

# WIOA Strategic Workforce Development Plan

# Regional Plan Template

East Tennessee Regional Plan

PYs 2024-2027



## Table of Contents

<b>Regional Area Information .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Regional Plan Tracker .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Regional Labor Market Analysis: .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Support of State Initiatives: .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Regional Service Strategies: .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Sector Initiatives for In-Demand Sectors or Occupations:.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Economic Development/Business Engagement: .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Coordination of Supportive Services: .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Performance Accountability: .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Coordination of Cost Arrangements: .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Public Comment:.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Stakeholder Involvement: .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Attachments:.....</b>	<b>37</b>

## Regional Area Information

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## Regional Labor Market Analysis:

- a. Utilizing the data provided by TDLWD, WIRRED Report, provide an analysis of regional economic conditions, including existing and emerging in-demand sectors and occupations, and the employment needs of businesses in those sectors and occupations.

Total employment in the East Region in 2022, excluding self-employed and agricultural workers, was 1,097,671. The five largest existing industry sectors are:

- Manufacturing (152,923)
- Health care and social assistance (137,802)
- Retail (126,134)
- Accommodation and food services (112,969)
- Educational services (78,214)

In comparison to 2018, the sectors experiencing the most significant workforce expansions were manufacturing (10,556), professional, scientific, and technical services (7,641), and transportation and warehousing (5,203). Despite being one of the largest sectors, Healthcare and Social Assistance is yet to recover its pre-pandemic employment levels. However, accommodation and food services and educational services, despite previous declines, have rebounded and exceeded their 2018 employment levels.

Almost all industry sectors saw an increase in earnings per worker. The most notable rises occurred in accommodation and food services, administration and support, and real estate (rental and leasing). Industries with the highest earnings per worker included management of companies and enterprises, utilities, professional, scientific, and technical services, while the accommodations and food services industry had the lowest earnings per worker. See Figure 1 - East Region Top Industry Earnings 2022 (Appendix A).

Within each of the major industries, emerging industries were identified - those expected to have the highest growth rates between now and 2030.

- Leisure & Hospitality
- Health care and social assistance: The largest industry in 2020 and projected to be the largest in 2030, it ranks second in the number of jobs expected to be added by 2030.
- Manufacturing
- Transportation, warehousing, and utilities
- Professional, scientific, and technical services
- Construction
- Information

The Regional Planning Council (RPC) will facilitate the use of this data to inform sector strategies in each LWDA and across the region.

East Region Occupational Employment



- b. Describe the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to meet the employment needs of businesses in those sectors and occupations.

The TDLWD Jobs4TN web site tracks the top in-demand job certifications and tools and technologies from its advertised jobs database, updated daily. The table below shows the most requested certifications, including nursing credentials, CPR, commercial driver license certifications, first aid, and emergency medical technician. For June 2023, the most requested technologies included Microsoft Office, HTML, operation of cash registers, forklifts, and use of personal protective equipment among others. See Figure 4 - East Region In-Demand Job Certifications 2023 and Figure 5 - East Region In-Demand Tools or Technologies 2023 (Appendix A).

#### Advertised Job Skills Table for East Region

1. Microsoft (MS) Office - Office Suite Software (3,533 job openings)
2. Hypertext markup language (HTML) - Web Platform Development Software (1,794 job openings)
3. Forklift - Forklifts (1,382 job openings)
4. Cash Register - Cash Registers (1,338 job openings)
5. Microsoft PowerPoint - Presentation Software (1,258 job openings)
6. Personal protective equipment - Hazardous Material Protective Apparel (1,186 job openings)
7. Motor vehicles - Automobiles or Cars (1,075 job openings)
8. Microsoft Word - Word Processing Software (862 job openings)
9. Cell Phone - Mobile Phones (659 job openings)
10. Constant Contact - Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Software (644 job openings)

These top advertised job skills align with the East Region's top five industry sectors. Utilizing this data and our employer needs assessment, the East will work with training providers to ensure that these skills are included in the curricula. AJCs in the East Region will work to connect participants with providers who focus on these skills, and educate employers on the utilization of Alison and Coursera to address skills gaps.

- c. Provide an analysis of the regional workforce, incorporating current labor employment and unemployment data, information on labor market trends, and educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment.

### Employment and Unemployment

Total employment in the East Region, excluding agriculture and the self-employed, increased from 1,088,055 in 2021 to 1,097,691 in 2022. Overall unemployment for the region decreased from 4.3 to 3.4, the same as the yearly average for the state.

The East Region consists of three Local Workforce Development Areas: Northeast, Southeast, and East, encompassing a total of 34 counties. Of these, 29 counties increased employment compared to 34 the year prior. This is an expected pattern as the year prior was a year of recovery for the Tennessee economy. The average number of establishments increased to 67,643 over the year and payroll increased by 9.2 percent to \$58.1 billion. The average annual industry wage in the region, calculated by dividing the total payroll by the average number of workers, increased by over 20 percent to \$56,372 from \$46,124. The median occupational wage increased by 8.5 percent to \$38,532, which is slightly below the state's median.

The labor force increased over the year by over 80,000 persons. Youth unemployment in 2021 (the latest data available) is slightly lower compared to the state rate of 11.4 percent. The percent of those in poverty was stable at 15.3 percent, below the state rate, and lower for the East Region last year.

The labor force participation rate (LFPR) in the East Region in 2022 was 56.8 percent, somewhat lower than the previous year. However, despite this, the state's labor force participation rate increased to 58.6 percent in 2022. The largest decrease for the East Region was in the Northeast LWDA, although it was minimal, following the pattern set by the region. Poverty rates remained stagnant from 15.2 percent in 2020 to 15.3 percent for the East Region in 2021, as federal aid was targeted to individuals with the greatest needs. The highest poverty rate in the region was in the Southeast LWDA at 18.8 percent. Northeast also reported higher than state average poverty rates in 2021. The 2021 rates should have been lower given the improving economy. Reducing poverty and increasing educational attainment should be key targets of workforce policy in this region.

Following the pattern set by state data, more than a third of those not in the labor force had a disability, with Northeast LWDA having the highest rate. Youth unemployment in the East Region decreased slightly from 10.97 in 2020 to 10.60 in 2021.

### Significant Barriers to Employment

The East Region in 2021 had 35 percent of the state's population, with the following higher percent of the populations below compared to its proportion of the state's population:

20 percent of the American Indian/Alaska native population



d. How will these analyses be shared with all partners and used to influence decisions regarding the regional workforce system?

The East RPC members took an active role in gathering information from labor market information databases, employers, and other stakeholders during public meetings. To ensure that the public had adequate opportunity to provide public comment on the regional plan and to promote community engagement during plan development, the RPC held additional meetings to gather input from regional employers, community colleges, TN Board of Regents (TBR) institutions, regional workforce partners and numerous other stakeholders.

To ensure labor market data is supported by current business needs, partners and employers will convene to agree on supply and demand data. Utilizing the information received from these convenings and up-to-date labor market data, the East Region will develop sector-focused strategies for the following industry sectors: Manufacturing, Healthcare and Social Assistance, Retail, Accommodation and Food Services, and Educational Services. The RPC will continue to target available employment and training resources to ensure that the workforce development needs of the priority sectors, industries, occupations, and skills are met. The East Region will leverage their BWDs to facilitate sector strategy implementation. Additional strategies are:

- Utilizing WIRED data to identify in-demand employment sectors.
- Ensure that decisions align with the needs of each particular industry and are employer driven.
- Partner with sector groups to facilitate the development of industry-specific training programs, enhancing sector-specific talent pipelines.
- Advocate for the adaptation of Business Service Teams outreach efforts to align with BEP and sector strategies.
- As a region, structure the LWDB's memberships around sector-strategies.
- Performance will be measured by tracking employer penetrations rates, LFPR Rates, customer satisfaction surveys, and quantifiable economic impact data.
- Quarterly reports to the RPC to identify initiative progress, roadblocks, and best practices.



## Support of State Initiatives:

- a. Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR)
  - i. Describe how the region will coordinate a collective approach to focused advocacy and engagement to special populations in effort to increase in the local LFPR.

To increase the Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR), East Region employs focused advocacy and engagement strategies targeting special populations. Based on the East TN Region – Significant Barriers to Employment data (Appendix A - Figure 7) provided by WIRED, populations of primary focus during this planning cycle will be youth, aging populations, and individuals with disabilities.

Below are strategies detailing the regional approach:

**Stakeholder Collaboration:** Bring together key stakeholders, including community organizations, advocacy groups, educational institutions, employers, and state agencies to form a collaborative task force. Ensure representation from organizations that specialize in serving the identified special populations.

**Needs Assessment:** Conduct a needs assessment to understand the specific challenges faced by each special population in terms of entering or re-entering the workforce. Gather input through surveys, focus groups, and individual interviews to identify barriers and opportunities. Incorporate AJC partners and ECD fundamentals to expand our needs assessment for complimentary understanding.

**Customized Outreach Strategies:** Develop customized outreach strategies tailored to the needs and preferences of each special population. Utilize culturally sensitive and targeted messaging to reach different demographic groups. For example, advocate for job shares with shift pick-up availability and the utilization of flexible scheduling to enable single parents and/or families needing to work nontraditional hours.

**Community Engagement Events:** Organize community engagement events, job fairs, and workshops specifically designed for special populations. Collaborate with local service providers and community centers to create accessible and welcoming environments.

**Skill Development Programs:** Implement skill development programs and training initiatives that address the unique needs of special populations. Work with educational institutions and training providers to offer programs that enhance participants' employability. Advocate for customized training to include Incumbent Worker Training (IWT), On-the-Job Training (OJT), and Registered Apprenticeship Programs which reflect business needs.

**Employer Partnerships:** Foster partnerships with employers committed to diversity and inclusion. Encourage employers to participate in outreach events, provide work-based learning opportunities, and offer inclusive hiring practices. Continuing to expand the partnership with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). Use Dun & Bradstreet data to support



- ii. What initiatives will the region implement to positively impact LFRP efforts, and how will these initiatives be tracked and measured for success?

To positively impact the Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR), the East region will implement a combination of initiatives that focus on workforce development, education, and community engagement. Tracking and measuring the success of these initiatives is crucial for assessing their impact and making data-driven decisions. Below are some initiatives that the region will implement and how they will be tracked and measured for success:

### Initiatives

1. Education and Training Programs: The East region will collectively examine areas of local ETPLs to align with in demand, industry driven training programs across the region. As part of this examination, the RPC will encourage region-wide availability to training programs from other areas to ensure adequate access and capabilities.
2. Youth, Aging Populations, and Individuals with Disabilities:
  - Promote Registered Apprenticeship Programs to provide hands-on training and pathways to skilled employment.
  - In partnership with Vocational Rehabilitation, implement tailored support services and programs, and align supportive service policies across the region.
  - Build partnerships and leverage existing relationships with employers to facilitate job placement and alignment of workforce skills with industry needs.
  - Develop clear career pathways and provide guidance to individuals exploring or transitioning into the workforce. Champion Coursera and Alison usage across the region to support career development.
  - Foster community engagement and partnerships with local organizations, chambers, business partners, government agencies, and community leaders. TDLWD's Business & Workforce Directors will facilitate consistent message delivery and involvement within the region.
  - Feedback and Continuous Improvement: Utilize needs assessments to collect feedback from program participants, employers, and the community to support in-demand industries.
  - Public-Private Partnerships: Develop partnerships between public and private sectors to leverage resources and create comprehensive workforce solutions. Faith-based organizations, Community Action Council (CAC), and nonprofits will work towards mutual goals for achieving economic growth within our communities.

### Tracking and Measurement

Tracking and measuring the success of these initiatives will be through existing reporting systems, and will involve quantitative and qualitative assessments, including participation rates, employment outcomes, employer satisfaction, and community feedback. Continuous monitoring, regular evaluations, and data analysis will provide insights into the effectiveness of the strategies and guide adjustments to optimize impact over time.

## b. Business Engagement Plan

- i. How will the region ensure consistent implementation the TDLWD-WFS Business Engagement Plan to redefine “business engagement” pursuant to the state-wide framework and provide streamlined solutions to employer customers?

East Region will champion the application of the seven pillars in the Business Engagement Plan by:

Sector-based approach to service delivery:

- Business & Workforce Directors will facilitate sector strategy implementation.
- Utilizing WIRED data to identify in-demand employment sectors.
- Ensure that decisions align with the needs of each particular industry and are employer driven.
- Partner with sector groups to facilitate the development of industry-specific training programs, enhancing sector-specific talent pipelines.
- Advocate for the adaptation of Business Service Teams outreach efforts to align with BEP and sector strategies.
- As a region, structure the LWDB's memberships around sector-strategies.
- Performance will be measured by tracking employer penetrations rates, LFPR Rates, customer satisfaction surveys, and quantifiable economic impact data.

Utilize a business cycle framework:

- East RPC will facilitate business lifecycle data (Econovue) training to align services with business needs in each LWDA.
- Support LWDA tailoring of services to support businesses in various phases of their lifecycles.

Position LWDA as Asset Mappers:

- The RPC will serve as a convener and intermediary for regional industry partnerships.
- The RPC will seek out non-WIOA related regional funding opportunities that will strengthen sector strategies and industry partnerships.

Case manage employers as customers:

- East RPC will support each LWDA's reliance on the state's Zendesk CRM platform to manage business customer relationships.
- In each LWDA employer relationships will be managed via a single point of contact in order to streamline services and reduce employer fatigue.

AJC Network Improvements:

- As a region, the RPC will work with TNDLWD to facilitate defining Business Services Team roles and responsibilities to align with state priorities and the BEP.
- East RPC will work as a region with TOSS to facilitate Business Engagement staff training to support sector strategies and the BEP.
- Promote the use of Mobile AJCs in each local area to support regional sector initiatives and outreach efforts.



- ii. How will the RPC facilitate the sector partnerships necessary to drive sector strategies addressing the needs of business and industry?

The Regional Planning Council (RPC) plays a pivotal role in fostering collaboration and coordinating efforts among various stakeholders. Here's how the East RPC will facilitate sector partnerships:

**Stakeholder Engagement:** Identify key stakeholders, including businesses, industry associations, educational institutions, workforce development boards, economic development agencies, chambers, and community organizations. Foster engagement by creating a collaborative network for stakeholders to participate in sector-focused discussions.

**Needs Assessment:** Conduct a thorough needs assessment to understand the specific workforce and skills needs of businesses within different sectors. See Appendix A - Figure 6. Gather input through surveys, sector task forces, and interviews to identify current and future demands.

**Formation of Sector Task Forces:** Facilitate the formation of task forces that bring together representatives from in-demand industry sectors within the East region. Include representatives from educational institutions, organizations/associations, and other stakeholders to participate in these groups. Encourage and facilitate regular partnership meetings, discussions, and communication.

**Development of Sector Strategies:** Work with sector task forces to develop comprehensive sector strategies that address workforce development, training, and education initiatives. Align strategies with the current and future needs of businesses within each in-demand sector.

**Identification of Skills Gaps:** Develop targeted training and education programs to address these gaps and strengthen talent pipelines for each in-demand sector.

**Promotion of Apprenticeships and Training Programs:** Promote RAPs and other on-the-job training programs in collaboration with businesses and industry partners. Encourage the development of industry-recognized credentials and certifications.

**Data Sharing and Analysis:** Encourage the sharing of labor market data, LFPR dashboard, and industry trends among sector partnerships. Analyze data to identify evolving skill needs and adjust strategies accordingly.

**Employer Engagement Events:** Organize employer engagement events, career exploration events (i.e. CareerQuest), and workshops to facilitate networking and knowledge exchange among businesses.

**Continuous Improvement:** Seek feedback from businesses and stakeholders on a routine basis to ensure continuous improvement. Use feedback to enhance the effectiveness of sector partnerships and adapt to current industry training, education, and skills needs.



- iii. Describe how the RPC will utilize TDLWD Regional Directors to facilitate the business engagement strategy and promote alignment with economic development within the region, including how the Regional Directors will report progress to the RPC.

The utilization of TDLWD Regional Directors to facilitate the business engagement strategy and promote alignment with economic development within the region involves a collaborative and communicative approach. Here's how the East RPC will work with Regional Directors and establish reporting mechanisms for progress:

**Establishing Clear Roles and Responsibilities:** Ensure that Regional Directors understand their role in fostering collaboration between workforce development and economic development efforts.

**Collaborative Business Engagement Strategy:** Work with Regional Directors to develop a comprehensive business engagement strategy that aligns with the economic development goals of the region. Identify key industries, employers, and stakeholders to target for collaboration and partnership.

**Communication and Outreach:** Facilitate regular communication channels between the RPC and Regional Directors. Establish mechanisms for ongoing dialogue to share updates, discuss challenges, and strategize on business engagement opportunities.

**Networking and Relationship Building:** Regional Directors will continue actively networking with businesses, industry associations, and economic development organizations within the region. Encourage relationship-building efforts to understand the workforce needs and economic landscape of local businesses.

**Promoting Workforce Development Programs:** Collaborate with Regional Directors to promote workforce development programs and initiatives to regional businesses. Highlight the benefits of AJC services and participating in training and apprenticeship programs.

**Alignment with Economic Development Goals:** Ensure that the business engagement strategy aligns with broader economic development goals and priorities. Work with Regional Directors to identify opportunities for workforce development to contribute to the growth and competitiveness of regional industries.

**Regular Progress Reporting:** Utilize the reporting framework for Regional Directors to regularly report progress on business engagement and economic development alignment. Regional Directors will collect relevant data on business engagement activities, such as the number of partnerships established, job placements, and employer satisfaction. Analyze data to identify trends and areas for improvement.

By actively involving TDLWD Regional Directors in the business engagement strategy and promoting alignment with economic development, the RPC can leverage their regional knowledge and relationships to create a more responsive and impactful workforce



- c. Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)
  - i. What opportunities exist for a collective approach to SYEP implementation across the region?

Implementing a collective approach to the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) across the region presents several opportunities for collaboration.

Opportunities for collaboration include:

Local areas in the East region along with partnering organizations will share best practices, expertise, and program management strategies to enhance the overall effectiveness of SYEPs. To accomplish this, the East region will develop training materials and provide instruction for CSP staff, partner staff, and SYEP stakeholders involved with the summer youth program.

East region will utilize EconoVue to identify specific employers within each in-demand sector and respective industry, schedule employer meetings to educate and train them on the SYEP. Employers will be asked for job descriptions, starting wage, and a job analysis indicating the percentage of time that the youth would spend doing certain job tasks. Where feasible, employers will be encouraged to provide youth with various job assignments throughout the agency to give the youth a broader perspective of job tasks. In addition, employers will be asked to mentor a youth for a specified period of time to encourage their continuous learning and success.

Further, the East region will align policies such as a requirement to provide each youth with an assessment of their aptitudes and interests to ensure that they are given a relevant, meaningful work experience placement. Policy alignment will include utilizing the same program application and outreach to similar organizations for recruitment such as foster-care agencies, local Boys & Girl's clubs, CTE programs, and other organizations that serve disadvantaged youth.

The East region will collaborate on marketing and outreach campaigns to promote the SYEP to attract more youth participants and employers that will offer worksites for work experience placements. The region will meet quarterly to share information to collectively improve program outcomes.

The collaborative approach will allow the region to learn from and support each other to advance the overall effectiveness and regional impact of Summer Youth Employment Programs.

ii. How will RPC leverage partnerships to increase SYEP participation and job placement within the region?

On January 24, 2024, the RPC convened a robust membership of organizations and employers to foster a greater understanding of the SYEP and the need for post-program employment. This partnership is a continuing effort for East Region as we seek to promote youth work experience regardless of the season. Continual communication with local education representatives, CTE Directors, employers, and other partners will provide measure for performance accountability.

Through collaborative efforts with state and local partners, the East region will seek opportunities to leverage work-based learning models including SYEP, when available. Supportive resources helps extend capabilities by involving multiple partners in the execution of the strategy. The sharing of knowledge, technological expertise and infrastructure will help expand services while providing cost efficiencies. Leveraging the additional relationships of multiple partners can be a powerful tool to rapidly promote the SYEP brand with a more robust return on investment.

By uniting with other experts to encourage aligned solutions, the region will increase youth enrollments and business engagement activities while building a wider network of providers. Utilizing partner support and endorsements, East Region seeks to reinforce their commitment to breaking down barriers for youth in the workforce ecosystem.

Leveraged examples would include contracting with career and technical education programs or other community-based organizations that have staff already engaged in work-based learning initiatives. Entities with similar missions for these populations would determine how each could assist with system capacity building.

Across the East Region efforts are underway with entities listed below:

- Career and Technical Education
- Community Based Organizations
- Faith Based Organizations
- Urban League
- Chambers of Commerce
- Foster Programs
- Boys & Girls Clubs
- Local School Boards

Throughout the planning cycle the East RPC will seek to expand the network to include additional partners. Local areas should seek to work and contract directly with entities when possible.

#### d. AJC Operations Improvement: AJC Assessment

- i. Provide an analysis of the KPMG assessment study results specific to the region, and contrast where results may differ across LWDA.

The KPMG assessment uncovered notable differences in both service usage and employment outcomes among various demographic groups, particularly among individuals with disabilities and those with justice-involved backgrounds. The data highlighted a significant lack of utilization of Title I and Title II programs by these groups, signaling a pressing need for more inclusive outreach and service delivery approaches. Additionally, a considerable portion of homeless and unemployed individuals were not accessing services, indicating a need for increased outreach efforts to these specific subgroups.

The study also revealed substantial variations in service accessibility between different counties and regions. Rural residents faced notable hurdles in accessing services, with nearly half of Title I participants residing in rural areas. This challenge was exacerbated by the absence of American Job Centers (AJCs) or service access points in certain counties, further limiting service availability. These findings underscore the urgent requirement for targeted strategies to improve service delivery in less urbanized regions, including establishing additional access points, utilizing mobile service units, and enhancing virtual service delivery options.

In contrast, the research noted that the majority of Adult Education (AE) centers are situated in transitional or competitive counties, with only one in a distressed county. This raises concerns about access barriers in distressed regions. The study suggests various strategies to enhance service efficiency, such as reaching out to underserved populations, providing transportation assistance, offering online courses, and expanding internet/computer access. These findings emphasize the necessity for tailored approaches to address demographic and geographic disparities in program participation and effectiveness.

#### Opportunities:

Increase training efficiency and effectiveness

Improve access and utilization of in-person and virtual services

Measure service quality and intensity

Provide external supports to high-need clients

Improve Title I services to individuals with disabilities, justice-involved, homeless population, and underemployed

The report noted variations across East TN LWDA. There are four counties in the Southeast LWDA that lack any AJC or access points, indicating capacity constraints in the region for additional services. While it is noted in the report that the Northeast LWDA has a limited number of affiliate and comprehensive AJCs, there are actually 6 affiliate and 2 comprehensive AJCs covering all 8 counties - representing a physical presence in every county. All distressed counties in the State have at least one AJC or access point, except for Bledsoe County in the Southeast LWDA. Similarly, all at-risk counties have at least one AJC or access point, except for two counties in the Southeast LWDA. These findings suggest that the Southeast LWDA, which has a high population residing in economically distressed +



- ii. How will the RPC facilitate innovative service strategies across the region in response to the assessment findings?

Based on the KPMG Summary document, East TN will:

- Address noted service gaps across the region, specifically the Southeast LWDA, the East RPC will seek out opportunities for additional access points and/or affiliate sites in the four "blank" counties. The East region will cultivate a partnership with the TN Department of Human Services and other state and community partners to expand access points and reduce travel time for those most in need. With these additional locations, the RPC will improve awareness of community resources and ensure that all county residents have access to AJC services.
- As the RPC focuses on enhancing the LWDA's presence throughout the East region, each local area will endeavor to deepen and track community partnerships as it increases access points to customers.
- Enhance service integration and staff training to increase co-enrollment rates. Collaborate with AJC personnel to amplify both the number and quality of referrals to partner programs, thereby enhancing overall customer satisfaction.
- Strengthen functional teams to increase inter-agency collaboration, develop outcome-focused strategies, and enhance employment outcomes. Advocate for accessibility and diversity across training programs to increase AJC program access and participation among a wider demographic.
- Enhance infrastructure capacity and improve resource allocation by reviewing policy and developing outcome-focused strategies. Identify root causes of inefficiencies and highlight best practices to address inadequacies.
- In support of sector strategies, utilize Labor Market Information (LMI) to understand job posting density for in-demand sectors to ensure a relevant and responsive ETPL. This approach is data-centered and will help align training programs with in-demand job opportunities leading to increased participant employment.

## Regional Service Strategies:

- a. Provide an analysis of workforce development activities, including education and training, in the region.
  - i. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce development activities and the collective capacity to provide workforce development activities to address the education and skill needs of the workforce, including individual with barriers to employment.

Workforce development is a critical element in maintaining a prosperous regional economy. To that effect, East region coordinates regularly with both public and private educational institutions, economic development agencies, industry associations, chambers, local municipalities, one-stop partner agencies, and community-based organizations to stay aware and informed of the most in-demand skills and occupations. The East RPC is a partner in region-wide initiatives targeting common goals that will continue to ensure that the three LWDA's provide a well-trained workforce resulting in a sustainable living wage and economic mobility for its residents and businesses.

Training services must be linked to high demand employment opportunities in the region or geographic area in which the participant is willing to commute or relocate. The selection of training services should be conducted in a manner that maximizes customer choice, informed by performance or relevant training providers, and coordinated - to the extent possible - with other sources of assistance. East Region limits individual training accounts to programs included on the ETPL; most eligible providers offer programs that lead to a credential in a period of two years or less.

The East RPC has implemented the following ongoing strategies and initiatives to ensure not only that job seekers are prepared to enter and to retain employment but also that regional business needs are met:

- Provide training to target middle skills occupations that will increase the wages of participants while meeting employers' skills needs.
- Collaborate with business and industry to further promote the value and applicability of industry recognized credentials.
- Develop, implement, evaluate, and replicate proven short-term prevocational services that are recognized and valued by business and industry, including development of learning, and skills such as: communication, interviewing, durable skills, punctuality, personal maintenance, and professional conduct in order to prepare individuals for unsubsidized employment.
- Work in partnership with the network of educational institutions such as K-12, career and technical education, and post-secondary education to expand best practices and provide career pathways for jobseekers.
- Work with WIOA Title II partners in the region to implement integrated education programs that promote the attainment of multiple postsecondary credentials while customers simultaneously are working toward passing the high school equivalency test (HiSET). To serve regional businesses, the curriculum promoted in these classes is

- b. How will the RPC support alignment and integration of education, workforce and economic development across the region?
- i. How will the RPC track and measure effectiveness of integrated workforce strategies?

b. The East RPC will implement the following ongoing strategies and initiatives to ensure that job seekers are equipped to enter and retain employment while correspondingly regional business needs are likewise met.

- Training provided to target in-demand skills occupations that will increase the wages of participants while meeting employers' skills requirements.
- Collaborate with businesses to further promote the value and applicability of industry-recognized credentials.
- Develop, implement, and evaluate proven short-term prevocational services that are recognized and esteemed by business and industry, including the development of learning and skills such as: communication, interviewing, durable skills, punctuality, personal maintenance, and professional conduct to prepare individuals for unsubsidized employment.
- Work in partnership with the network of educational institutions such as K-12, career and technical education, and post-secondary education to expand best practices and provide career pathways for job seekers.
- Work with WIOA Title II partners in the region to implement integrated education programs that promote the attainment of multiple postsecondary credentials while customers simultaneously are working toward passing the high school equivalency test. To serve regional businesses, the curriculum is adapted to the in-demand skill sets specific to each industry sector to ensure participants' preparation and training for education advancement and career entry.
- East Region currently leads the state in the number of Apprenticeship Programs and Apprentices. Each LWDA continuously seeks out opportunities to expand RAPs in the region.
- Collaborate with the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development (TNECD) on new and expanding employer projects to ensure fulfillment of obligations and strategy implementation to address labor force needs.

i. The East RPC will utilize KPI data. Measurable results will include tracking the number of new Apprenticeship Programs, Apprentices, Apprentice completers, employer penetration, IWT and OJT participants, and ETPL programming utilization.

- c. Describe the RPC's strategic vision in supporting state initiatives that foster regional economic growth.
- i. What innovative service strategies will be used to address regional educational and training needs?
  - ii. What cooperative procedures, either formal or informal, will the partners establish to best align regional services and coordinate regional delivery?

C. The regional planning council coordinates regional strategic planning to support the state strategies and goals to align and foster regional economic growth through the following strategies:

#### State Strategic Goal 1: Increase/Sustain Competitive Labor Force Participation Rate


RPC Strategy 1: Increase LFPR by 0.5% each program year during 2024-2027.

- The labor force participation rate (LFPR) in the East Region in 2022 was 56.8 percent compared to 58.6% for the State of Tennessee.
- Develop targeted outreach strategies that resonate with the specific needs, interests, and concerns of special populations, including minorities, individuals with disabilities, justice-involved, veterans, older workers, and youth.
- Partner with employers and CTE Directors to create clear career pathways and advancement opportunities within target sectors to attract and retain workers.
- Partner with Vocational Rehabilitation, community and faith-based organizations, and Adult Education to implement innovative recruitment strategies to attract diverse talent pools, including underrepresented populations, minorities, veterans, justice-involved, and individuals with disabilities.

RPC Strategy 2: Increase TN Youth Employment Program placements by 2% each program year during 2024-27.

- Partner with CTE Directors, community and faith-based organizations, and businesses to amplify program messaging across the region and recruit new program participants. Implement sector-focused career exploration technology, as funding allows.
- Increasing TYEP participants will positively impact the youth unemployment rate in the East Region. Currently, the rate has decreased slightly from 10.97 in 2020 to 10.60 in 2021, and this effort will work to continue that trajectory.
- With the support of marketing materials provided by TDLWD, the Regional Planning Council (RPC) will launch a comprehensive campaign across the region to promote participation and ensure that the target enrollment is met or surpassed.

RPC Strategy 3: Increase co-enrollments.

- The East region will strive to increase the number and quality of partner referrals in efforts to raise co-enrollment rates.
  - Coordinate with OSOs, core, and community partners to improve understanding, function, and impact of partner referrals.
  - Create cross-partner case management methods through staff development.
  - Utilizing Quarterly Cross-Training will ensure referral training includes all partners. 

## Sector Initiatives for In-Demand Sectors or Occupations:

- a. Identify in-demand industry sectors and occupations for the region.

Total employment in the East Region in 2022, excluding self-employed and agricultural workers was 1,097,671. The five largest industry sectors in 2022 were:

- Manufacturing (152,923)
- Health care and social assistance (137,802)
- Retail (126,134)
- Accommodation and food services (112,969)
- Educational services (78,214)

The top occupations for the East Region (occupations employing 20,000 or more individuals) are:

- Office and Administrative Support - 142,010
- Transportation and Material Moving - 102,850
- Production - 101,030
- Food Preparation and Serving related - 100,350
- Sales and related - 90,560
- Health Care Practitioners and Technical - 66,810
- Management - 58,350
- Educational Instruction and Library - 49,910
- Business and Financial Operations - 44,920
- Installation, Maintenance, and Repair - 44,620
- Construction and Extraction - 40,360
- Health Care Support - 34,130
- Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance - 32,030
- Protective Service - 20,380
- Computer and Mathematical - 20,140

b. Describe the development and implementation of sector initiatives for in-demand industry sectors or occupations.

East Tennessee's investment of its resources to develop strategies that fit individual industry sector needs, particularly the high-growth sectors of the economy, is a priority. The East TN RPC implemented rigorous local and regional planning elements and requirements to drive high-quality career pathways and strategies. Local and regional-based sector task forces are being formed to provide a mechanism for establishing tailored strategies throughout East TN. The region seeks to align its resources with training workers to those industry sectors that drive existing and emerging economy while partnering with the education system developing the curriculum necessary for building these skills.

Use state-led sector strategies (as mentioned in Pillar #1 of Business Engagement Plan - Page 11) as a framework for implementation across the region, such as:

- Meet with chambers and local industry associations to attract stakeholders to join industry-specific task forces. Enlist local educational institutions, LWDB members and staff, regional businesses, workforce directors, and others to join employers in analyzing opportunities and in-demand skills training.
- Develop a better understanding of employers' needs by a coordinated regional outreach, including hosting feedback sessions, holding one-on-one conversations, using local task forces, and communicating these needs to training providers.
- Support new approaches to training, such as a regional sector-based training program, to bridge the gaps in training across the region and develop career pathways utilizing innovative methods such as apprenticeships.
- Increase access to the workforce system by increasing outreach efforts and better utilization of the VAJC.
- Present American Job Center capabilities for youth, adult, and dislocated workers to provide context to employers.
- Use resources effectively by agreeing on regional priorities for using the two Mobile AJCs and by developing a regional plan to promote the Mobile AJCs.
- Support the Business Engagement Plan by increasing business outreach and the utilization of programs such as OJT, IWT, and RAPs.
- Continue to expand and replicate innovative, successful models of operation across the East Region.

c. How will these sector initiatives be tracked and measured for success?

East RPC will collaborate with department leadership and WIRED to establish/identify performance metrics to measure success and create accountability regarding in-demand sector strategy. Operate within the metrics of the employer CRM to determine qualitative measures.

Conduct periodic needs assessments for each of the in-demand sectors to establish a baseline and maintain a current needs database, matching those needs to current training availability.

The sector task force leadership should inform the public workforce system on what success looks like to them as it directly relates to workforce development efforts. One example of how this could be evaluated is through a regular survey of task force membership. To be effective in sector strategies, this must be viewed as a long term commitment that will require an in-depth, sustainable plan that is re-evaluated at regular intervals. An example of this could be the measurement of specific sector benchmarks developed by the task force leaders that would report the effectiveness in the region's execution in providing businesses with a trained and qualified workforce.

Additional measures to be tracked for in-demand sectors:

- Job listings
- Job placements
- Customer satisfaction (Business)

## Economic Development/Business Engagement:

- a. Describe how economic development and workforce investment activities will be coordinated in the region.

The coordination of economic development and workforce investment activities in a region involves a collaborative effort between various stakeholders, including government agencies, businesses, educational institutions, and community organizations. The partnership between the TDLWD and the Tennessee Department of Economic & Community Development (TN ECD) is vital to the success of business engagement and development across the region.

East Region's strategies to achieve effective coordination are:

- Utilize a business cycle framework: East RPC will facilitate business lifecycle data (Econovue) training to align services with business needs in each LWDA. Support LWDA tailoring of services to support businesses in various phases of their lifecycles.
- Sector-Based Initiatives: Tailor programs and initiatives to specific industries or sectors that are crucial to the region's economic growth. This involves identifying key industries, understanding their workforce needs, and implementing targeted training programs.
- Workforce Training Programs: Develop and implement workforce training programs that address the skill gaps in the labor market. This could include apprenticeship programs, on-the-job training, and customized training solutions to ensure that the workforce is equipped with the skills demanded by employers.
- Strategic Planning: Conduct a SWOT analysis to consider the region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, ensuring a holistic approach to growth.
- Partnerships and Collaboration: Foster partnerships and collaboration among key stakeholders to share resources, expertise, and foster a unified approach to addressing economic and workforce challenges.
- Connecting Businesses: Present businesses with opportunities such as tax credits, grants, federal bonding, or other financial incentives. These incentives can encourage the creation of new jobs and the expansion of existing businesses.
- Education and Outreach: Conduct educational outreach to inform businesses, workers, and the community about available resources and opportunities. This includes promoting training programs, job fairs, and other initiatives that support economic and workforce development.
- Policy Alignment: Ensure that regional plans are aligned with local, state, and federal levels to support both economic development and workforce investment. Advocate for policies that promote job creation, innovation, and a skilled workforce.
- Data-Driven Decision-Making: Ensure that the data and analytics measures the LFPR and identifies trends in the labor market, assess the effectiveness of training programs, and make



- b. Describe how the RPC will collectively utilize the TDLWD-WFS Business Engagement Plan to provide consistent messaging and services to employers within the region.

The East RPC will implement the guidance provided via the seven pillars in the BEP, in order to provide consistent messaging and services to employers in the region. The seven pillars are:

1. Sector-based approach to service delivery:

- Business & Workforce Directors will facilitate sector strategy implementation.
- Utilizing WIRED data to identify in-demand employment sectors.
- Ensure that decisions align with the needs of each particular industry and are employer driven.
- Partner with sector groups to facilitate the development of industry-specific training programs, enhancing sector-specific talent pipelines.
- Advocate for the adaptation of Business Service Teams outreach efforts to align with BEP and sector strategies.
- As a region, structure the LWDB's memberships around sector-strategies.
- Performance will be measured by tracking employer penetrations rates, LFPR Rates, customer satisfaction surveys, and quantifiable economic impact data.

2. Utilize a business cycle framework:

- East RPC will facilitate business lifecycle data (Econovue) training to align services with business needs in each LWDA.
- Support LWDA tailoring of services to support businesses in various phases of their lifecycles.

3. Position LWDA as Asset Mappers:

- The RPC will serve as a convener and intermediary for regional industry partnerships.
- The RPC will seek out non-WIOA related regional funding opportunities that will strengthen sector strategies and industry partnerships.

4. Case manage employers as customers:

- East RPC will support each LWDA's reliance on the state's Zendesk CRM platform to manage business customer relationships.
- In each LWDA employer relationships will be managed via a single point of contact in order to streamline services and reduce employer fatigue.

5. AJC Network Improvements:

- As a region, the RPC will work with TDLWD to facilitate defining Business Services Team roles and responsibilities to align with state priorities and the BEP.
- East RPC will work as a region with TOSS to facilitate Business Engagement staff training to support sector strategies and the BEP.
- Promote the use of Mobile AJCs in each local area to support regional sector initiatives and outreach efforts.

6. Training & Development:



- c. What innovative initiatives, utilizing tools such as registered apprenticeships, incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, and customized training solutions, will the RPC coordinate to meet the training needs of employers across LWDA's?

Each local board has developed policies and procedures in order to expand or enhance local workforce development through OJT, IWT, WBL, career pathways and sector strategies that are focused on strengthening the regional workforce skill sets and that ultimately lead to increased economic development. The RPC ensures that the local board policies from each LWDA align with regional priorities.

Employer outreach for these initiatives includes local and regional employers, partners and stakeholders, industry associations, ECD, Chambers of Commerce, community and faith-based organizations, and training and education providers.

The East Region continues to provide work-based learning opportunities through OJT, work experience, Registered Apprenticeships (RAP) and IWT programs. Support for RAP may include both WIOA-funded OJT, IWT, and/or ITAs. These activities reinforce the work-based learning model with employers and, as a result, employers are now embracing the model for ongoing utilization to develop talent pipelines and meet training/WBL needs.

Through needs assessment, dissemination of data, and regional cooperation among partners and other stakeholders, the East TN RPC will ensure the creation of a trained workforce that meets the needs of current industry specifically through implementation of the following:

- Geographic assets mapping
- Comprehensive, industry-driven training and work-based learning programs
- Assess and prepare learners before they start training including assessment of soft skills
- Data analysis of industry needs

The East Region would like to explore the possibility of a regional RAP that aligns with in-demand sectors and/or cross-sectors, and explore WBL models such as Student Enterprise Centers to implement regionally.

## Coordination of Supportive Services:

- a. Describe how supportive services will be coordinated throughout the region.

The coordination of supportive services throughout a region involves ensuring that individuals have access to essential support systems that enable them to participate in and benefit from workforce development programs. Supportive services may include childcare, transportation, uniforms, tools, equipment, and other services that address barriers to employment. Below are key components of supportive services in East TN:

- Needs Assessment
- Integrated Service Delivery
- Referral Systems
- Resource Mapping
- Case Management
- Partnerships with Service Providers
- Training and Awareness Programs
- Flexibility in Service Delivery
- Policy Alignment
- Periodic Evaluation and Continuous Improvement
- Cultural Competency

To coordinate these services, East Region collaborates with various partners to align services offered with each participant's needs. Services are then braided to ensure necessary supports are in place. Staff are cross-trained to ensure understanding of partner programs, services, and how to facilitate cross-agency case management. Customer feedback will be used to ensure that current needs are met and changing/future needs are addressed.

By implementing these strategies, East Region will maintain a coordinated and responsive system of supportive services that effectively addresses the diverse needs of the workforce, ultimately increasing the LFPR.

- b. Explain where diverse demographics make regional coordination of supportive services a challenge and describe how the RPC will ensure barriers are equitably addressed.

Coordinating supportive services in regions with diverse demographics can present unique challenges due to variations in needs, cultural differences, language barriers, and disparities in access to resources. To ensure that barriers are equitably addressed, it's crucial to implement strategies that recognize and respond to the specific challenges faced by diverse populations. The East Region will navigate these challenges through policy alignment. Ensuring that regional policies are aligned with local, state, and federal levels to support both economic and workforce development.

East RPC will advocate for policies that promote equitable delivery of services such as:

**Supportive Services Policies:** Review policies across the East Region to align, expand, and enhance services to support the populations of primary focus for this planning period (youth, aging populations, and individuals with disabilities). For example, review and update supportive service policies to expand “childcare” support to “caregiver support.” This will provide parents who are caregivers to adults with special needs the opportunity to train/work.

**Tailored Outreach Strategies:** Promote the development of outreach strategies that are tailored to diverse demographics. This includes using culturally relevant communication channels, materials, and messaging to effectively reach and inform individuals about available services.

**Equitable Resource Allocation:** Ensure that resources are allocated equitably across diverse communities. Analyze data on demographics, socio-economic status, and geographic locations to identify areas with the greatest needs and allocate resources accordingly.

**Data Collection and Analysis:** Collect disaggregated data to identify disparities in service utilization among different demographic groups. Analyze this data to identify trends, gaps, and areas that require targeted interventions to ensure equity in access and outcomes. For example, utilize the KMPG report to identify service gaps across each LWDA, and develop strategies to adapt and ensure equitable access across the region.

By incorporating these strategies, East Region will continue to work towards equitable coordination of supportive services, acknowledging and addressing the unique needs of diverse demographic groups. Ongoing collaboration with targeted populations is key to ensuring that the coordination of supportive services is responsive to the diversity within the region.

## Performance Accountability:

- a. Describe strategies relating to the performance accountability measures based on performance indicators to include State and Local Measures (Key Performance Indicators), to include:
  - i. How the RPC will work with each LWDA to achieve the negotiated measures
  - ii. How the measures will be monitored and progress tracked.

Performance accountability measures in workforce development involve setting and achieving specific regional targets and indicators to assess the effectiveness of programs and services. Below are strategies the East Region will utilize to achieve negotiated measures and monitor progress:

### i. Working with LWDA to Achieve Negotiated Measures:

**Collaborative Goal Setting:** Engage in collaborative regional goal-setting sessions with each LWDA to establish performance measures that align with LWDA priorities.

**Customized Strategies:** Develop customized strategies for the region based on its strengths, challenges, and specific goals. Identify training programs, job placement initiatives, and supportive services to meet the unique needs of the region.

**Capacity Building:** Support LWDAs in building the capacity to measure and track performance indicators effectively. Provide training and resources to ensure that each LWDA is equipped to implement and achieve negotiated performance measures.

**Regular Communication:** Establish regular communication channels with LWDA representatives to foster ongoing dialogue across the region. Address challenges, share best practices, and exchange insights to optimize the implementation of performance measures.

### ii. Monitoring and Progress Tracking:

**Data Validation:** Ensure that the East region is participating in the State Data Validation process to have the necessary tools and training to accurately collect and report data.

**Real-Time Monitoring:** Utilize state-provided dashboards or reporting systems that allow for immediate visibility into key performance indicators.

**Performance Reviews:** Conduct regular regional performance reviews to assess progress. Identify areas of success and areas that may require adjustments in strategies or resource allocation.

**Best Practices:** Identify best practices from high-performing LWDAs and facilitate knowledge-sharing to improve outcomes across the region.



- b. What additional metrics, outside of KPIs, will the region measure to determine success of regional strategies and initiatives?

In addition to KPIs, the East region will facilitate the implementation of the below measures to determine the success of regional strategies and initiatives in workforce development:

Regional Strategic Initiative Tracker:

- Utilize tracker (see Appendix B) to measure progress toward achieving regional planning goals.
- Compare Local Strategic Initiative Trackers to ensure alignment with regional efforts.

Participant Satisfaction:

- Measure participant satisfaction through surveys and feedback mechanisms.
- Assess participants' perceptions of the quality and relevance of training programs, support services, and overall experience.

Employer Satisfaction:

- Gauge employer satisfaction with the skills and qualifications of the workforce.
- Collect feedback from employers on their satisfaction with services received and the effectiveness of workforce training programs in meeting industry needs.

Post-Employment Outcomes:

- Track post-employment outcomes, such as retention, for program participants after completing training programs.
- Monitor the long-term impact of workforce development initiatives on individuals' economic mobility.

Job Placement Rates:

- Track the percentage of program participants successfully placed in employment.
- Differentiate between short-term and long-term job placements to assess sustainability.

Skill Attainment and Certification Rates:

- Measure the attainment of specific skills and certifications by program participants.
- Evaluate the alignment of acquired skills with industry demands.

Leveraged Resources:

- Measure the ability to attract and leverage additional resources, such as grants, partnerships, and private investments.
- Assess the sustainability and scalability of workforce development initiatives.



## Coordination of Cost Arrangements:

- a. Describe the coordination of administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate.

Coordination of administrative cost arrangements, including pooling of funds for administrative costs, are agreed upon through the Infrastructure Funding Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding among AJC partners. MOU/IFAs are developed with on site partners in the AJCs in order to establish methods of cost sharing. IFAs are updated quarterly and reviewed by partner leadership for accuracy and monitoring of shared costs and expenditures. The fiscal staff for the local board invoices partners monthly to ensure timely payment of shared costs. Program funds are also braided with other Federal and State programs, such as Trade Adjustment Act, TN Promise, TN Reconnect, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Employment and Training (E&T), TANF, Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP), Disabled Veterans Outreach Programs, and Re-Employment Services Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) in order to eliminate duplication and leverage dollars to maximize resources and services.

AJC partners also enter into MOUs in order to leverage resources, eliminate duplication of services, and improve effectiveness, thereby decreasing administrative and program costs. Current MOUs and IFAs reflect the sharing of infrastructure costs among partner programs, based on proportionate use of the AJCs and relative benefit received. Under the guidance of the regional planning council, the local areas in East TN will also consider utilizing cost sharing arrangements when appropriate, for administrative costs such as the development of a) regional plans, b) outreach materials, c) regional Annual Report, d) seeking regional technical assistance, and e) applying for regional grant funding.

- b. Identify any additional funding resources the region plans to collectively seek, including opportunities for LWDAs to partner towards application of non-WIOA grants.

The East Region may seek to collaborate on the following non-WIOA grant opportunities:

Federal Grants and Programs: Explore federal grants offered by agencies that align with workforce development goals.

- USDOL Critical Sector Job Quality Grants
- ARC Grants (WORC, INSPIRE, etc.)
- EDA Grants
- Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)

State-Level Funding Programs: Collaborate with state agencies to identify and apply for state-level funding opportunities and grant programs that complement WIOA funding and support specific workforce development initiatives.

- Youth Employment/Career Exploration Program Funding
- State Apprenticeship Funding
- Office of Reentry Funding

Multi-level Government Funding (WIOA Matching or Expansion Grants): Explore opportunities with state, county, and city government leaders to provide matching or expansion funding to augment limited WIOA resources. This could include funding to support additional infrastructure needed to provide direct localized support for initiatives requiring allocation of resources beyond the capacity of current fund levels.

Corporate Partnerships and Sponsorships: Engage with local businesses and corporations to explore opportunities for sponsorships or partnerships.

- Eastman Chemical Company (NE), Oak Ridge National Laboratory (E), and Tennessee Valley Authority (SE)

Private Foundation Grants: Seek funding from private foundations that have an interest in supporting workforce development, education, and skills training.

The RPC for each local area will seek any additional funding opportunities that align and support the needs of in-demand sectors and workforce development initiatives in the region.



- c. Identify opportunities for the RPC to collaborate with industry groups or sector partnerships to coordinate cost-sharing arrangements, or to partner towards application of sector-based grant funds.

Below are possible opportunities for collaboration in the East Region:

**Sector Task Forces:** Utilize task forces comprised of representatives from in-demand sectors within the region to engage in regular discussions to identify workforce needs, skills gaps, and opportunities for collaboration. Align training programs, education curricula, and workforce initiatives with the specific needs of each industry sector.

- Industry Events and Job Fairs
- Advocacy for Sector-Specific Policies
- Sector Talent Retention Strategies
- Shared Resources for Outreach and Recruitment

**Sector Partnership Grants:** Collaborate with industry groups to apply for sector-specific grant funds. Leverage the collective expertise and insights of industry partners to strengthen grant applications.

**Cost-Sharing for Regional Training Programs:** Coordinate cost-sharing arrangements for training programs that benefit in-demand industries across the East region.

**Regional Apprenticeship Programs:** Pool resources to create apprenticeship opportunities that address common skill requirements within the region.

**Cross-Sector Training Initiatives:** Identify common skills across industries and develop training programs that facilitate workforce mobility.

A current example is the US DOL Critical Sectors Job Quality Grant. As a result of the needs expressed by the Hospitality & Tourism sector task force in the East LWDA, the East Grand Region is working with industry partners and the University of Tennessee at Knoxville to conduct statewide research in preparation to apply for the aforementioned grant. This opportunity will lead to funding and implementation of regional RAPs, sector and cross-sector training initiatives, etc.

By actively engaging with industry groups and sector partnerships, the RPC can strengthen its capacity to coordinate cost-sharing arrangements, access sector-based grant funds, and implement targeted workforce development strategies that align with the needs of key industries in the region.

## Public Comment:

- a. Describe the process used by the region to provide a period of no more than 30 days for public comment.

The process for providing a period of no more than 30 days for public comment involves several key steps to ensure transparency, engagement, and feedback from partners and community. Below is an outline of the process used by East Region:

**Public Notice:** Issuance of a public notices to inform the community about the upcoming public comment period. The notice is disseminated through various channels: local newspapers, local workforce development board (LWDB) websites, social media, and community bulletin boards.

**Document Availability:** The relevant documents, proposals, plans, or initiatives are made available to the public. Copies of the documents are made available at accessible locations such as LWDB offices and online platforms.

**Public Meetings:** Public meetings are scheduled during the public comment period to allow community members to express their views, ask questions, and provide feedback. These meetings are held at convenient times and locations to maximize community participation.

**Feedback Channels:** East Region provides multiple channels for submitting feedback, including email, postal mail, and in-person submissions. The various available options are clearly communicated to the public.

**Public Comment Period Duration:** The start and end dates of the comment period are clearly communicated in the public notice.

**Feedback Compilation:** Systematically compile all received public comments, whether submitted in writing, online, or verbally during public meetings. Maintain transparency in the compilation process and avoid selective inclusion or exclusion of comments.

**Analysis and Reporting:** Analyze the compiled public comments to identify common themes, concerns, or suggestions. Prepare a report summarizing the feedback received and detailing any modifications or adjustments made based on public input.

**Public Response:** Publicly respond to the comments received, acknowledging the input from the community. Clearly communicate any changes, modifications, or decisions made in response to public feedback.

**Documentation:** Document the entire public comment process, including the public notice, meeting transcripts, and submitted comments. These documents are accessible to the public, promoting transparency and accountability.

## Stakeholder Involvement:

- a) Describe how stakeholder requirements were met for the regional plan, pursuant to the TDLWD Regional and Local Plan policy.

The RPC, made up of members from required and additional partners across the 34 county region, met on January 24, 2024 to discuss and provide input on the East Regional Plan for the period of 2024-2027. Prior to the meeting, all available resource data, plan guidance and previous plans were shared with all stakeholders invited for analysis. The meeting notices were also posted on the LWDB's websites and in the American Job Centers.

During the stakeholder engagement session, TDLWD staff provided an overview of WIOA planning requirements and shared WIRED data. Following the presentation, the RPC focused on strategy topics related to the Regional Planning Guidance. The RPC facilitated breakout sessions for each strategy topic, and each group presented recommendations and suggested approaches to address concerns and opportunities for growth. Information gathered during the sessions was incorporated into the plan responses.

The RPC Executive Committee, consisting of Local Workforce Development Board Executive Directors and Regional Directors for TDLWD, met weekly during the planning process and will continue with the required quarterly meetings. The RPC will review quarterly progress reports to determine the status of regional initiatives.

The Regional Plan will be released for public comment for a minimum of 15 business days with a final opportunity for input from the public during an afternoon and evening session in each local area.

- b) Describe outreach efforts to all required planning partners and provide relevant information on all planning meetings, listening sessions, or other public meetings related to the planning process.

East RPC holds quarterly meetings and all partners are invited to participate. Meetings alternate between in-person and virtual. During the creation of the Regional Plan the East RPC provided information on regional initiatives, programs, and strategies. At that time, input, feedback, and information was solicited from all regional partners. Additionally, when posted publicly for comment on each LWDB website, the RPC provided options for the public to have an opportunity to comment or offer feedback via public listening sessions conducted both in person and virtually. Comments could also be submitted via email to each LWDB.

No comments were submitted for the East Regional Plan.

For details on the public comments period and stakeholder requirements, refer to pages 34 and 35.

Listening Sessions:

Northeast - Monday, March 18 at 3 & 6 PM

Southeast - Wednesday, March 27 at 6 PM

East - Monday, March 18 at 3 & 6 PM

**Attachments:**

- a. Documentation of CLEO approval (sample provided)

# Appendix A



Figure 1

Source: TN Department of Labor and Workforce Development, WIR<sup>2</sup>ED Division, QCEW, August 2023

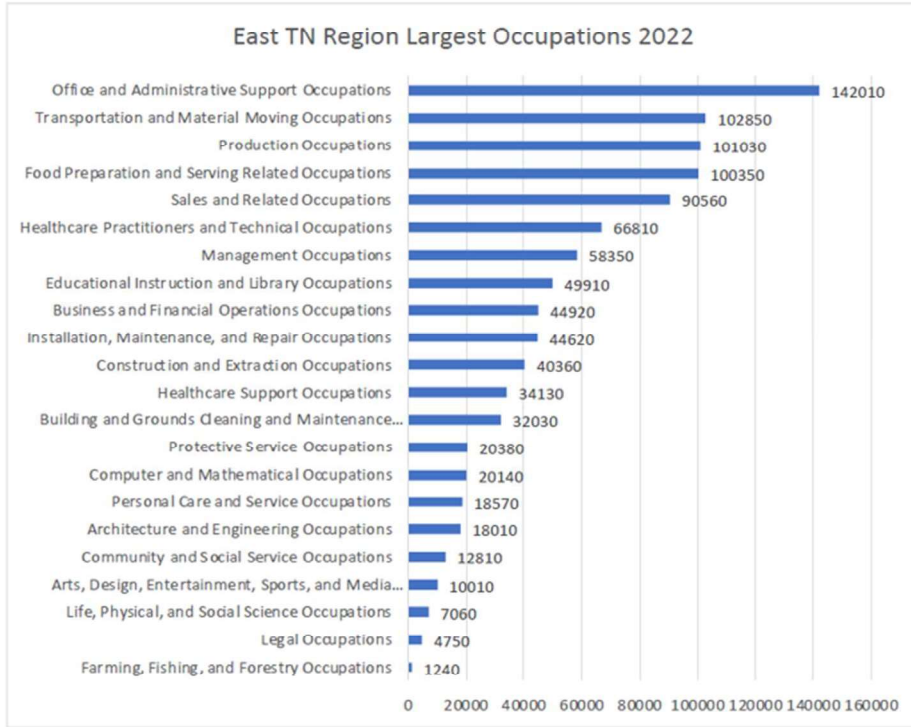


Figure 2

Source: TN Department of Labor and Workforce Development, WIR<sup>2</sup>ED Division, OEWS, August 2023

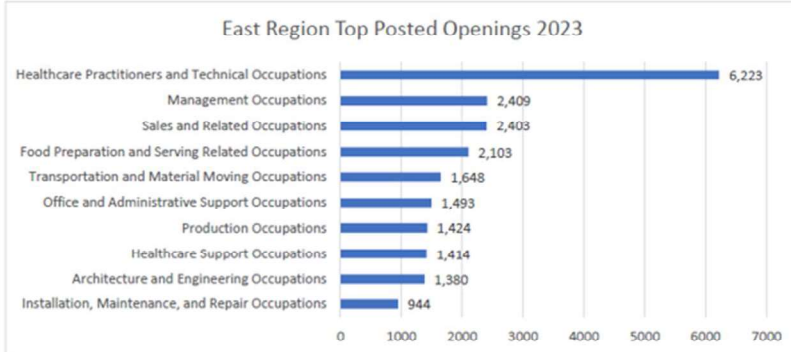


Figure 3

Source: jobs4tn.gov Online Advertised Jobs August 2023

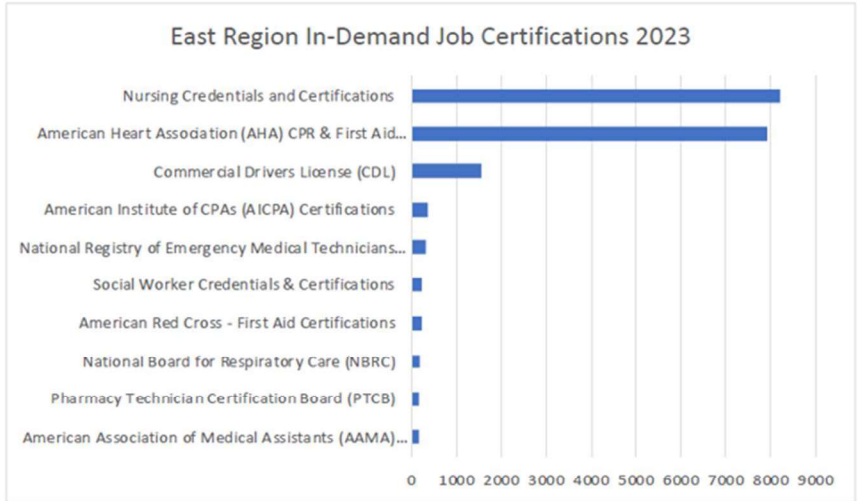


Figure 4  
 Source: jobs4tn.gov Online Advertised Jobs August 2023

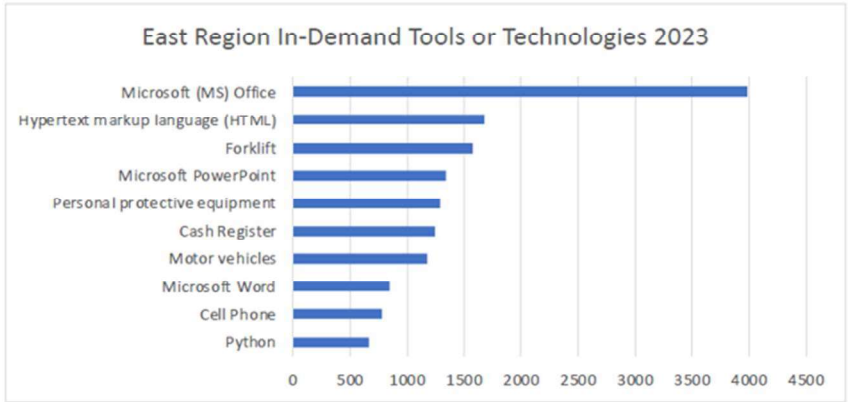


Figure 5  
 Source: jobs4tn.gov Online Advertised Jobs August 2023



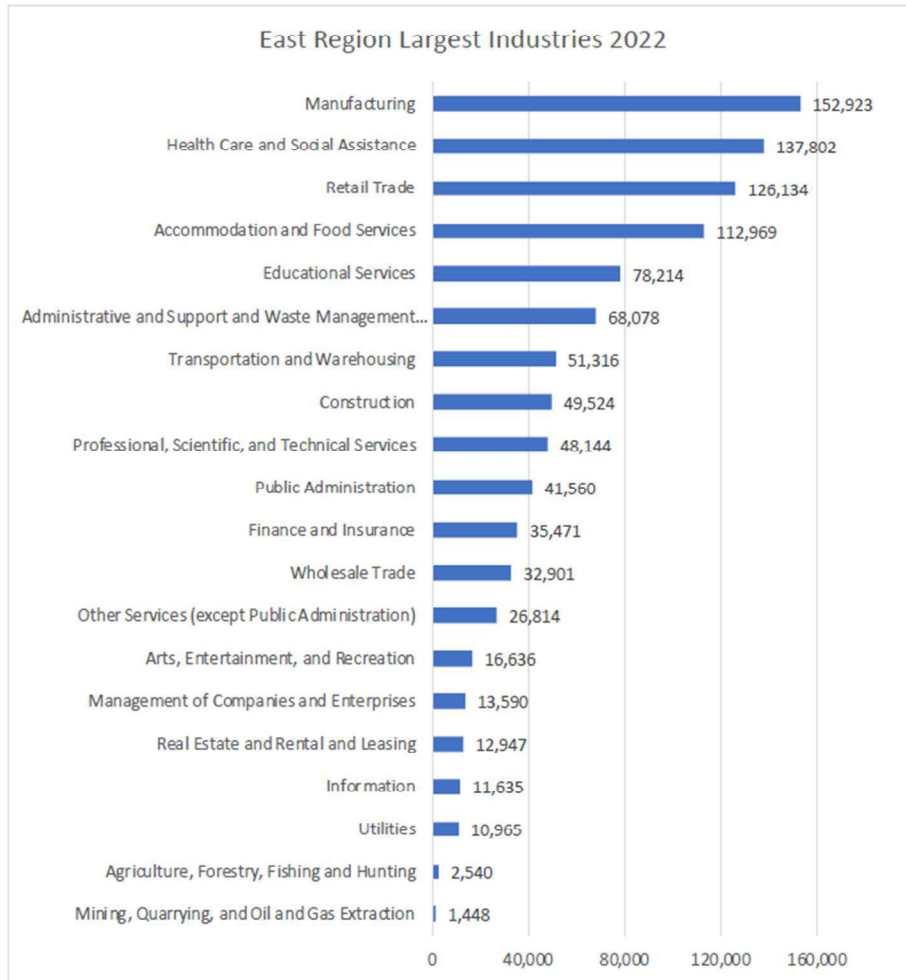


Figure 6

Source: TN Department of Labor and Workforce Development, WIR2ED Division, QCEW, August 2023

#### East TN Region – Significant Barriers to Employment

	Northeast LWDA	East LWDA	Southeast LWDA	West Region	State Total
Number of American Indians or Alaskan Natives alone	909	2440	1303	4652	15,219
Population Ages 15-19	38,528	83,422	41,142	163,092	438,290
Population Ages 20-24	32,305	70,100	39,408	149,973	443,703
Population Ages 55+	181,970	406,657	209,364	797,991	1,784,308
Number of Veterans 2022	39,692	86,556	40,149	166,397	449,163
Number Below Poverty	82,656	171,071	90,152	343,879	927,587
Number With Disability	102,094	187,125	112,242	401,461	1,019,661
Number of Single Parent Families	97,636	214,500	120,576	432,712	1,234,824
Probationers and Parolees 2023	5,953	12,596	4,883	23,432	71,142
Community Correction 2023	356	117	212	685	3,401
Mental Health Court Statistics (FY 2023)	0	0	10	10	96
Limited English Speaking	919	5,879	3,100	9,798	42,056
Foster Care Services - Youth Aged 2022	45	189	64	298	801
Clients In Recovery Courts 2023	65	312	84	461	1,399
Disadvantaged Youth and Adults	61,910	127,625	69,660	259,195	693,590
TANF 24 Months From 2022	176	267	190	633	1,816
Prison Population Total 2023	1,393	1,934	1,843	5,270	19,063
Jail Population Total 2023	2,728	4,558	2,819	10,105	25,696

Figure 7

Source: Sources: **Population:** U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey, 5-year Estimates. **Probationers and Parolees:** Lisa Helton and Adam Dawson, TN Dept of Correction. **Mental Health Court and Recovery Court Statistics:** Rebekah Provost-Emmons, Recovery Court Administrator, Office of Criminal Justice Services, Division of Substance Abuse Services. **Limited English Speaking:** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2021. **Foster Care Services:** Dave Aguzzi, Office of Independent Living, TN Dept of Children's Services. **TANF 24 Months from Ending Eligibility:** Lakecia Peterson and Rebecca Mungle, Division of Family Assistance and Child Support, TN Dept of Human Services. **Jail Population:** Jail Summary Report, TN Dept of Correction, Decision Support, <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/correction/documents/JailJune2023.pdf>. **Prison Population:** Linda F. Booker, Tennessee Bed Space and Operating Capacity Report, <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/correction/documents/BedJune2023.pdf>. TEGl 01-23 Updated Disadvantaged Youth and Adults Data



## Regional Plan Signatures

This Regional Plan represents our area's collective efforts to maximize and coordinate efforts and resources available under Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act. (WIOA)

**Instructions:**

The Chief Local Elected Officials in this region must sign and date this form.

By signing below, the Chief Local Elected Officials in this region request approval of region's 2024-2027 Regional Plan.

Chief Local Elected Official Name	Signature	Date
<i>Glen Jacobs</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>	<i>4/5/24</i>
Chief Local Elected Official Name	Signature	Date
Chief Local Elected Official Name	Signature	Date

## Regional Plan Signatures

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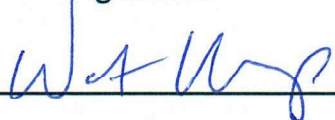
By signing below, the Chief Local Elected Officials in this region request approval of region's 2024-2027 Regional Plan.

Chief Local Elected Official Name	Signature	Date
Richard Venable		04/08/2024

## Regional Plan Signatures

This Regional Plan represents our area's collective efforts to maximize and coordinate efforts and resources available under Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act. (WIOA)

By signing below, the Chief Local Elected Officials in this region request approval of region's 2024-2027 Regional Plan.

Southeast Chief Local Elected Official Name	Signature	Date
Hamilton County Mayor Weston Wamp		4/8/24

East Chief Local Elected Official Name	Signature	Date

Northeast Chief Local Elected Official Name	Signature	Date