training programs, career placement support upon release, resume development, and interview skills. Re-entry efforts seek to reduce the barriers to employment so that people with past criminal involvement can compete for work opportunities.

3. **Veterans:** IDES provides assistance to military veterans in several ways. For veterans who have barriers (e.g., physical, psychological, educational, resume filled with military jargon, etc.), a Veterans' Representative will help them work to overcome those barriers. Another level of Veterans' Representative works with employers in the area encouraging them to hire veterans for their job openings. When a veteran is declared to be job ready, he/she is referred to employers who have openings in the fields for which the veteran has experience/training.
4. **Youth:** IDES' Hire the Future program is geared to young adults aged 16-24 and is designed to facilitate the transition into the workplace.

Both in- and out-of-school youth are exposed to sector-based career pathways through sub-contractor led programs in addition to Work Experience-related opportunities.

In-school youth participate in Drop-Out Prevention programs while enrolled in secondary high schools where career exploration is a very large part of the curricula. Focus is often placed on learning vocational/technical skills firsthand through hands-on classroom activities/projects or job shadowing experiences.

Out-of-school youth participate in Dropout Recovery Programs. Youth obtain their GED (high school equivalency) while also taking part in career exploration activities and ICAPS opportunities. Out-of-school youth are highly encouraged throughout the program to take advantage of post-secondary opportunities that are available to them during and after the GED obtainment period.

Students also receive further career guidance through Transitional Grant participation. Two local youth service providers offer continued career opportunities/exploration once the youth has completed his/her GED and are entering either the post-secondary or employment track. Students receive continued support throughout their Follow-up period.

Adult Education at HCC offers several bridges for High School Equivalency (HSE) students and low and high intermediate ESL students. All students in both ESL and HSE classrooms are experiencing Blended Learning in the curriculum as well as contextualized instruction focusing on Workplace Technology and Education and Training career pathways. In addition, HCC has a College and Career Readiness ICAPS program for students to receive a short-term certificate in several career

pathways. This program also helps students to transition either into the workplace or into further post-secondary education to earn an associate degree. HCC plans to expand our bridge offerings to better prepare students transition into other career pathways.

ICC Adult Education currently offers four (4) bridge programs and two (2) ICAPS programs (Integrated Career & Academic Preparation). The four bridge programs are manufacturing, healthcare, entrepreneurship, and IT. ICC is currently exploring the opportunity to add a Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics (TDL) bridge offering. ICC has surveyed students to understand the demand for various bridge programs and there is significant interest in a TDL bridge program.

5. **National Farm Workers:** The National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) is a nationally directed program of services for chronically underemployed and unemployed migrant and seasonal farmworkers (MSFWs) which is administered by UMOS. NFJP goals are to strengthen the ability of MSFWs and their dependents to obtain or retain unsubsidized employment or stabilize their unsubsidized employment in agriculture; deliver career services, training, and related assistance to eligible MSFW including youth; provide access to career services for MSFW through the One-Stop services delivery system; and coordinate with the State Workforce Agency and Monitor Advocate System Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Program.
6. **Long-Term Unemployed:** Career Link's current initiatives involve the incorporation of sector-based career pathways for potential Long-Term Unemployed population. IDES is also receiving funds for the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) through USDOL. This program targets UI recipients that are most likely to exhaust benefits and requires them to receive assistance with their reemployment efforts. All RESEA-eligible individuals will be referred to Title 1 by IDES. Career Planners are using emails and postal mail contact. If participants are not answering their phone then the use of text messaging is employed. Facebook messenger can also be used to contact participants when possible.
7. **Low-Skilled Adults and Youth:** Another initiative involves creating additional Bridge Program and Integrated Education and Training (IET) opportunities for participants enrolled in High School Equivalency and English as a Second Language programs.

HCC offers and IET in Microsoft Office Specialist. Bridge programming includes bridge to Workplace Technology and Education. HCC will offer an accelerated pathway to six (6) different sectors in the coming year that will allow students to take credit classes while still working in Adult Education.

ICC has added a manufacturing bridge and a Production Welding Certificate IET program. In addition to the CNA program, Adult Education has added a healthcare IET program with Medical Office Assistant—Basic certificate and a MOAA certificate. Ideally, our intent is to seek advice from Career and Technical Education Advisors

regarding logistics, etc. involved in developing avenues to additional career sector pathways.

Mid Central Community Action of McLean county offers integrated or “bundled” services that lead to concrete gains in net income and job retention. CSBG’s Income Supports Program offers annually three undesignated \$1,000 dollar scholarships to eligible individuals who are trying to advance their education in order to access employment at a higher or living wage.

8. **General:** An expansion of workshops, including more focused content related to preparing individuals for entry into these sector-based career opportunities will include: Basic Skills Remediation for the Out-of-School Youth and the Long-Term Unemployed populations in order to prepare them for initial entry and competency requirements necessary for successful completion of selected career pathways. A College Preparatory component will also be infused into the existing workshop curricula. Based on current feedback from participants, the newer “electronic based form” of teaching is a tremendous barrier to those re-entering the educational field. Hopefully, the advanced overview of today’s classroom/expectations will deflate customer anxiety and the potential of “dropping out” of a program. Additionally, incorporation of the Veteran’s population into these workshops serves as a high priority for our LWIA. The learning curve for this population seems to resemble that of a long-term unemployed individual entering post-secondary education.

In addition to these initiatives, regional partners will work to address how to fully mainstream targeted populations into sector-based career pathways. Partners will develop data on these populations to determine the extent to which they are already involved in existing career pathways. We will also utilize technical assistance provided by the State to help us achieve this goal.

EDR 3 supports the State’s goal of expanding information for employers and job seekers to access services by improving the Illinois public-private data infrastructure to support the alignment and integration of economic development, workforce development and education initiatives for supporting sector partnerships and career pathways. Although we lack the ability at the regional level to impact the development of such systems, if they are created, we will encourage our local employers and job seekers to use them. The regional partners welcome any opportunity to provide input into the design of the systems that make up the data infrastructure that is under development.

Chapter 3 Section G: Describe how goals established in this plan will be monitored and evaluated.

The goals established in this plan are broad in scope and not easily quantified. Discussions between the Partners to establish a plan for monitoring and evaluation will be ongoing. There will be records of meetings’ discussions of strategies and objectives. The Consortium consisting of the four core partners will monitor and evaluate the progress of the region.

Chapter 3 Section H: Describe how a *workforce equity lens* is or will be incorporated in the implementation of regional workforce, education, and economic development strategies.

Equity will be incorporated into our strategies by using data to understand current efforts and to measure future success. Partner programs collect the type of demographic information used to measure equity in access and service. We anticipate that the State will be providing information on our current efforts and developing goals that will be measured. Workforce development programs already target those with barriers to employment. By design, most are focused on assisting those most in need. In some instances, the mere fact that we are measuring it may shine a light that provides insight into how these programs assist low-income individuals, people of color, those with disabilities, veterans, women as well as many others in achieving workforce equity. As a system we will also look at increasing access for customers through digital literacy efforts including access to computers.

This is one example: Equity is the foremost priority and the focus of all recent student success initiatives at ICC. ICC has convened a diverse array of partners by launching major innovations such as the Workforce Equity Initiative (WEI). ICC serves as lead college of the \$18.7 million per year, statewide WEI program, comprised of 18 colleges. Since the program launched in 2019, ICC has served over 900 students, over 70% of whom are African American and 100% of whom are low-income. Additionally, ICC has demonstrated success in implementing programs for special populations, including low-income, minority, first-generation college students, and students with disabilities. Documented success in the College's Emerging Leaders bridge program, federal Trio programs, and CNA/LPN career pathway program indicate that wrap-around supports and equity strategies have been instrumental in keeping students engaged, connected, and on track for completion, culminating in career success.