

SOUTHERN 14 WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD, INC.

DEAN ROGAN SR, CHAIRMAN

PAM BARBEE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MEMO

TO: Policy and Planning Committee
FROM: Pamela Barbee
DATE: February 26, 2026



The Policy and Planning Committee will meet:

Time: Feb 26, 2026 10:00 AM Central Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87821518885>

Meeting ID: 878 2151 8885
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The purpose for this meeting is to:

1. To review and accept Regional Plan
2. To review and accept the Local Plan

Regional Plan Modification Summary

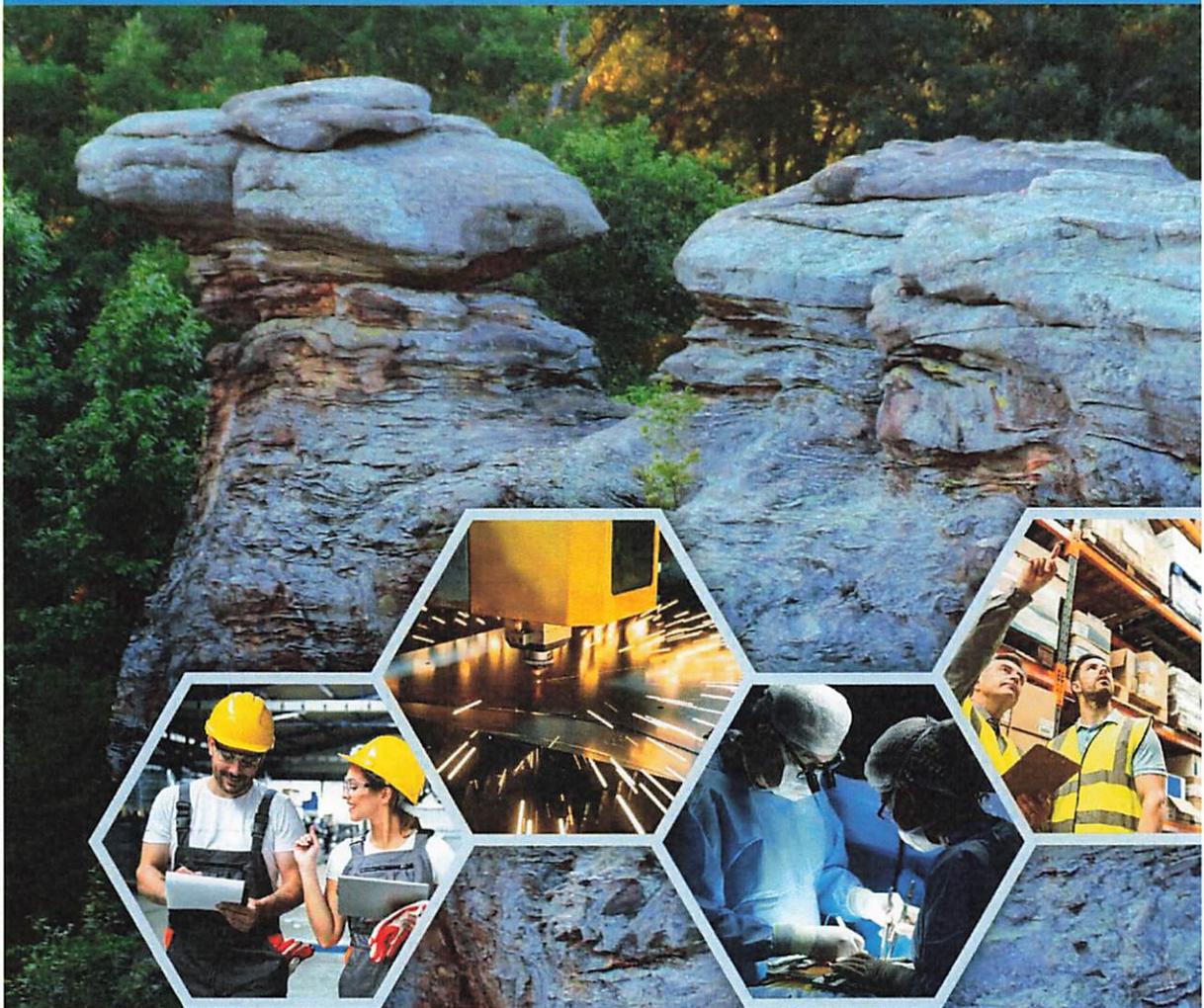
To summarize, this was a modification year so only new updates are provided in the summary. The phrase Workforce Equity Lens was replaced with responsiveness, inclusivity, and accessibility (RIA) language in Chapter 1.E, 2.E and 3.H. You will also notice that economic and workforce data was updated with the data package provided by the state. Finally, sector initiatives were updated to include the language Talent Pipeline Management, which is an approach to help align industry demands to workforce initiatives.

Local Plan Modification Summary

To summarize, this was a modification year so only new updates are provided in the summary. The phrase Workforce Equity Lens was replaced with responsiveness, inclusivity, and accessibility (RIA) language in Questions and Chapter B.2, J.2, K.2, K.3, 4.L, 5.G, and 6.D. Four additional new questions were added to the template for 2026. Those are found in Chapter 4.H questions 4-6 on page 34-36.

Southern Economic Development Region 8 WIOA Regional Plan – Effective July 1, 2024

Revised July 1, 2026



SOUTHERN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REGION VISION – Collaborate with education, workforce, economic development, and partner agencies serving the unique and diverse nature of southern Illinois to: 1) provide program participants the ability to pursue a career pathway leading to long-term employment with a family-sustaining wage; and 2) assist area businesses to be competitive in a global economy.

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Chapter 1: Economic and Workforce Analysis – Regional Component

This chapter provides the regional planning process and explains how the region has collected and analyzed regional information including labor market information to determine targeted industries and occupations for the SEDR.

1.A. Analysis

Multiple efforts have been ongoing to engage active participation in the work of the Regional and Local Plan. Participation in available WIOA Professional Development webinars and attendance at a regional overview session of the proposed State Plan preceded separate planning meetings. An interactive in-person and Zoom session was facilitated in Marion on 12/14/23 with over 25 regional leaders participating. Both leaders of the two local workforce areas welcomed the group and lead discussion. Robyn Russell, CEO of Man-Tra-Con and the Southern Illinois Workforce Development Board of LWIA 25 and Pam Barbee, Executive Director of the Southern 14 Workforce Board of LWIA 26 continue to provide guidance and full engagement in the planning process. The group work of the three-hour meeting included an overview of the WIOA Professional Development webinar on the Regional and Local Planning Guide updates. The group also examined the PY 2022 updated Regional Plan, updated Planning guidance, and the Labor Market packet provided by IDES Labor Market Economist, Eric Makela. All required WIOA partners were present and the regional planning commissions were represented including: Southern Five, Greater Wabash, Greater Egypt and Southeastern. The Regional Planning Commission directors have continued to share Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) documents to inform the work of the Regional Planning group. Economic Development Directors from the region were also present: SiNOW, Jefferson County Development Corporation, City of Carbondale Economic Development Director, Johnson 2000, One Shawnee, and the Southern Illinois Community Foundation continue to inform our work. Separate meetings were held with University of Illinois Extension group leaders, facilitated by Jody Johnson, County Extension Director III, on 1/22/24 and 2/6/24 with 15 participants sharing important on-going work in youth development, alleviating food deserts, and work of the Dixon Springs Ag Center. Susan Odum, U of I Extension Specialist Community Development, also assisted with important information about Create Bridges focused on the retail and hospitality sectors. Community College presidents and K-12 Superintendents have been engaged in the process through the Education and Workforce Committee of SiNOW and the new Career Success Network designation. Employers have been engaged at monthly meetings of the Employer and Econ group and the Business Growth and Development Committee of SiNOW.

On-going work with special grant funds to assist Returning-Citizens with welding certifications while incarcerated and job placement upon release have given the group special insight into the challenges for recently released citizens in deep southern Illinois. Special DCEO grants focused on the homeless have also expanded the understanding of challenges to access of services for this group. Work with the NAACP and several community organizations dedicated to the development of career opportunities for people of color continue to inform the work of the system concerning incorrect perceptions concerning lack of employment and access to public workforce funding. Apprenticeship grants have allowed more in-depth conversations with employers of every size and spurred collaborative work with high schools and community colleges within the 19 county region. The region understands that access is not only about close geographic proximity

to services but also the tools necessary to access remotely and more importantly changing the perceptions of those most in need about access to services.

Every effort is made to avoid duplication of effort and to utilize existing feedback group opportunities throughout the region. Leaders throughout the region are already serving on economic development boards and the work of these groups is well-represented in this Regional Plan. Several Zoom meetings of the Planning and Data group occurred in January. The Public Comment opportunity was advertised in the Southern Illinoisan. A final meeting occurred at the conclusion of the Public Comment period.

1.A.1. Economic Conditions

The Southern Economic Development Region varies from other EDRs in the reluctance of its rural employers to utilize Illinois Job Link to post actual job openings. It is common for hundreds of vacancies to exist with local employers who prefer to utilize “word of mouth” rather than the state labor market system to find employees. This undocumented need affects many areas of data. Utilizing the existing data and the input of economic development partners and employers, the SEDR is prioritizing in-demand industries and occupations identified in the 2024 Regional Plan Data Packet. In addition, data utilized by Regional Planning Commissions and the Chmura JOBSeq have been discussed. For the purposes of the Regional and Local Plan document, the IDES produced Labor Market Materials have been utilized.

As the State of Illinois WIOA Unified State plan states, “specialized industry clusters in more rural parts of the state, while important to their local economies, may not be apparent in an analysis of statewide data. As a result, the cluster identification process should occur in each of the State’s Economic Development Regions to determine the economic drivers in each. Targeted regional clusters determine in-demand occupations in that region. Public sector training funds are guided by in-demand occupations. Ensuring these training investments align with economic development activities will give the highest chance of success for both efforts.”¹

¹ State of Illinois WIOA Unified State Plan 2020-2024, page 49

The following chart shows the Gross Regional Product for the SEDR year ending 2024:

Industry	2024 GRP
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	\$857,585,454
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	\$1,748,263,479
Utilities	\$534,444,420
Construction	\$638,600,181
Manufacturing	\$1,713,801,638
Wholesale Trade	\$710,406,556
Retail Trade	\$1,517,486,610
Transportation and Warehousing	\$569,510,321
Information	\$217,426,133
Finance and Insurance	\$1,345,685,015
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	\$472,691,959
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	\$375,200,897
Management of Companies and Enterprises	\$133,612,983
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	\$268,449,658
Educational Services	\$64,568,812
Health Care and Social Assistance	\$1,873,837,610
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	\$63,785,692
Accommodation and Food Services	\$580,578,994
Other Services (except Public Administration)	\$371,781,202
Government	\$3,139,552,353
Other Vectors	\$1,966,617,408
	\$19,163,887,375

Source: The Conference Board

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1.A.1.a. Targeted Industries and Occupations

Targeted industries and occupations were selected region wide for the Southern Economic Development Region

- Supply of trained workers and employer demand.
- Wages that are family sustaining.
- Number of jobs already established in the region.

² 2026 IDES Labor Market Information EDR 8, page 14

- Favorable location quotients.
- Labor market information showing a favorable employer outlook for the region.
- Availability and quality of existing educational programs through area high schools, adult education and community colleges were reviewed to ensure a pipeline of work-ready, highly-skilled job candidates for the chosen occupations.

Among industrial sectors as identified by the North American Industrial Classification System, the regional sectors with the highest employment location quotients are Agriculture (4.43), Mining (4.18) and Utilities (1.51). All of these sectors are integrated with high-impact industry groups such as Quantum Computing, AI & Microelectronics, Clean Energy Production & Manufacturing, Next Generation Agriculture, Ag Tech & Food Processing, and Transportation, Distribution & Logistics.

Among occupations requiring a certificate, license, or associate's degree, the following have been identified as in-demand occupations in the Southern Region: Nursing Assistants; Registered Nurses; Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers; Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary; Childcare Workers; Medical Assistants; Automotive Service Technicians & Mechanics.

Among occupations requiring a Bachelor's Degree or higher level of education, the following have been identified as in-demand occupations in the Southern Region: General & Operations Managers; Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education; Business Operations Specialists, All Other; Accountants & Auditors; Financial Managers; Medical & Health Services Managers; Managers, All Other. ⁴

Identifying Key Industry Sectors

Healthcare and Manufacturing are the two key industry sectors leading growth in the region while providing high wage jobs. Transportation and warehousing is still a major cluster for the district, but has not had the same growth as in Healthcare or Manufacturing. Covid-19 and associated supply chain demands caused an increase in both transportation and warehousing. Readerlink is a new book warehouse and distribution center in Williamson County with a new distribution center at Aisin facilities and soon FedEx distribution. The newly awarded \$14 million dollar federal investment in the Southern Illinois Multimodal Station in Carbondale, Illinois and the proposed Shawnee and Cairo Port Districts could make a notable difference in the Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics sector within the next four years. Hospitality occupations are expected to grow substantially with the Millennium Destination Development expected to open in multiple phases over the next four years. Hospitality workers are already in shortage in multiple types of facilities throughout the region.

According to IDES current employment statistics, nondurable goods manufacturing surpassed pre-Covid levels and is among strongest in the region in terms of payroll. Educational and Health Services payrolls account for a larger share of total payrolls in the SEDR than the state. Service providing Industries: Educational and Health Services, Leisure and Hospitality are expected to grow substantially.

The Job Postings and Wages by Occupational Grouping shows Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations at 7,591 average job postings with annual median wages of \$66,332.

⁴2026 IDES Labor Market Information EDR 8, page 2
SEDR 8 Regional and Local Plans

EDR 8: Southern								
Soc Code	SOC Occupational Title	Unique Job Postings Jan 2025 to Dec 2025	Entry Wage		Median Wage		Experienced Wage	
			Hourly	Annual	Hourly	Annual	Hourly	Annual
00-0000	Total all occupations	22,946	\$15.47	\$32,185	\$22.15	\$46,069	\$33.38	\$69,416
11-0000	Management Occupations	1,682	\$25.37	\$52,773	\$43.08	\$89,626	\$62.66	\$130,340
13-0000	Business and Financial Operations Occupations	696	\$21.32	\$44,343	\$31.55	\$65,638	\$42.84	\$89,106
15-0000	Computer and Mathematical Occupations	133	\$20.11	\$41,833	\$34.84	\$72,469	\$48.45	\$100,788
17-0000	Architecture and Engineering Occupations	250	\$29.88	\$62,159	\$38.06	\$79,153	\$50.09	\$104,187
19-0000	Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	230	\$16.08	\$33,427	\$27.14	\$56,452	\$37.09	\$77,149
21-0000	Community and Social Service Occupations	592	\$18.87	\$39,240	\$26.14	\$54,383	\$35.11	\$73,016
23-0000	Legal Occupations	44	\$17.53	\$36,476	\$30.21	\$62,828	\$56.44	\$117,401
25-0000	Educational Instruction and Library Occupations	407	\$15.93	\$33,141	\$23.48	\$48,840	\$32.23	\$67,036
27-0000	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, & Media Occupations	485	\$14.67	\$30,510	\$19.00	\$39,526	\$30.55	\$63,530
29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	6,748	\$23.01	\$47,859	\$37.12	\$77,217	\$57.36	\$119,313
31-0000	Healthcare Support Occupations	1,127	\$15.73	\$32,733	\$17.71	\$36,830	\$20.91	\$43,485
33-0000	Protective Service Occupations	293	\$17.77	\$36,964	\$30.68	\$63,810	\$39.52	\$82,196
35-0000	Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	1,238	\$14.40	\$29,948	\$14.70	\$30,563	\$17.82	\$37,081
37-0000	Building & Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance Occupations	499	\$14.67	\$30,509	\$17.35	\$36,094	\$21.47	\$44,672
39-0000	Personal Care and Service Occupations	208	\$14.40	\$29,948	\$15.30	\$31,822	\$19.12	\$39,757
41-0000	Sales and Related Occupations	2,256	\$14.37	\$29,881	\$15.78	\$32,808	\$23.86	\$49,608
43-0000	Office and Administrative Support Occupations	1,520	\$15.51	\$32,252	\$19.57	\$40,704	\$24.62	\$51,216
45-0000	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	141	\$17.05	\$35,450	\$22.44	\$46,676	\$26.38	\$54,870
47-0000	Construction and Extraction Occupations	371	\$21.35	\$44,408	\$33.83	\$70,358	\$40.81	\$84,882
49-0000	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	961	\$18.01	\$37,472	\$26.40	\$54,928	\$34.08	\$70,890
51-0000	Production Occupations	630	\$17.55	\$36,513	\$23.55	\$48,968	\$27.87	\$57,952
53-0000	Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	2,056	\$15.65	\$32,554	\$19.49	\$40,541	\$24.42	\$50,783

Source: Unique Job Postings - Lightcast Q4 2025 Dataset
Source: Wages - Economic Information and Analysis/U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, July 2025 Release (2024 Vintage)

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1.A.1.b. Favorable Location Quotients

Industry employment projections from various sources have been examined by the RPLT8 to examine:

- Industries with high employment rates that are sustained through existing education and training programs.
- Industries declining due to environmental and technological changes that are being replaced by emerging industries and occupations.
- Industries that have potential to expand and improve the regional economy with better connections to educational and training programs.
- Industries that have high growth potential along with a high concentration location quotient.
- Industries that have matured and are now declining

Our region considers leading industrial sectors to have favorable location quotients. Leading industrial sectors include those where employers are projected to increase payroll employment and whose employed ratio, as a percentage of all payroll employment, is greater than those industrial sectors in the United States. In the Southern Region, leading sectors include Agricultural Production, Mining, Utilities, and Healthcare & Social Assistance.

Our regional also includes emerging sectors to have favorable location quotients. Emerging industrial sectors include those where employers are projected to increase payroll employment and whose employed ratio, as a percentage of all payroll employment, is still lower than those industrial sectors nationally, and therefore may be underrepresented and

under-supplied in many local areas. In the Southern Region, emerging sectors include Manufacturing, Construction, Transportation & Warehousing, Leisure & Hospitality, and Professional & Business Services.⁶

Regional Sector Analysis

Employment Changes and Location Quotients

The **maps** on the following pages **show the "where" for selected economic data** at the regional and county levels. This view allows readers to more easily **see how each county contributes** to the overall economic engine in a region **and** how regions as a whole **compare to other areas** of the state.

All maps in the next section show employment **by place of work, i.e., businesses located in each county**. They might not correspond to where workers live.

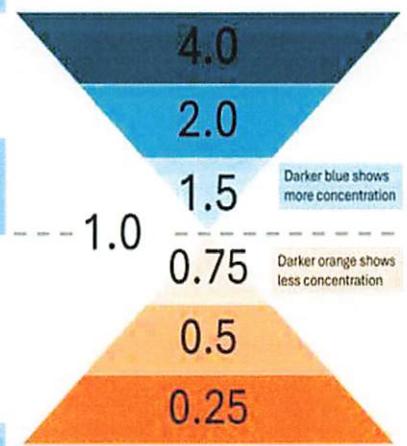
The **Employment Change** maps indicate the level of **gain or loss of employment** between Q4 2021 and Q4 2022 (latest available at time of writing). These maps can be used to understand where gains and losses occurred, and identify targets of opportunity where skilled workers may be in greater demand, or identify areas which may be in need of attention from regional workforce and economic development agencies.

The **The Location Quotient (LQ)** maps indicate counties **where sector employment is most and least concentrated** as of Q4 2022. The LQ value indicates how concentrated employment in a given sector compares to the nation.

An LQ of **1.0 means employment is in line with** the overall **national** employment for that **sector**. 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 the nation. The farther away from 1.0, the greater the difference between what is happening in the county than the nation. For example, if a sector represents 40% of employment in a county and that sector nationally represents 10% of employment, it would have an LQ of 4.0, or a concentration of employment that is 4 times higher than the nation.

Some maps on the following pages have **counties shaded black**, indicating an insufficient number of workers to reach federal employment reporting thresholds. This data is **suppressed to protect the privacy** of businesses, employers, and workers in those counties. **We use 2-digit NAICS level data to minimize** the instances of data **suppression**.

The maps on the following pages show where employment is concentrated and the degree to which it is above or below the national level. Areas with **high LQs might have an inherent advantage**, while areas with low LQs might have an inherent disadvantage for supporting a particular sector's businesses with skilled workers.



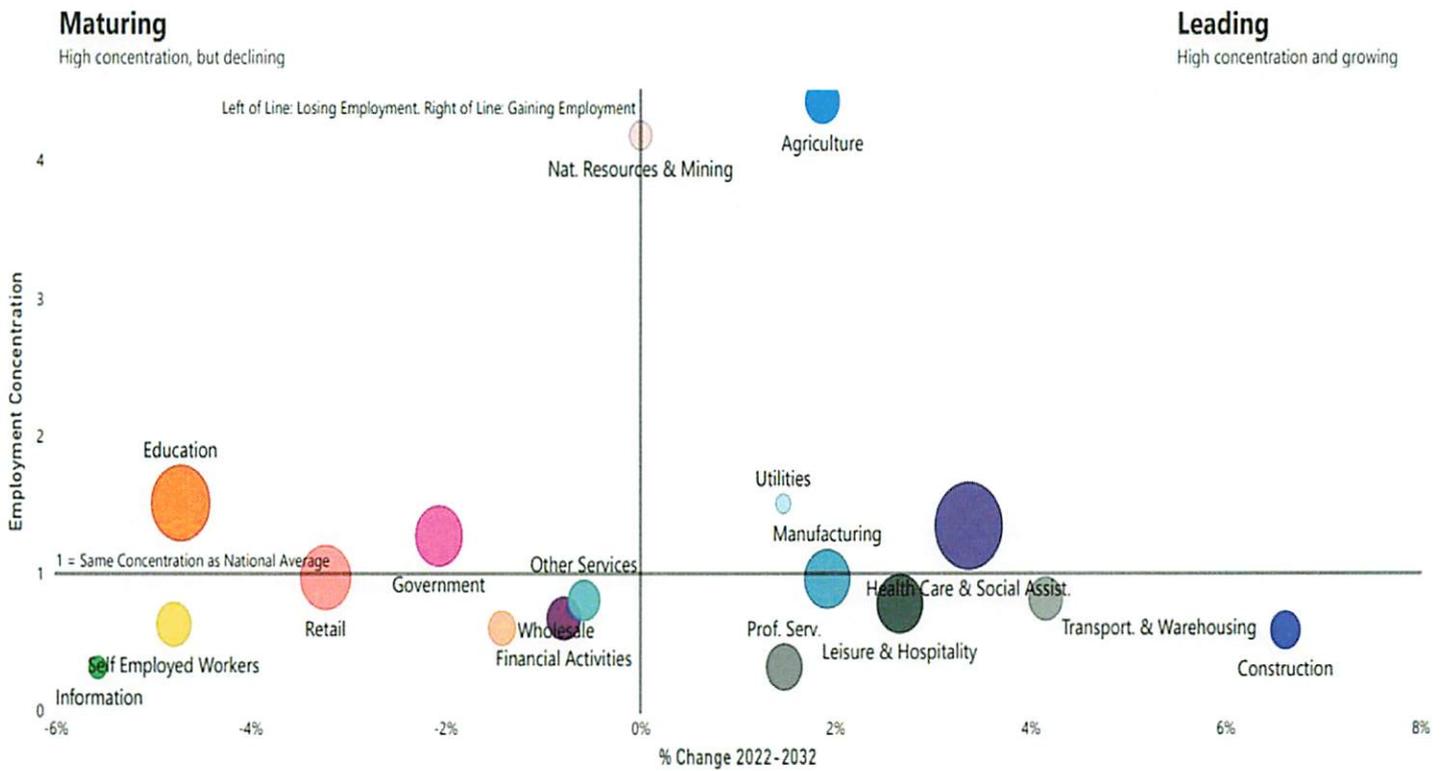
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⁶2026 IDES Labor Market Information EDR 8, page 2

⁷ 2026 Southern Regional Plan Data Packet EDR 8, page 19

Southern Region Employment Location Quotients by Sector

Bubble size corresponds to total employment in 2022. Some sectors excluded in lower left quadrant due to disproportionately low location quotients and employment declines. Education includes public and private, and government excludes education.



Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security, 2022-2032 Industry Employment Projections.

Regional Sector Analysis

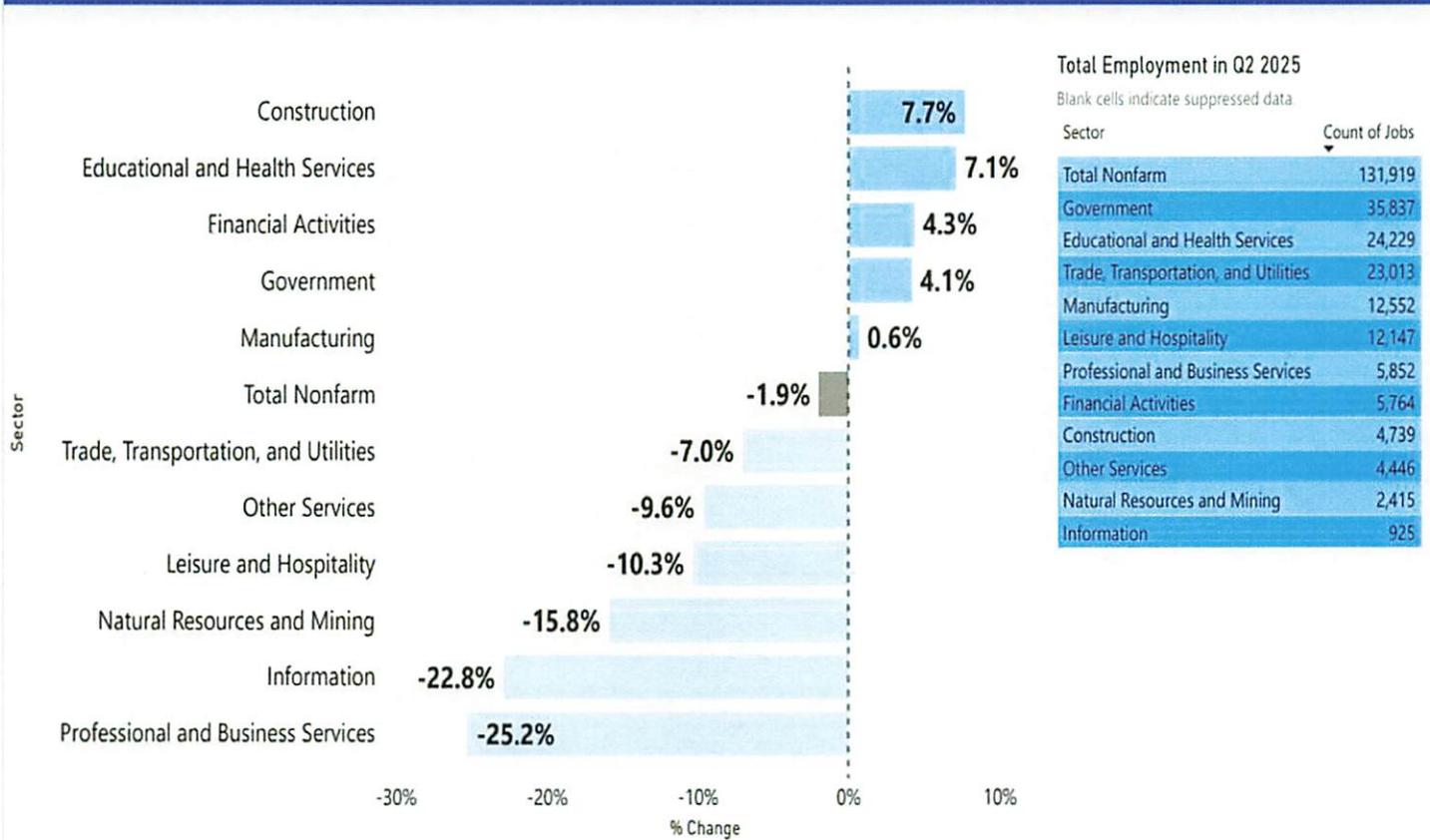
Change in Employment and Location Quotient

The following maps show the "where" for selected economic data at the regional and county levels.

This view allows readers to more easily see how each county contributes to the overall economic engine in a region and how regions as a whole compare to other areas of the state.

% Change in Employment by Sector in Southern Region, Q2 2019 - Q2 2025

Below is a high-level comparison of total employment by sector in the region for Q2 2019 (pre-pandemic) vs Q2 2025 (latest available at time of writing). Sectors are sorted by size of % employment change. On the right are total jobs in Q2 2025 by sector, sorted by employment size.

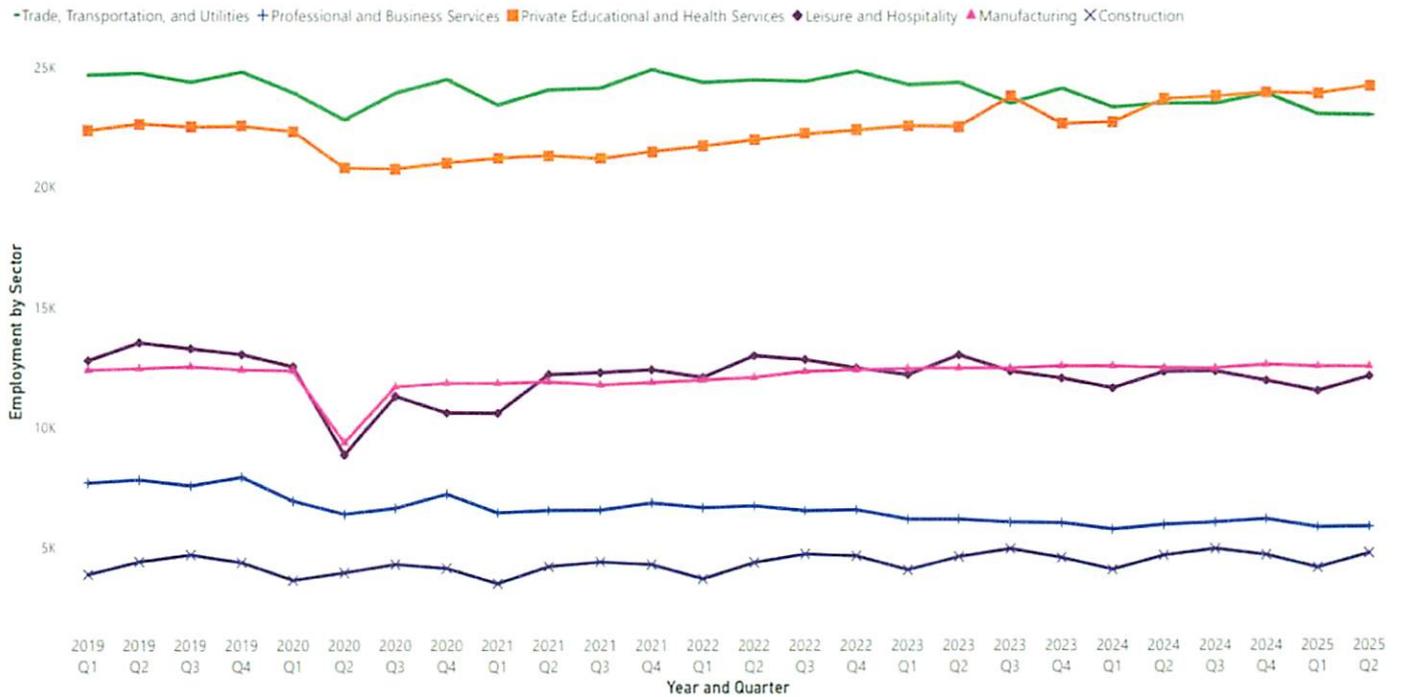


Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security, Current Employment Statistics, respective years.

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Southern Region Employment by Sector and Quarter, 2019-2025Q2 (not seasonally adjusted)

Below are quarterly employment levels by sector in the region, including quarterly employment fluctuations. E.g., transportation employment gets temporary increases in 4th quarter due to holiday e-commerce spending. Some sectors with lower statewide employment are excluded for simplicity.



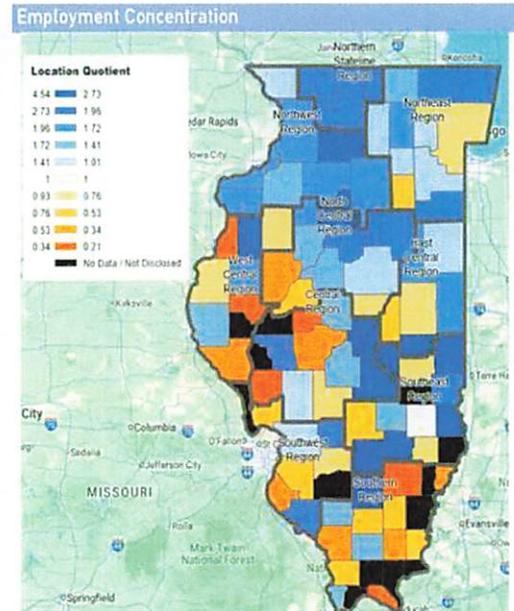
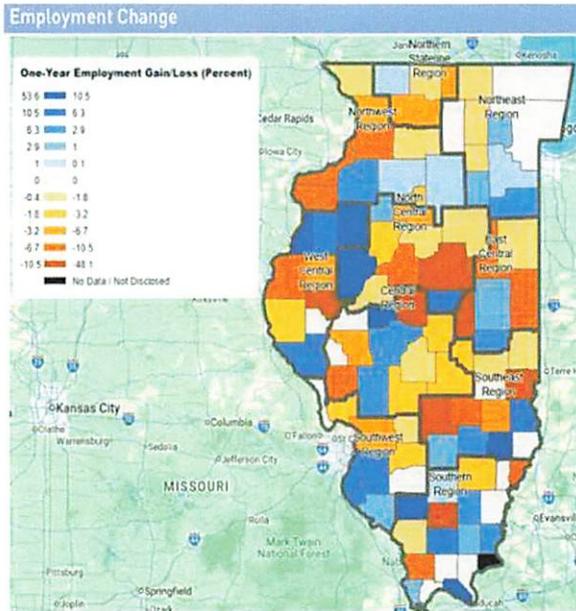
Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security, Current Employment Statistics, respective years.

Manufacturing Sector

Q4 2023- Q4 2024 % Employment Change

Component Industries (NAICS 31-33)

- Food (NAICS 311)
- Beverage and Tobacco Products (NAICS 312)
- Textile Mills (NAICS 313)
- Textile Product Mills (NAICS 314)
- Apparel (NAICS 315)
- Leather and Allied Products (NAICS 316)
- Wood Products (NAICS 321)
- Paper (NAICS 322)
- Printing (NAICS 323)
- Petroleum and Coal Products (NAICS 324)
- Chemicals (NAICS 325)
- Plastics and Rubber Products (NAICS 326)
- Nonmetallic Mineral Products (NAICS 327)
- Primary Metals (NAICS 331)
- Fabricated Metal Products (NAICS 332)
- Machinery (NAICS 333)
- Computer and Electronic Products (NAICS 334)
- Electrical Equipment and Components (NAICS 335)
- Transportation Equipment (NAICS 336)
- Furniture (NAICS 337)
- Miscellaneous (NAICS 339)

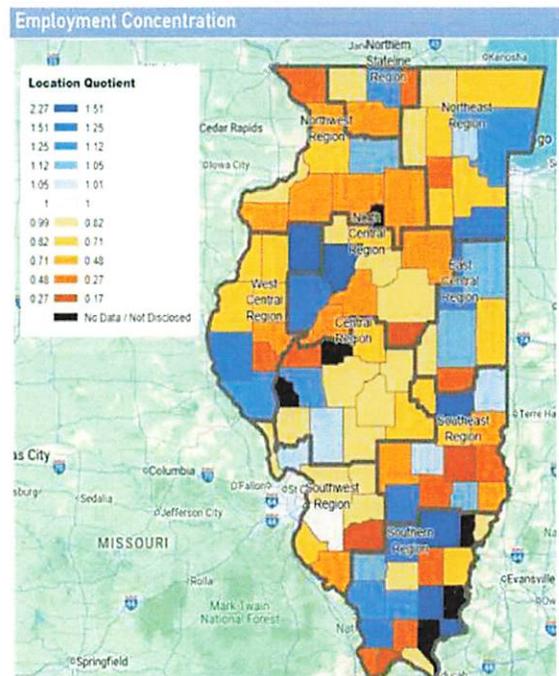
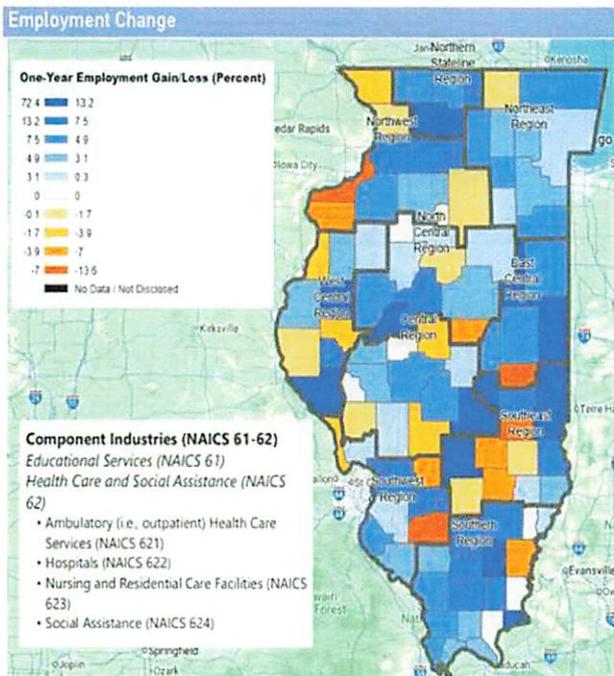


Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Q4 2023 & Q4 2024. Retrieved from the Illinois Employment Business System on Illinois WorkNet.

Education and Health Services Sector

Q4 2023- Q4 2024 % Employment Change & Q4 2024 Employment Location Quotient

It is not possible to dissect this sector into health care or education alone in some counties, due to suppression.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Q4 2023 & Q4 2024 Retrieved from the Illinois Employment Business System on Illinois WorkNet.

Trade, Transportation, and Utilities Sector

Q4 2023- Q4 2024 % Employment Change

Component Industries

Utilities (NAICS 22)

Wholesale Trade (NAICS 42)

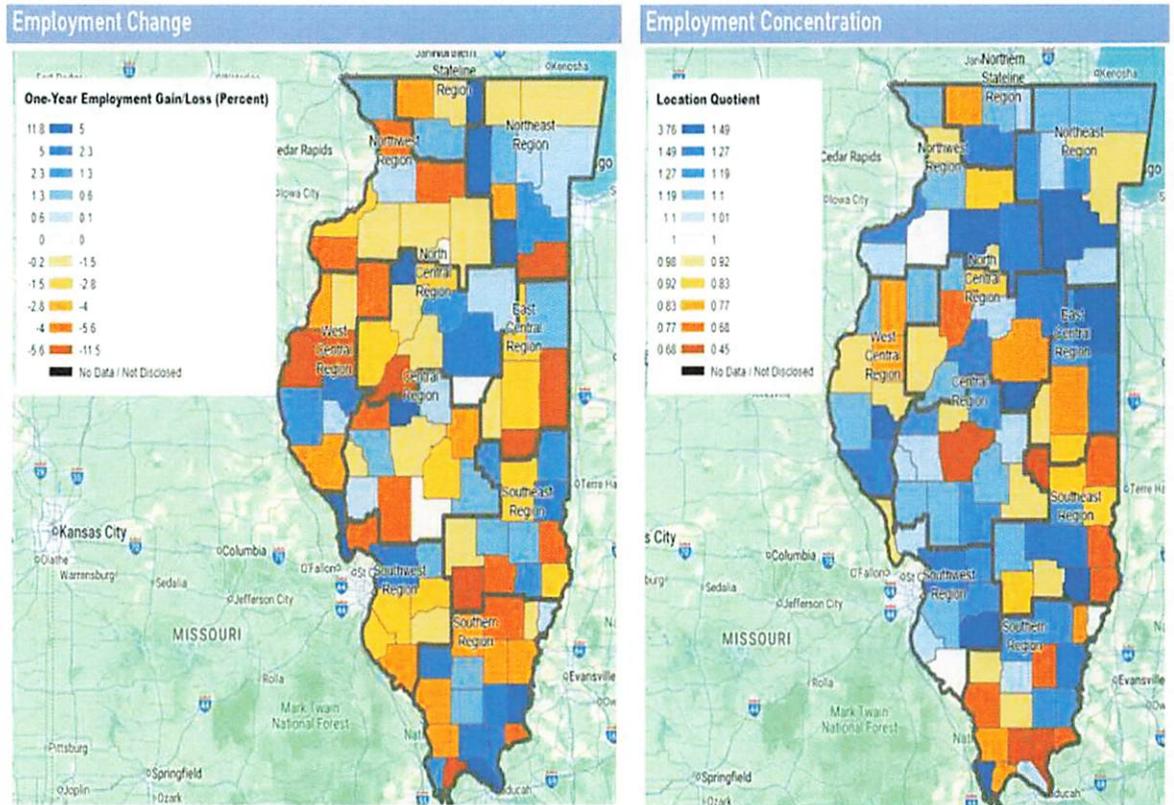
- Durable Goods (NAICS 423)
- Nondurable Goods (NAICS 424)
- Electronic Markets (NAICS 425)

Retail Trade (NAICS 44-45)

- Motor Vehicle and Parts (NAICS 441)
- Furniture and Home Furnishings (NAICS 442)
- Electronics and Appliances (NAICS 443)
- Building and Garden Equipment (NAICS 444)
- Food and Beverage (NAICS 445)
- Health / Personal Products (NAICS 446)
- Gasoline Stations (NAICS 447)
- Clothing and Accessories (NAICS 448)
- Sporting Goods & Hobbies (NAICS 451)
- General Merchandise (NAICS 452)
- Miscellaneous (NAICS 453)
- Nonstore Retailers (NAICS 454)

Transportation and Warehousing (NAICS 48-49)

- Air (NAICS 481)
- Rail (NAICS 482)
- Water (NAICS 483)
- Truck (NAICS 484)
- Transit and Ground Passenger (NAICS 485)
- Pipeline (NAICS 486)
- Scenic and Sightseeing (NAICS 487)
- Support Activities (NAICS 488)
- Postal Service (NAICS 491)
- Couriers and Messengers (NAICS 492)
- Warehousing and Storage (NAICS 493)



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Q4 2023 & Q4 2024. Retrieved from the Illinois Employment Business System on Illinois WorkNet.

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1.A.1.c. Favorable Demand Projections based on Growth

These industries are more concentrated in the region and are growing. Some of the key features include:

- Strengths that help a community stand out from the competition
- Small, high growth industry clusters that can be expected to become more dominant over time
- High location quotient and high employment growth

The industries identified by the Regional Planning Commissions and IDES Labor Market Data contain the following:

Non-durable goods manufacturing – this sector is among the strongest in the region in terms of payroll growth;

Transportation, warehousing, and utilities although showing a smaller share of total payrolls than the state, has surpassed pre-pandemic levels and significant developments in the region will create substantial growth

Educational and Health Services- account for a larger share of total payrolls in the SEDR compared to the state and have surpassed pre-recession levels

Leisure and Hospitality recovery is posting better than the state overall and recent investments in current and future leisure and hospitality venues make the leaders very confident in its growth

Energy is categorized by the data group as emerging but some believe it also belongs in the Growth category due to recent significant increases in solar fields, methane capture from oil wells and coalmines, and plans for energy storage facilities in the region.

Payroll employment projections are obtained from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Employment Projections program and follow these definitions:

Total job openings = Growth + Replacement openings

Growth = difference between base-year employment level and projection-year employment level

Replacement openings = Exits + Transfers

Exits = Current workers exiting the labor force

Transfers = Current workers who leave an industry or occupation to work in a different industry or occupation

Based on long-term projected growth in labor demand, the occupations that require formal training or work experience and are estimated to have the most growth are as follows, and are representative of many industries but particularly Health Care and Social Assistance, Retail Trade, Transportation, Warehousing & Utilities, and Professional & Business Services:

SOC Code	SOC Name	Annual Growth
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	22
31-1120	Home Health & Personal Care Aides	19
11-9111	Medical & Health Services Managers	13
29-1171	Nurse Practitioners	11
53-7065	Stockers & Order Fillers	10
11-1021	General & Operations Managers	9
11-3031	Financial Managers	9
11-9013	Farmers, Ranchers & Other Agricultural Managers	9
21-1018	Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder & Mental Health Counselors	9
15-1252	Software Developers	8

²¹

1.A.1.d. Favorable Demand Projections based on Replacements

Replacements is an outdated methodology, which has been replaced with "Separations." Separations has 2 parts:

- Transfers – those who permanently leave an occupation to enter a new field or to go to a different occupational category (meaning a different SOC group), and
- Exits – those who leave the labor force entirely (i.e. death, retirement, etc.)

²¹ 2026 IDES Labor Market Information 2026, page 3

Based on long-term projected job transfers, the occupations with the most replacement openings are as follows, and are most highly represented in the Retail Trade industrial sector, but also among employers in Health Care & Social Assistance and Leisure & Hospitality:²²

Table 2

1.A.1.d Favorable Demand Projections based on Replacements					
Occupation Title (SOC 2-digit)	Exits	Transfers	Growth	Total	
Healthcare					
Registered Nurses	170	105	-1	274	
Healthcare Support Occupations	473	531	35	1,039	
Nursing Assistants	137	170	-1	306	
Manufacturing					
Production Occupations	381	562	-12	931	
Team Assemblers	90	134	-10	214	
Machinists	14	20	1	35	
Welders, Cutters, Solderers & Brazers	10	21	1	32	
Transportation, Distribution & Logistics					
Transportation & Material Moving Occupations	655	891	46	1,592	
Truck Drivers, Heavy & Tractor-Trailer	84	109	7	200	

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1.A.1.e. Mature Industries and Occupations

Mature Industries - The mature industries such as coal mining, oil, and agriculture, while not the leaders in employment they once were, remain important and vital components of the regional economy. Legislation that reduced carbon monoxide and mercury impacted area businesses through closures and downsizing causing an increase in unemployment. The large increase in the availability and low-cost of natural gas has also had a large and negative impact on coal mining and oil production. (DRA 11²⁴) Local employers in healthcare, manufacturing, transportation and hospitality anticipate a continued growing demand in these fields in the coming years. State and federal investments continue to grow these industries and associated occupations.

Industrial sectors which are classified as mature are those where employers are projected to cut payroll employment but whose employed ratio, as a percentage of all payroll employment, is still greater than those industrial sectors in the United States. Mature sectors are those which have labor markets which are well-understood and typically less dynamic than leading or emerging sectors.

Among employers in the Southern Region, the Education & Health Services industrial sector is classified as mature according to recent data, in addition to the Government sector.²⁵

²² 2026 IDES Labor Market Information EDR 8, page 3

²³ 2026 IDES Labor Market Information EDR 8, page 16

²⁵ 2026 IDES Labor Market Information EDR 8, pages 3-4

1.A.1 f. Emerging Industries and Occupations

Emerging Industries - These industries contain clusters that are under-represented in the region but are growing. Often times, these industries grow quickly. Innovative technology improvements in solar and the capture of methane from both coalmines and oil wells has spurred entrepreneurial activity throughout the region. Thousands of acres of solar installation are occurring. In addition, methane recovery from coalmines in Saline County are being utilized to heat hoop houses utilized for agriculture production. In White County, the capture of methane from oil wells is being captured and supplying electricity for Bit Coin servers on site within the acres of oil wells. The availability of federal and state incentives are spurring more interest. Unfortunately, at the present time, these renewable energy projects do not require large numbers of employees. Regional leaders do want to keep them in the emerging or “exploratory” categories for support.

Saline county leaders are finalizing a large call center project that will require several hundred IT specialists within a brick and mortar facility. The IT industry already shows unmet need in some corners of the region and this new IT Center would create a larger need for IT specialists. The need for IT occupations is difficult to evaluate due to the understanding that IT stand-alone positions represent only a small portion of the actual need for persons with an IT skill set that are in demand within other occupational codes. The demand for technology and some level of IT skills is interwoven in many of the current in-demand occupations in the area. IT occupations should receive a significant increase if a projected plan in Saline County for an IT Call Center come to fruition.

Emerging industrial sectors include those where employers are projected to increase payroll employment and whose employed ratio, as a percentage of all payroll employment, is still lower than those industrial sectors in the United States. Emerging sectors are typically those which have undergone recent change by way of technological innovation, or have historically lagged national markets in business investment.

Among all employers in the Southern Region, emerging sectors include Construction, Manufacturing, Transportation & Warehousing, Professional & Business Services, and Leisure & Hospitality.²⁶

1.A.1.g. In-Demand Occupation

Industry employment projections have been studied by the RPLT8 to examine:

- Industries with high employment rates that are sustained through existing education and training programs.
- Industries declining due to environmental and technological changes that are being replaced by emerging industries and occupations.
- Industries that have potential to expand and improve the regional economy with better connections to educational and training programs.
- Industries that have high growth potential along with a high concentration location quotient.
- Industries that have matured and are now declining

²⁶ 2026 IDES Labor Market Information EDR 8, page 4

In addition to the in-demand occupations categorized under the ‘Statewide’, ‘Advanced Education’, ‘Middle Skills’, and ‘Growth’ demand tiers as developed by the Illinois Workforce Investment Board, the Southern Region includes several occupations which are categorized as ‘Local Priority’ occupations which satisfy the following criteria:

- Positive annual employment growth rate
- Positive number of regional job openings annually

Organized from most to least annual total job openings, these occupations are:

Table 3: EDR 8 Local Priority Occupations		
SOC Code	SOC Name	Annual Openings
11-9013	Farmers, Ranchers & Other Agricultural Managers	527
35-1011	Chefs & Head Cooks	20
31-2011	Occupational Therapy Assistants	19
11-3071	Transportation, Storage & Distribution Managers	14
49-9051	Electrical Power-Line Installers & Repairers	13
29-1126	Respiratory Therapists	10
29-2072	Medical Records Specialists	9
29-2056	Veterinary Technologists & Technicians	7
15-1299	Computer Occupations, All Other	7
29-2032	Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	6
17-3023	Electrical & Electronics Engineering Technologists & Technicians	6
51-9011	Chemical Equipment Operators & Tenders	4
15-1212	Information Security Analysts	4
15-1242	Database Administrators	4
29-9021	Health Information Technologists & Medical Registrars	3

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1.A.1.h. Sources of Supply and Demand Data

Supply and demand for occupations are provided through the Illinois Department of Employment Security’s (IDES) Employment Projections Program. Other input data sources include the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), the Current Population Survey (CPS), and the Current Employment Statistics Survey (CES). Skill demand is identified by cross-referencing job postings data provided through Lightcast with the Department of Labor’s most recent O*NET content model. To identify possible skill imbalances, skill demand was compared to the region’s skill stock

obtained through a combination of O*NET skill importance data and occupational employment estimates from the 2024 Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OWES) and Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS).²⁸

Southern Economic Development Region 8



Sources of Data

- [Labor Market Information \(Illinois.gov\)](#)
This is the primary page for labor market information. It may be overwhelming for a new user. Here are some of the key links that provide details on smaller geographies such as EDRs and counties.
- [Current Employment Statistics \(CES\)](#)
Produces payroll job estimates of Illinois and metro area non-farm industries.
- [Employment Projections](#)
Provides short-term and long-term employment projections for both industries and occupations.
- [Help Wanted Online \(HWOL\) Reports](#)
Compiles job ads from online job boards, newspapers and aggregator sites and tallies the hottest job opportunities by region each month.
- [Local Area Unemployment Statistics \(LAUS\)](#)
Develops monthly and annual estimates of the labor force, employed, unemployed and the unemployment rate for the state.
- [Monthly Employment and Unemployment Press Releases](#)
The Illinois Employment Situation: Statewide and metro area employment and unemployment press releases.
- [Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages \(QCEW\)](#)
Produces comprehensive quarterly counts of employment and wages for workers covered under Unemployment Insurance programs.
- [UI Program Data](#)
Provides data collected on individuals currently applying for and those receiving Unemployment Insurance.
- [Wage Information - Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics \(OWES\)](#)
Information on entry level, median, and experienced hourly (and annual) wages is available for Illinois, the Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), Economic Development Regions (EDRs), counties and the Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIAs).

[Labor Market Information \(Illinois.gov\)](#)

1.A.2. Employment Needs

The SEDR is prioritizing the in-demand industries and occupations identified in the prior section. Skills development investments will focus on these industries and occupations broadly beginning with Career Awareness and specific to competencies and credentials identified by employers. Credential preferences will be given to nationally recognized credentials in these areas. Nationally recognized credentials assess competencies and can provide a direct path to state licenses for regulated occupations. The selected occupations are defined by Career Pathways. The chart below shows the Illinois Pathways, Related Careers and National Credentials.

Industry	Illinois Pathways	Related Careers	Credentials
Healthcare	Health Science Therapeutics and Diagnostics Pathway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certified Nurse Aide • Medical Assistant • Licensed Practical Nurse • Registered Nurse 	<p>These occupations require an Illinois license. National credentials include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Health Career Association Clinical Medical Assistant (CCMA) • American Nursing Credentialing Center Nurse Practitioner Certifications

²⁸ 2026 IDES Labor Market Information EDR 8, page 5

²⁹ EDR8 Regional Profile 2-24, pg 14

Industry	Illinois Pathways	Related Careers	Credentials
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical Lab Tech 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Certification Corporation (NCC) Certifications for nurses, physicians, and other licensed health care professionals
Advanced Manufacturing	Manufacturing Product Pathway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assemblers • Precision Assemblers • Team Assemblers • Manufacturing • Manufacturing Equipment Repair • CNC • Industrial Maintenance 	<p>National Credentials recognized by National Manufacturing Associations' Manufacturing Institute:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACT Skills Certification System • Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC) Certified Production Technician • Manufacturing Skills Institute - Manufacturing Technician Certification • National Institute for Metalworking (NIMS) Credential (series) • American Welding Society (AWS) Certifications • International Society of Automation (ISA) Certification Programs
Transportation	Transportation, Distribution and Logistics Transportation Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Truck Drivers, Heavy & Tractor Trailer • Aviation Tech 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial Driver's License (CDL) • National Commission for the Certification of Crane Operators (NCCCO) Certifications. • National Center for Construction Education & Research (NCCER): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mobile Crane Operator ○ Tower Crane Operator • Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Certification

Additionally, the planning team has found that the high performance of employers increasingly requires workers to effectively integrate with cutting-edge technologies. Our service providers work in conjunction with workforce partners and state planners to determine the technology skills most applicable for youth and adult jobseekers. To that end, the regional planning team consulted the O*NET technology inventory to assess the relative importance of technological aptitude for each occupation under the most recent O*NET content model. Utilizing the most recent five years of jobs postings in the region and indexing each item from 0 (no demand) to 1 (highest demand), the most common technologies associated with regional job postings were:

Table 4: EDR 8 Technology Skill Demand Index	
Technology Skill	Demand
Office suite software	1.000
Spreadsheet software	0.808
Electronic mail software	0.570
Presentation software	0.331
Medical software	0.149
Word processing software	0.145
Object or component-oriented	0.133
Data base user interface and query	0.130
Operating system software	0.107
Customer relationship management	0.095
Web platform development software	0.094
Development environment software	0.092
Computer aided design CAD	0.070
Enterprise resource planning ERP	0.068
Application server software	0.048
Accounting software	0.043
Human resources software	0.038
Business intelligence and data	0.036
Analytical or scientific software	0.031
Graphics or photo imaging software	0.030

30

³⁰ 2026 IDES Labor Market Information EDR 8, pages 5-6

The technology skills are designed to be generic descriptions of specific software or programmatic knowledge which workforce members are expected to have. For example, “Object or component oriented” software references the use of programming languages to interface with data or executable files, turn those data or files into objects, then reference those objects in a computing environment to produce an outcome. There are many different brands and uses of object-oriented programming, and employers must search for workers with skills in the sort that most effectively accomplishes their objectives.³¹

1.A.3. Knowledge and Skills

Industries in the region are facing the crucial challenge of recruiting and retaining talent with academic, technical, and work-ready skills. This presents both education and workforce systems with the opportunity to better meet talent supply needs³².

Employers across industries have defined work-ready as having academic, technical and soft skills (e.g., work ethics) and there is a growing need for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math). Further, the target industries and occupations have credential and competency requirements and preferences.

An opportunity is in place to work closely with existing and potential employers to identify growth plans, forecasted and current job openings, preferred and required credentials and competencies, and work with workforce and educational programs to improve alignment to employer needs. The State of Illinois has modeled employer-based training after the US Chamber of Commerce’s Talent Pipeline Management³³. EDR 8 has assets with the TPM model. The Regional Apprenticeship Navigator has completed a year-long TPM certification program. The Chamber has issued an implementation guide for closing the skills gap. This employer-led initiative can be further developed and aligned with educational and training programs based on forecasted and current employer needs.

1.A.3.a. Targeted Career Pathway Structures

Ongoing planning will include improved communications between employers and education and training providers to align programs to employer needs. Strategies include working across the P-20 education system and direct employer participation to improve job seeker skills that match to employer needs. The diagram below shows that implementing the range of strategies beginning with career awareness through job retention will bolster the range of skills individuals and employers need.

The Career Pathways structure continues to prove valuable as new apprenticeships develop throughout the region as part of the DCEO sponsored Apprenticeship Expansion Grant for EDR 8. Recent Perkins Assessment meetings have also centered on working with employers and educators utilizing the career pathway structures. (see Career Pathways chart Section 1.A.2.)

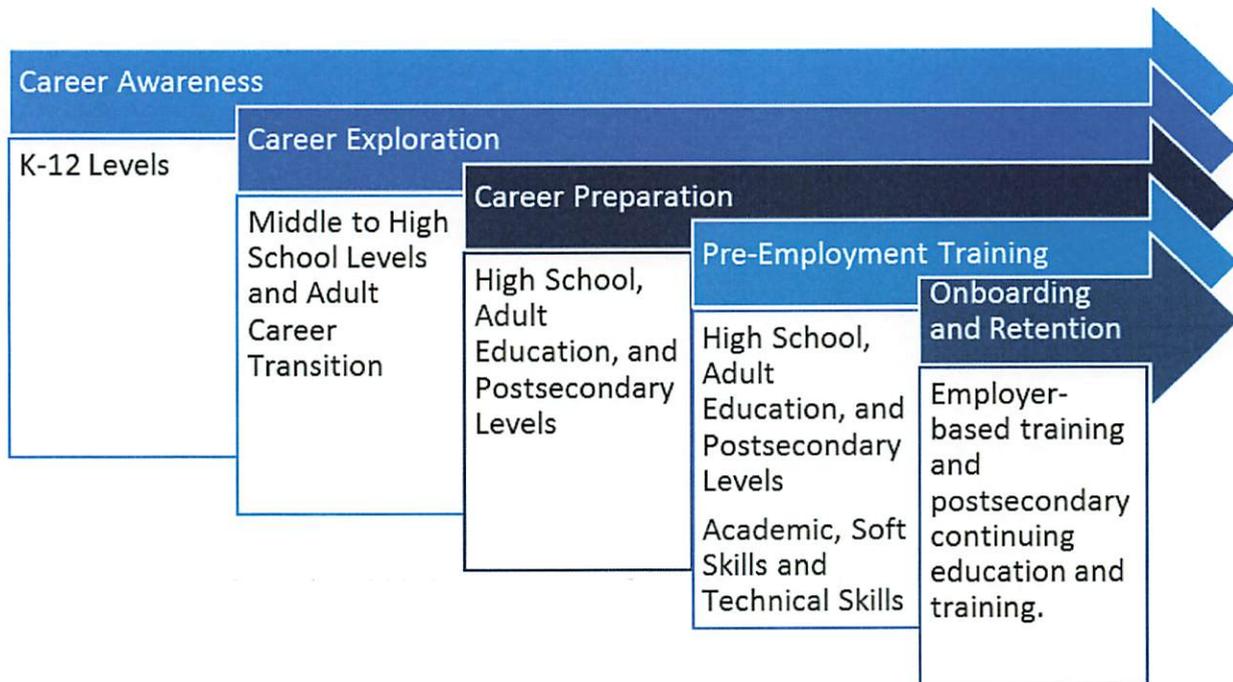
³¹ 2026 IDES Labor Market Information EDR 8, page 6

³² Illinois Community College Board Report, page 63.

³³ U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation Talent Pipeline Management US Chamber of Commerce’s Talent Pipeline Management <https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/talent-pipeline-management>

Current targeted career pathway cluster for the region are as follows:

- Construction
- Supply Chain & Transportation
- Agriculture
- Public Service & Safety³⁴



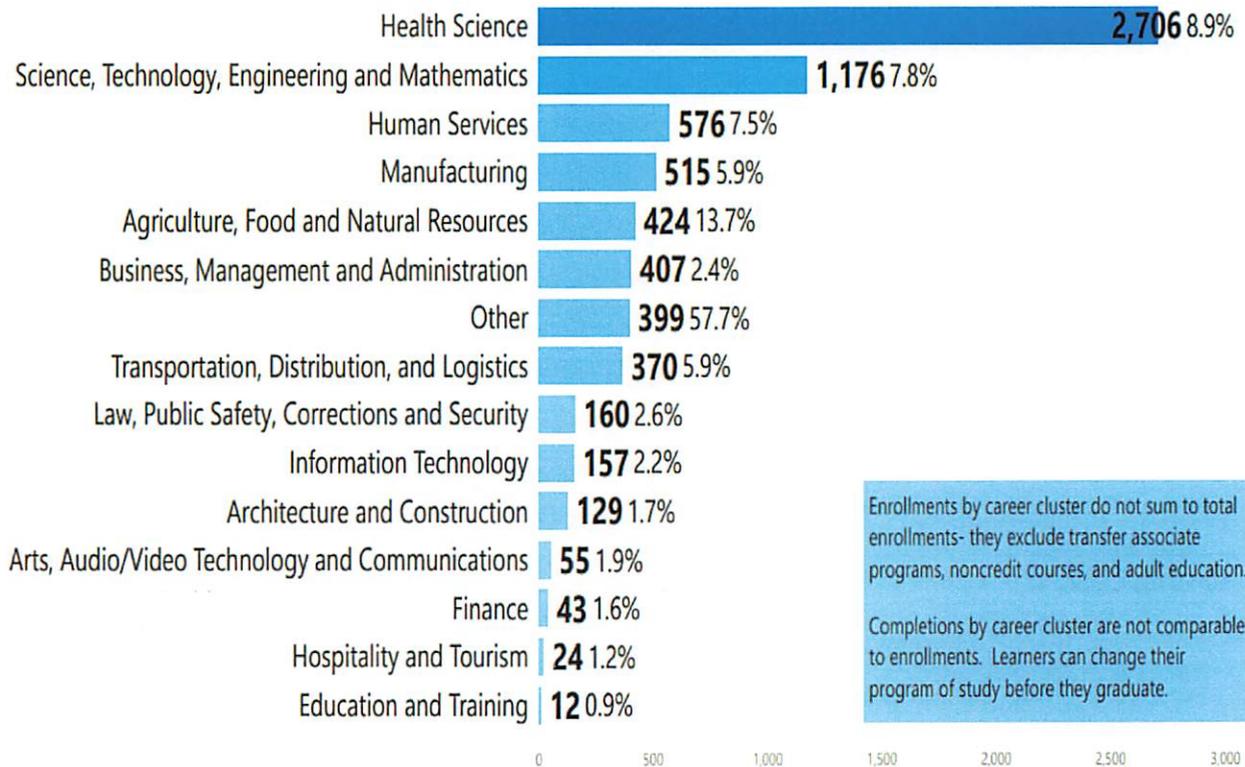
³⁴ 2026 IDES Labor Market Information EDR 8, page 6
SEDR 8 Regional and Local Plans

Community College Career Cluster Enrollments in Southern Region

Below is a summary of FY24 enrollments in community college districts that are primarily located in the region.

Count of Enrollments and Share of Statewide Community College Enrollments by Career Cluster

Shading proportional to enrollments within region. Shares do not sum to total- they percent to completions in each career cluster.



Enrollments by career cluster do not sum to total enrollments- they exclude transfer associate programs, noncredit courses, and adult education.

Completions by career cluster are not comparable to enrollments. Learners can change their program of study before they graduate.

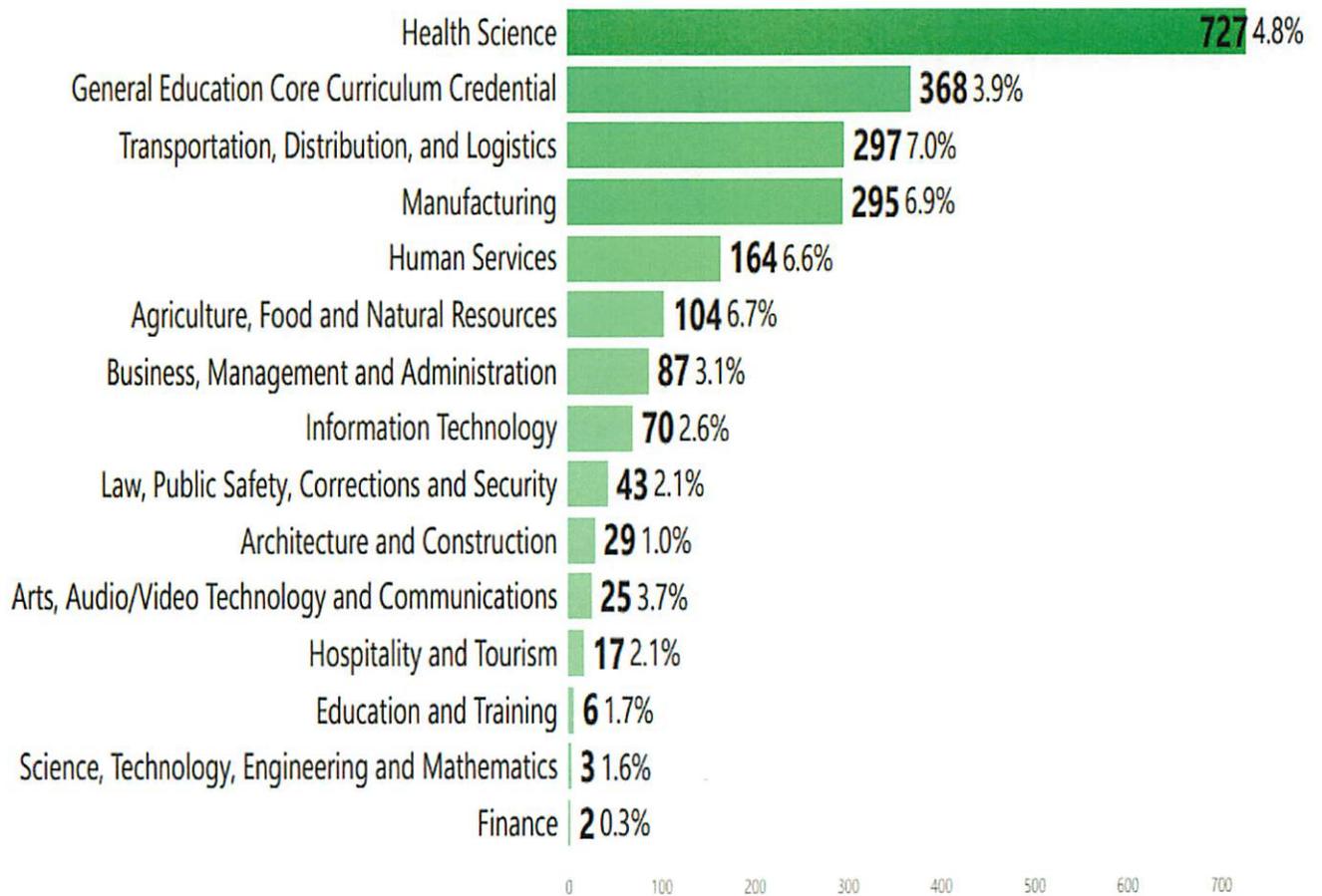
Source: Illinois Community College Board, Fiscal Year 2024 Summary of Graduates and Enrollments & ICCB Databook, Tables III-3 and III-9.

Community College Career Cluster Completions in Southern Region

Below is a summary of recent graduations in community college districts that are primarily located in the region.

Count of Completions and Share of Statewide Community College Completions

Shading proportional to completions within region. Shares do not sum to total- they percent to completions in each career cluster.



Source: Illinois Community College Board, Fiscal Year 2024 Summary of Graduates and Enrollments & ICCB Databook, Tables III-3 and III-9.

Career Cluster Enrollments by Community College & District in Southern Region

Below is a summary of recent enrollments in community college districts that are primarily located in the region.

College Name	Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources	Architecture and Construction	Arts, Audio/Video Technology and Communications	Business, Management and Administration	Education and Training	Finance	Health Science	Hospitality and Tourism	Human Services	Information Technology	Law, Public Safety, Corrections and Security	Manufacturing	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics	Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics
Southern Region Total	560	263	106	740	37	93	5,542	49	997	290	333	869	3,149	745
John A. Logan	12	209	64	123	37	36	709		371	124	49	254	2,692	113
Shawnee	76	54		317		57	2,298		212	54	94	123		251
Rend Lake	417		42	134			1,062	48	309	49	74	429	118	185
Southeastern Illinois	55			166			1,473	1	105	63	116	63	339	196

"Other" and Government & Public Administration are excluded for space.

Source: Illinois Community College Board, Fiscal Year 2024 Summary of Graduates and Enrollments & ICCB Databook, Tables III-3 and III-9.

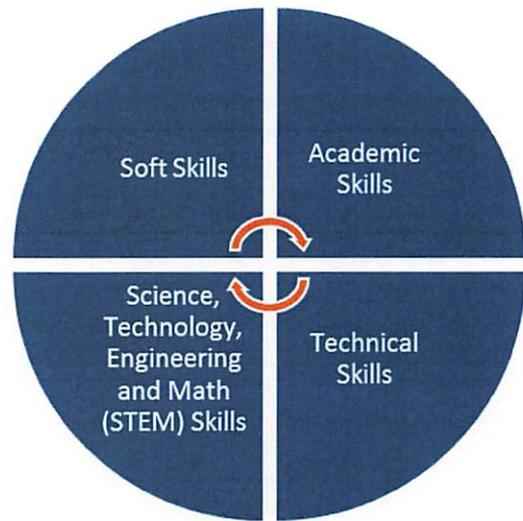
Career Cluster Completions by Community College & District in Southern Region

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College Name	Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources	Architecture and Construction	Arts, Audio/Video Technology and Communications	Business, Management and Administration	Education and Training	Finance	Health Science	Hospitality and Tourism	Human Services	Information Technology	Law, Public Safety, Corrections and Security	Manufacturing	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics	Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics	
Southern Region Total		104	29	25	87	6	2	727	17	164	70	43	295	3	297
Rend Lake		80		15	53			231	17	75	16	29	136		134
John A. Logan		2	26	10	20	6	1	292		76	14	3	68	3	33
Shawnee		2	3		14		1	148		13	12	4	62		51
Southeastern Illinois		20						56			28	7	29		79

1.A.3.b. In-Demand Skills

Employers in the region continue to share the need for workers who are willing to learn and can work well with others. Post pandemic employers seem more willing to train on-the-job but do expect some level of accessible “soft” or “ready to work” skills. Many potential jobs applicants are basic skills-deficient. Soft Skills and Academic Skills often need addressed before technical skills, STEM skills and ultimately job-related skills/training can be addressed. LWIA services include career development and training for in-demand occupations. The services and training opportunities include employer-based training. This type of training is customized to meet the needs of employers by increasing job skills of both incumbent and new hires. The LWIAs will prioritize building and sharing knowledge of employer needs to foster development of traditional and custom training programs for individuals and employers. Employer needs can also be met through assessment such as Work Keys for Applied Mathematics, Locating Information, and Reading for Information and the NOCTI 21st Century Skills for Reading, Mathematics and Workplace Skills. The chart to the right highlights skills needs.



The regional planning team approved use of the O*NET skills inventory to assess the relative importance of each individual attribute classified as “knowledge” or “skill” for each occupation under the most recent O*NET content model. Utilizing the most recent five years of job postings in the region and indexing each item from 0 (no demand) to 1 (highest demand), the most common knowledge and skills associated with regional job postings were:

Table 5: EDR 8 Skills & Knowledge Demand Index	
Skills / Knowledge	Demand
Mathematics	1.000
Customer and Personal Service	0.721
English Language	0.681
Active Listening	0.669
Speaking	0.656
Critical Thinking	0.635
Reading Comprehension	0.629
Social Perceptiveness	0.621
Monitoring	0.614
Service Orientation	0.609
Coordination	0.599
Judgment and Decision Making	0.593
Writing	0.579
Administration and Management	0.569
Time Management	0.569
Complex Problem Solving	0.566
Active Learning	0.564
Education and Training	0.547
Administrative	0.529
Computers and Electronics	0.526

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1.A.3.c. Existing Skill Demands

There is an apparent mismatch of the existing skills of job seekers and the demands of local business. The skill deficits of job seekers in the Southern Region are not primarily technical skill gaps, but rather a lack of understanding of various career opportunities in the region; a need for reinforcement of foundational skills/work ethic skills within school systems; increased number of pre-employment programs to shorten on-boarding time by the employer and work-based learning models which blend sector specific technical skills and the realities of the work environment. Technology advances are occurring at a rapid pace.

Career development best practices identify the importance of beginning career awareness and skills with K-12 education. There is continued work with K-12 schools, in particular 8th grade to high school, to provide career awareness, exploration, and job skills and career pathways. Recruitment into industries including manufacturing and transportation needs to include awareness of school counselors and teachers that there are opportunities that require skill training and certification, not necessarily college degrees. A March 1, 2016 article, "Is the technical shortage becoming a catastrophe?"³⁹ in Fleet Owner Magazine identified Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates 67,000 new technicians and 75,000 new diesel engine specialists need to be added to the labor rolls by 2022 to keep up with demand and replace retiring workers. Career development activities are key in new K-12 PACE framework requirements.

On-going planning will include improved communications between employers and education and training providers to align programs to employer needs. Strategies include working across the P-20 education system and direct employer participation to improve job seeker skills that match to employer needs. The IDES charts below address Demand Occupations and skills by required levels of formal education.



Assessing in-demand occupations and skills in the Southern Economic Development Region, by required level of educational attainment



Demand Occupations Requiring Education Beyond a Bachelor's Degree

Occupation	Projected Annual Openings	Skills	Hourly Entry Wage	Hourly Experienced Wage
General & Operations Managers	200	Active Listening, Coordination, Monitoring	35.40	57.47
Medical & Health Services Managers	51	Speaking, Critical Thinking, Active Listening	47.39	62.66
Financial Managers	57	Active Listening, Critical Thinking, Monitoring	48.62	67.11
Management Analysts	38	Active Listening, Critical Thinking, Reading Comprehension	43.43	58.56
Clergy	34	Speaking, Active Listening, Service Orientation	24.21	29.54
Administrative Services & Facilities Mgrs	33	Speaking, Active Listening, Coordination	38.93	51.61
Sales Managers	30	Persuasion, Active Listening, Speaking	58.57	74.36
Liaisons	29	Active Listening, Speaking, Reading Comprehension	46.89	78.85
Marketing Managers	23	Active Learning, Active Listening, Critical Thinking	47.12	65.02
Computer & Information Systems Managers	21	Critical Thinking, Active Listening, Reading Comprehension	60.90	72.05



Demand Occupations Requiring a Bachelor's Degree

Occupation	Projected Annual Openings	Skills	Hourly Entry Wage	Hourly Experienced Wage
Elem. School Teachers, Ex. Special Ed.	112	Instructing, Speaking, Learning Strategies		
Project Mgt & Bus Op Spec., All Other	110	Active Listening, Critical Thinking, Reading Comprehension	34.88	44.42
Accountants & Auditors	79	Active Listening, Mathematics, Reading Comprehension	29.03	37.22
Secondary Teachers, Ex. Spec/Voc. Ed.	79	Instructing, Learning Strategies, Speaking		
Insurance Sales Agents	59	Active Listening, Reading Comprehension, Speaking	19.96	42.89
Market Research Analysts & Specialists	56	Reading Comprehension, Active Listening, Complex Problem Solving	25.00	34.84
Human Resources Specialists	53	Active Listening, Speaking, Reading Comprehension	29.10	35.00
Software Developers & QA Analysts/Testers	50	Programming, System Analysis, System Evaluation	55.14	65.47
Computer Systems Analysts	28	Critical Thinking, Active Listening, Reading Comprehension	41.17	50.13

Assessing in-demand occupations and skills in the Southern Economic Development Region, by required level of educational attainment

Demand Occupations Requiring an Associate's Degree

Occupation	Projected Annual Openings	Skills	Hourly Entry Wage	Hourly Experienced Wage
Registered Nurse	309	Active Listening, Social Perceptiveness, Service Orientation	36.01	40.55
Physical Therapist Assistants	25	Reading Comprehension, Active Listening, Speaking	30.09	32.21
Radiologic Technologists	23	Active Listening, Monitoring, Social Perceptiveness	28.74	32.38
Computer User Support Specialists	22	Active Listening, Speaking, Reading Comprehension	25.98	31.23
Paralegals & Legal Assistants	20	Reading Comprehension, Active Listening, Critical Thinking	19.37	24.14
Computer Network Support Specialists	18	Critical Thinking, Active Listening, Judgement/Decision Making	29.08	35.47
Computer Occupations, All Other	12	Critical Thinking, Reading Comprehension, Active Listening	42.25	49.64
Calibration & Eng. Techs. Ex. Drafters, All Other	10	Active Listening, Critical Thinking, Reading Comprehension	27.18	31.19
Dental Hygienists	9	Speaking, Active Listening, Critical Thinking	34.79	38.58
Health Info Techs/Registrars/Surg Asst. AD	8	Active Listening, Critical Thinking, Reading Comprehension	23.66	25.92

Demand Occupations Requiring a Certificate or License

Occupation	Projected Annual Openings	Skills	Hourly Entry Wage	Hourly Experienced Wage
Nursing Assistants	207	Service Orientation, Active Listening, Social Perceptiveness	16.19	17.77
Automotive Service Techs/Mechanics	78	Equipment Maintenance, Repairing, Troubleshooting	21.76	26.40
Medical Secretaries	74	Speaking, Active Listening, Service Orientation	16.09	18.54
Licensed Practical & Vocational Nurses	59	Service Orientation, Active Listening, Coordination	25.04	27.08
Fitness Trainers & Aerobics Instructors	52	Instructing, Service Orientation, Social Perceptiveness	17.62	25.51
Hairdressers/Hairstylists/Cosmetologists	49	Active Listening, Speaking, Service Orientation	12.79	16.26
Preschool Teachers, Ex. Special Education	41	Speaking, Learning Strategies, Instructing	15.09	18.56
Emergency Medical Techs & Paramedics	28	Critical Thinking, Active Listening, Coordination	19.43	20.92
Bus/Truck/Diesel Engine Mechanics	26	Repairing, Troubleshooting, Operation & Control	23.50	28.69
Library Technicians	26	Reading Comprehension, Speaking, Active Listening	15.50	20.35

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The chart below identifies regional strategies for matching job seekers to employer needs beginning with cross-cutting behaviors and attitudes and across the range of workforce development from Career Awareness through Onboarding and Retention.

Development Area	Strategies
Cross-cutting behaviors and attitudes are important factors with success beginning in PK-12 through job retention. Soft skills sometimes referred to as work ready skills are behaviors and attitudes essential to success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education through a work-ready skills program curriculum developed by the region is available to middle school through adults. Standardized assessments including Work Keys and NOCTI 21st Century Skills can be made available to high school and adult education students including Bridge programs, and other adult remedial programs that include career preparation. Nationally recognized credentialing programs (e.g. apprenticeships, certificates, certifications, licenses) often include requirements for behaviors that ensure public safety.
Career awareness builds knowledge and interest in industries and occupations beyond those familiar to community members. Building a workforce that is interested in emerging and in-demand career pathways begins with career awareness for students in elementary through high school levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> parents, students, and workforce partners. Outreach begins with increasing awareness of those tools made available through the state's Illinois workNet® Web Portal System to the community. Career profiles focused on the selected target industries and occupations should be technology based and in mobile formats to engage community members. Manufacturing Awareness Campaign. High School Career/Job Fairs with regional ROE offices.

Development Area	Strategies
<p>Career Exploration provides opportunities for youth and adults in career transition to understand demand sector career opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work-based learning opportunities can be coordinated through public schools and program serving out-of-school youth including programs such as the area’s C.E.O. program, coordinated tours of employer facilities, job shadowing, mentoring through in-person and online programs, and in-school/program visits both in-person and via live online streaming by workforce and industry experts. • No-cost career interest area assessments are available through Illinois workNet and the state’s Career Information System.
<p>Career Preparation builds on Career Awareness and includes hands-on opportunities to further examine career interest areas and to develop job-specific skills beginning in high school and continuing through adult career transition</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High School Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs introduce career preparation. Newly required PACE Framework in all regional high schools has requirements for employer engagement and career exploration. These programs can be further aligned to meet regional employer needs and provide nationally recognized credentials. Alignment of competencies assessed for these programs need to be matched to employer needs. • Adult Education Bridge and I-CAPS programs provide opportunities for career preparation for occupations using a career pathway approach within specific industries (e.g. health care, manufacturing, transportation, distribution and logistics, and information technology) along with remedial education. This format keeps adults engaged and gets them prepared for jobs while building academic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics. Job technical skills, for example blue print reading, and in a manufacturing program provide skills employers want from job-ready candidates. Inclusion of nationally recognized credentials with these programs can improve placement outcomes and retention. • STEM (Science, Technology, Engineer and Math) education is increasingly critical to career pathway planning in fields that are in high demand. Illinois Pathways provides a framework for sequencing STEM programs that include work-based learning and earning credentials. This framework is relevant to high school CTE, adult education, and postsecondary (e.g. Community College) programs. • Assessments including the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and Work Keys identify academic skill gaps and insights for placement in appropriate preparation programs. • Maker Spaces are engaging community members throughout the U.S. by providing a modern and open setting and tools used across industries for use by programs and the public. For example, 3-D printers, simulation tools, and manufacturing equipment can be provided and supervised by experts from related industries.

Development Area	Strategies
	<p>Creating an experimental Maker Space to engage the community can increase interest in Career Preparation through Pre-employment Training.</p>
<p>Pre-employment Training builds on Career Preparation to build job-specific skills to develop competencies. U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Industry Competency Models ⁴²use a building block structure to develop career lattices from basic (Tier 1) behaviors and attitudes to Management Competencies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Colleges primarily offer short-term (credit and non-credit) and two-year Associate Degree pre-employment training programs. Further developing employer partnerships to ensure training programs are aligned to job competencies required and preferred by employers and attainment of credentials that are recognized nationally and preferred by the regions employers ensures the ongoing maintenance and provision of training programs. Career Pathways and models such as the DOL Industry Competency Model; provide transparent information and educational and career planning tools. Work-based learning opportunities for on-the-job training and internships are proven to be essential components of successful pre-employment training programs. Customized or class-sized training opportunities are important for programs that cannot be successful if constrained by traditional semester schedules. Low income and sometimes low literacy individuals who need support, training, and foundational academic skills delivered in settings that accelerate time to employment onboarding. The MSSC Certified Production Technician is an example currently in place in LWIA 25.
<p>Onboarding and Retention builds on Pre-employment Training to provide approaches for ensuring successful employment onboarding and long-term job retention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Illinois Department of Commerce’s Illinois Talent Pipeline model for employer-based training provides options for supporting onboarding and retention through customized job skill training options that meet employer’s needs. More information and training by the Regional Navigator Committee will provide the format to strengthen relationships with employers and the workforce system. Apprenticeships offer alternatives for employers to “train” on the job.

As an alternative to employer reports, the regional planning team sought to evaluate potential gaps in skills and technology adoption between its resident labor force and job postings from employers located in the region. Job postings were matched with O*NET occupation titles and the skills and knowledge necessary to provide those services. The current stock of skills and knowledge of workers in the region was approximated with data from the Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) program, from which occupational employment estimates were matched with O*NET occupation titles and the skills and knowledge necessary to provide those services. For each skill and knowledge

⁴² United States Department of Labor Industry Competency Models <http://www.careeronestop.org/CompetencyModel/>
 SEDR 8 Regional and Local Plans Effective July 1, 2024 Revised 2026

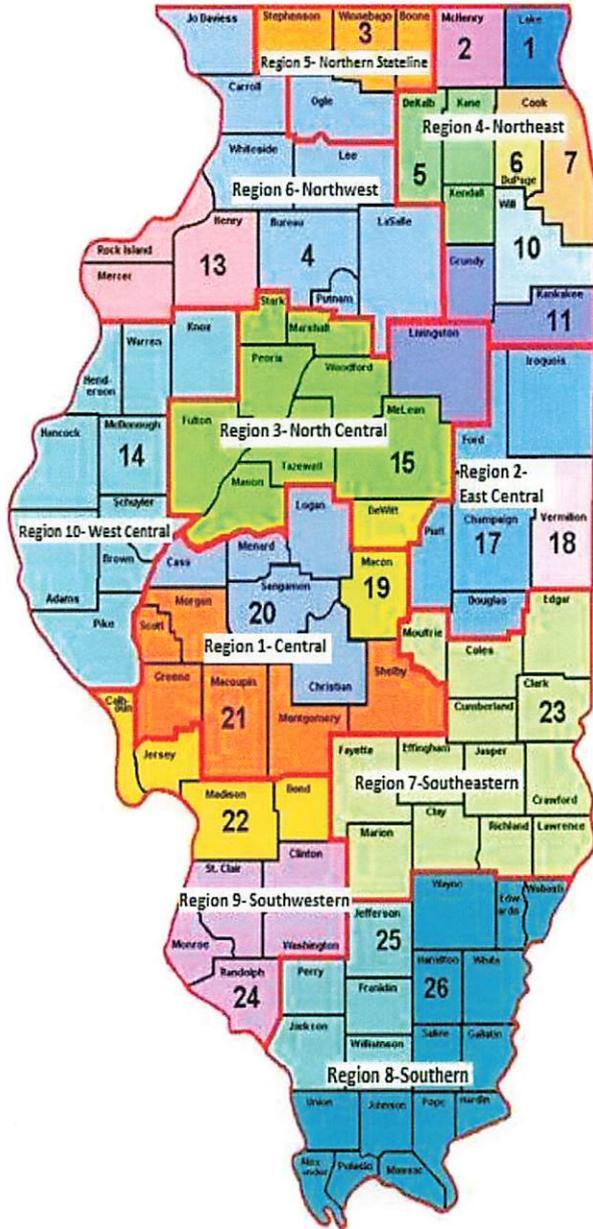
category, a ratio of job posting demand to current stock was estimated, and the skill and knowledge categories with the highest ratios demand / stock ratios for 2025 were:

Table 6: EDR 8 O*NET Skill Demand Shortage Rank	
O*NET Skill	Demand Shortage Rank
Medicine and Dentistry	1
Science	2
Biology	3
Therapy and Counseling	4
Psychology	5
Operations Analysis	6
Customer and Personal Service	7
Sociology and Anthropology	8
Systems Analysis	9
Programming	10

To some extent, the regional planning team expects these demand shortages are an accurate representation of the skill shortages experienced by employers in the region. Demand shortage estimates may also be biased toward the skill and knowledge sets in industries which have a comparative advantage in human resource functions such as job posting, though this bias is inevitable in any quantitative analysis of skill demand in which job postings are an indicator.

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1.A.4. State of Regional Workforce



The Southern Economic Development Region (SEDR) 8 consists of the southernmost 19 counties of Illinois. The region consists of thousands of miles, varying topographies, and intense cultural differences. Many residents experience extreme poverty and yet there are pockets of wealth. The region is home to counties without stoplights and six-lane hubs of economic prosperity. The region experiences higher incidence of chronic health diseases while boasting world-class health care, including a nationally recognized stroke rehabilitation institute and cancer center. The region, once dependent on coal resources and related occupations now struggles to “re-train” frequently dislocated coal miners. Areas of the region boast fertile farmland and rich oil fields while other areas are abandoned and communities are left with high poverty and low educational attainment. Within the population of 357,372 the medium income falls well below the state and national average. The 67,836 disabled residents represent 19.2% of the population compared to

11% in Illinois. Even though the region is home to the Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, only 8% of the population have a graduate or professional degree. 87.15% are white. The region experiences chronic poverty at levels unparalleled in the state. Even though the region is extremely diverse, it holds leaders who love it, are passionate about revitalizing it. Leaders met in person for a day long visioning and mapping session, which included a review of the existing Regional Plan and any changes we wished to make as a group.

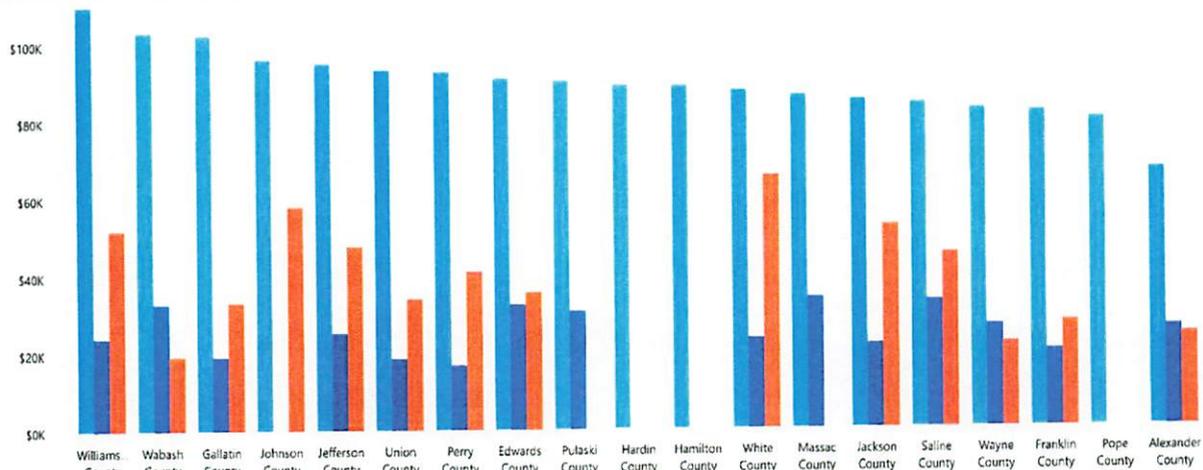
Median Income by County- Households with Children

Region
Southern

The statewide median income for all households was \$72,563, which is 5% higher than the national level of \$69,021. In Illinois, the median income was \$110,026 for married couples with children, \$32,586 for single mother households, and \$50,942 for single father households.

Median Income by Household Type

● Married couples with children ● Single mother ● Single father



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey, Table S1903.

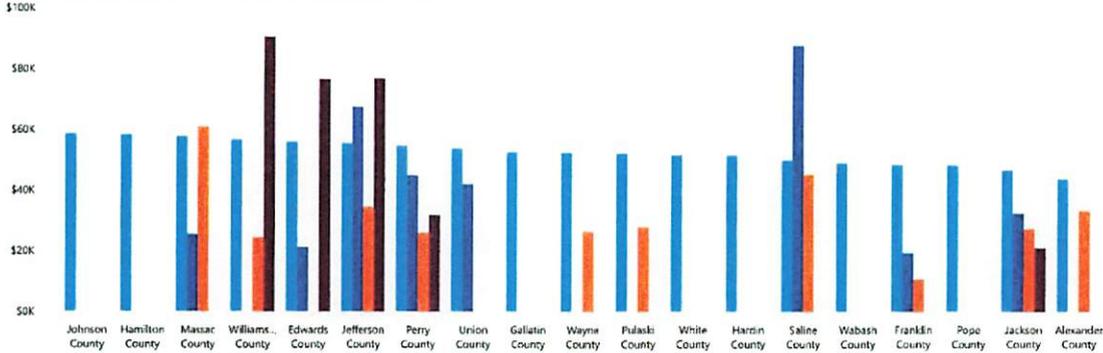
Median Income by County and Race

Region
Southern

Statewide, the median income for African American households is \$46,401, Asian households is \$98,367, Hispanic households is \$58,791, and White households is \$73,533. Below are the American Community Survey responses for household income by race in each county of the region. *Care must be taken when comparing income, as some counties do not have sufficient American Community Survey responses regarding income for some racial and ethnic groups. It is not possible to compute a region-wide median income in the American Community Survey data provided.*

Median Household Income by Race

White Non-Hispanic Hispanic or Latino Black or African American Asian



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey, Table S1903.

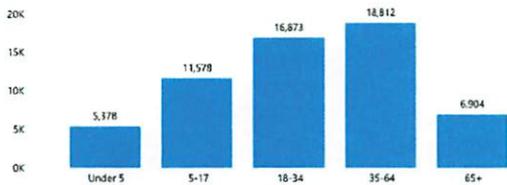
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Counts of Population Below Poverty Level

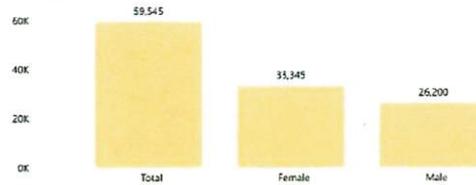
Region
Southern

Roughly 1.5 million Illinois residents live below poverty. Children under the age of 5 (17%), females (13%), African Americans (25%), and individuals lacking a high school diploma or equivalent (22%) are more likely to live below poverty. Below counts of the population in the region with income below poverty level by various characteristics.

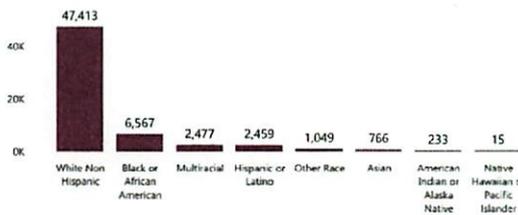
By Age



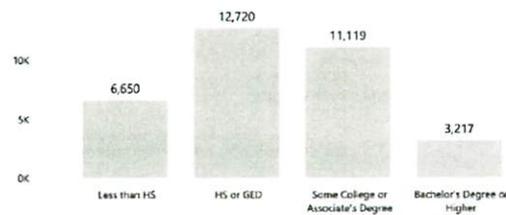
By Sex



By Race/Ethnicity



By Educational Attainment



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey, Table S1701

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⁴⁵ 2024 Regional Plan Data Packet EDR 8, page 13

⁴⁶ 2022 Regional Plan Data Packet ERD 8, page 12

Population with Disabilities by Age and Type

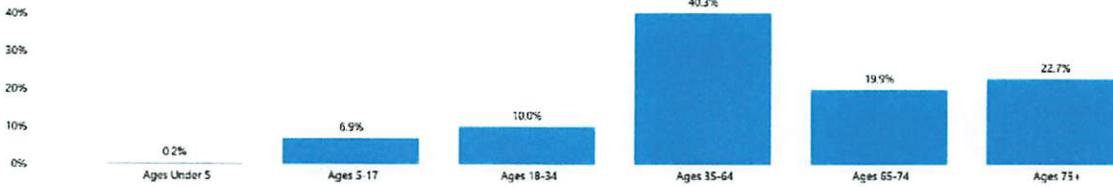
Region
Southern

67,836

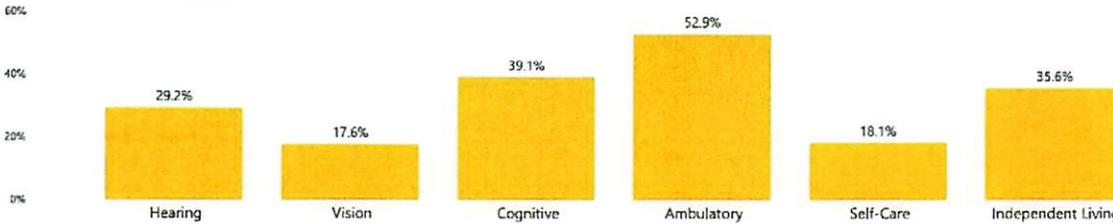
19.2%

Approximately 11% of the population (or 1.4 million people) in Illinois have some type of disability. The most prominent disabilities include ambulatory and the inability to live independently. Below is the composition of persons with disabilities in the region by age and by type of disability.

Persons with Disabilities in Region
Share of Persons with Disabilities by Age



Share of Persons with Disabilities by Type*



*Sum of percentages can exceed 100 due to persons with multiple disabilities.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey, Table S1810

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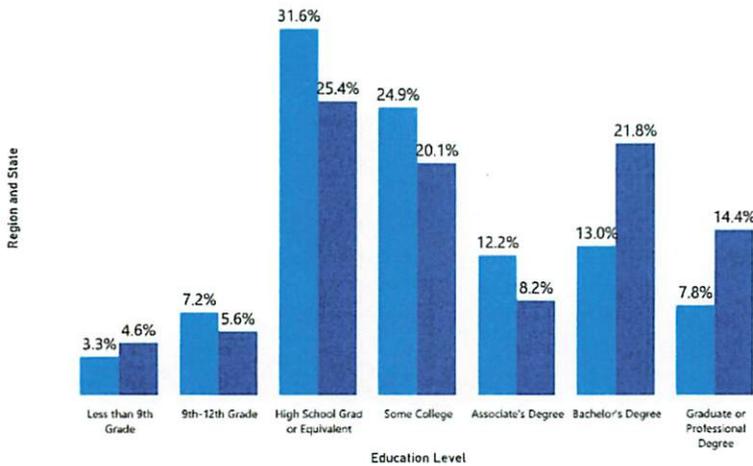
Education Attainment of Population 25 & Over

Region
Southern

Over 64% of Illinois residents 25 & over continued education past high school. Below are the educational attainment characteristics of the region compared to the state.

Share of Population Age 25+ by Education Level

Region State



Group	Count Ages 25+
Less than 9th Grade	8,467
9th-12th Grade	18,341
High School Grad or Equivalent	80,636
Some College	63,419
Associate's Degree	30,995
Bachelor's Degree	33,062
Graduate or Professional Degree	19,932
Total	254,852

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey, Table S1501

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⁴⁷ 2022 Regional Plan Data Packet ERD 8, page 7

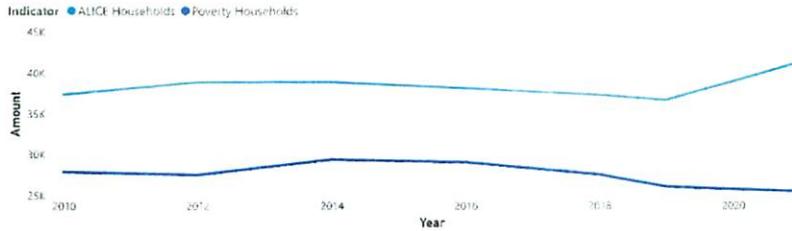
⁴⁸ 2022 Regional Plan Data Packet ERD 8, page 4

ALICE Population

Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed persons

The United Way identified an ALICE threshold for persons with income above poverty level, but who nonetheless cannot meet basic costs of living in their counties. The ALICE threshold is based on a household survival budget that includes housing, childcare, food, transportation, healthcare, a smartphone plan, taxes, and a modest reserve for unanticipated one-time costs. Below is a summary of the ALICE population in the region over time and by county.

Count of ALICE & Poverty Households

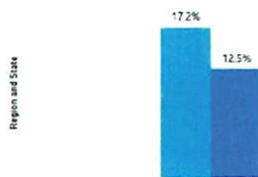


ALICE Threshold by County, 2021

County	ALICE Households	Threshold - Under 65	Threshold - Over 65
Alexander	793	\$60,000	\$45,000
Edwards	609	\$45,000	\$40,000
Franklin	4,154	\$45,000	\$40,000
Gallatin	519	\$50,000	\$40,000
Hamilton	853	\$50,000	\$40,000
Hardin	391	\$45,000	\$45,000
Jackson	6,606	\$45,000	\$45,000
Jefferson	4,494	\$50,000	\$45,000
Johnson	1,053	\$50,000	\$45,000
Massac	1,510	\$50,000	\$45,000
Perry	2,297	\$50,000	\$45,000
Pope	354	\$50,000	\$40,000
Pulaski	650	\$50,000	\$45,000
Saline	2,644	\$45,000	\$40,000
Union	1,765	\$50,000	\$40,000
Wabash	1,502	\$45,000	\$40,000
Wayne	1,983	\$45,000	\$40,000
White	1,667	\$50,000	\$40,000
Williamson	7,478	\$45,000	\$45,000

Share of Households Below Poverty Level, 2021

Region State



Share of Households Above Poverty Level but Below ALICE Threshold, 2021

Region State



Source: United Way of Illinois, 2021 ALICE Dataset

1.A.4.a. Demographics, Labor Supply and Occupational Demand

To develop an understanding of the areas changing demographics and economic drivers, data was obtained from multiple sources including the 2024 Regional Plan Data Packet EDR 8 developed by the State of Illinois; Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES); United States (U.S.) Bureau of Labor Statistics and Census Bureau, the major regional planning Commission CEDS and the DRA.

Southern Economic Development Region 8

Nonfarm Payroll Employment by Industry: December 2023

Three sets of figures are included in this table: the first two columns reveal payroll job levels pre-pandemic and for current month; the middle columns depict industry shares for the region and the state; the final two columns reveal how far (positive or negative) the region and Illinois are from pre-pandemic levels.

EDR 8: Southern	Industry Employment		Industry Share		Difference from 2019	
	Not Seasonally Adjusted	Dec-19	Dec-23	Region	State of IL	Region
Total Nonfarm	135,543	135,502	100%	100%	0.0%	0.1%
Total Private	99,027	97,806	72.2%	86.4%	-1.2%	0.0%
Goods Producing	19,378	19,280	14.2%	13.1%	-0.5%	-0.6%
Construction and Mining	6,988	6,767	5.0%	3.9%	-3.2%	2.7%
Manufacturing	12,390	12,513	9.2%	9.2%	1.0%	-1.8%
Durables	6,685	6,036	4.5%	5.3%	-9.7%	-3.7%
Non-durables	5,705	6,477	4.8%	3.9%	13.5%	0.8%
Service-Providing	116,165	116,222	85.8%	86.9%	0.0%	0.2%
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	24,905	24,977	18.4%	20.2%	0.3%	1.0%
Wholesale Trade	3,170	3,157	2.4%	4.9%	0.9%	1.7%
Retail Trade	15,383	15,305	11.3%	9.5%	-0.5%	-1.9%
Transportation, Warehousing & Utilities	6,353	6,475	4.8%	5.8%	1.9%	5.6%
Information	1,157	1,147	0.8%	1.4%	-0.9%	-6.5%
Financial Activities	5,695	6,602	4.9%	6.7%	15.9%	-0.3%
Professional and Business Services	7,756	6,155	4.5%	15.4%	-20.8%	-0.6%
Educational and Health Services	22,504	22,834	16.9%	16.0%	1.5%	3.7%
Leisure and Hospitality	12,874	12,680	9.4%	9.5%	-1.5%	-4.6%
Other Services	4,758	4,130	3.0%	4.1%	-13.2%	-0.9%
Government	36,516	37,696	27.8%	13.6%	3.2%	0.6%
Federal Government	2,761	2,790	2.1%	1.3%	1.1%	3.5%
State Government	14,546	14,334	10.6%	2.3%	-1.5%	-8.1%
Local Government	19,209	20,572	15.2%	10.0%	7.1%	2.4%

Industry Employment:
In December, 135,502 nonfarm payroll jobs were recorded in the Southern Region; 41 fewer jobs than for the same month in 2019, prior to the start of the 2020 recession.

Industry Share:
Key industries in the Southern Region are not identical to key industries in the state. Industry shares are highlighted in bold when the industry sectors reflect large differences from the state average. For instance, Local Government accounts for 15.2% of the Region's payroll jobs but 10.0% of the state's jobs.

Difference from Same Month 2019:
The two columns on the right reveal how far Region and State payrolls were from pre-pandemic levels for the same month in 2019. Nonfarm payrolls in the Southern Region were roughly on par with 4 years ago while state payrolls were +0.1% higher than December 2019.

Losses █
Gains █

⁴⁹ 2024 Regional Plan Data Packet EDR 8, page 17

⁵⁰ EDR8 Regional Profile 2-24, pg 6

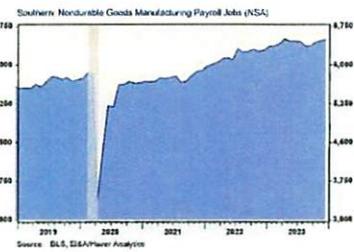
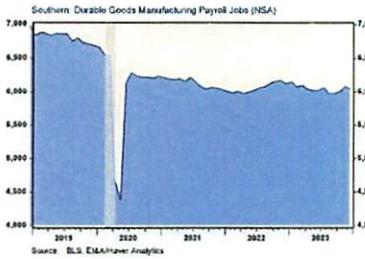
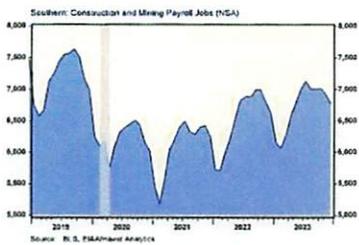


Southern Economic Development Region 8



Goods-Producing Industries: Construction and Mining, Durable and Nondurable Goods Manufacturing

- Construction and Mining payrolls account for a larger share of total payrolls in this region than the state. Payrolls are up from their lows but had not yet regained their 2019 pre-recession levels in December 2023. Construction and Mining payrolls fluctuate sharply with the seasons of the year.
- Manufacturing payrolls in this region account for roughly the same portion of total payrolls as the state.
 - Durable Goods Manufacturing payrolls increased from their recession lows but had not yet regained 2019 pre-pandemic-induced recession levels in December 2023. This industry was significantly weaker than the statewide totals.
 - Nondurable Goods Manufacturing recuperated their 2019 pre-recession levels and surpassed them by 2022, continuing the upward trend in December 2023. This sector is among the strongest in the region in terms of payroll growth.



Current Employment Statistics (CES)

Current Employment Statistics (CES)

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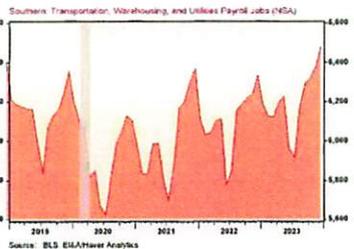
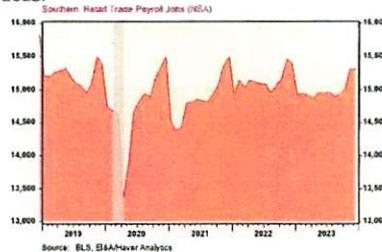
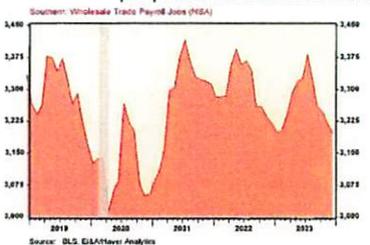
Southern Economic Development Region 8



Service-Providing Industries: Trade, Transportation and Utilities

In total, this industry sector recovered from the 2020 pandemic-induced recession in the state and in the Southern Region in December 2023.

- Wholesale Trade payrolls increased from recession lows and posted some strong gains in 2021 and 2022, yet not quite sufficiently to sustain 2019 pre-recession levels at the end of 2022 and in the first half of 2023. In December 2023, payrolls were just above pre-recession levels. This industry sector accounts for a smaller share of total payrolls than the state.
- Retail Trade payrolls increased from recession lows and even posted strong pre-pandemic levels in 2020 before decreasing in 2021 in this region. Though payrolls picked up in 2022, levels were below pre-pandemic levels in December 2023. This industry sector accounts for a larger share of payrolls than the state.
- Transportation, Warehousing and Utilities account for a smaller share of total payrolls in this region than the state. This industry sector regained and surpassed 2019 pre-recession levels in 2022 and despite some volatility in 2023, were above pre-pandemic levels in December 2023.



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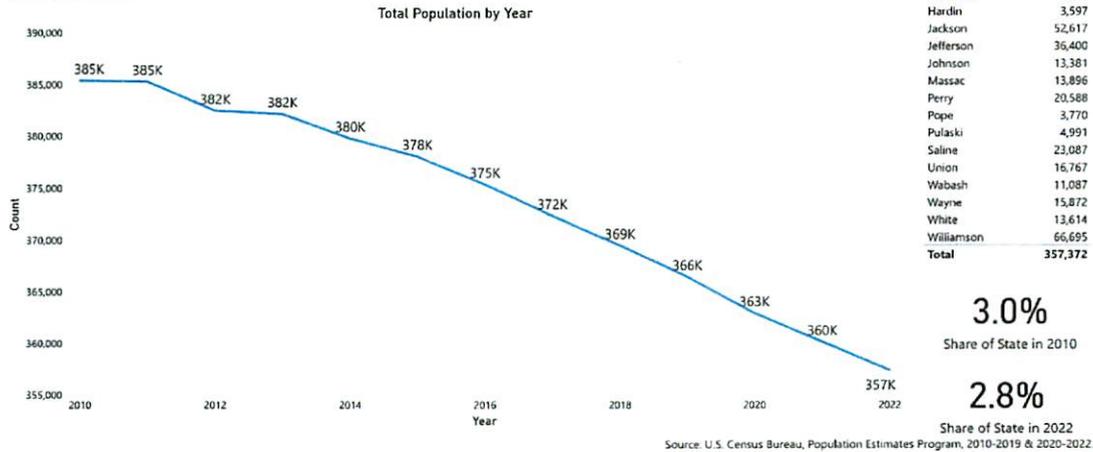
⁵¹ EDR8 Regional Profile 2-24, pg 7

⁵² EDR8 Regional Profile 2-24, pg 10

Total Population Over Time

Illinois has a population of 12,582,032 and is the 6th largest state in the nation. Below are the estimated total population and share of total population over time, along with the 2022 population for each county in the region.

Care must be taken when comparing population for 2019 and 2020, as the 2019 estimate was based on migration and aging adjustments from the 2010 census, and 2020 was a full count of the population. The Census Bureau did not revise previous population estimates to reconcile with the 2020 full counts.



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The SEDR Population Trends chart shows the overall trend is a decreased population for both the youth (24 and under) and the prime working age population (25-54). Seven of the DRA counties in Illinois reported populations of less than 10,000, creating challenges for local government to generate sufficient revenue to maintain schools and infrastructure, as well as challenges to provide government services for residents.

The median age in Illinois has been steadily increasing over the past decade. In 2022, the median age was 39.2 compared to 36.6 in 2010. Statewide, just over 17% of Illinois residents are age 65 and over. Data confirms the “graying” of the region’s population. The median age in SEDR is increasing congruent with the aging population in our state and nation and now represents 20.9% of our total population. Access to healthcare is essential for an aging population, at the same time the qualified workforce has decreased impacting access to vital health care services⁵⁴.

The SEDR currently represents 2.8% of the state’s population, fairly consistent with the 2010 3% average⁵⁵.

Approximately 1.5 million Illinois’ residents live below poverty. In addition, the loss of population and “graying” of the population produce challenges to labor supply.

While the United States (U.S.) population saw increases in youth and prime working-age residents, the region’s population decreased along with the statewide population in these two age demographics⁵⁶. The exodus of youth is a recognized “brain drain” throughout the region. The talent gap is across public and private sectors, also causing a decrease in civic participation. Retention and attraction of youth and prime working age adults is a high priority of the region⁵⁷.

⁵³ 2024 Regional Data Plan Packet, pg 3

⁵⁴ Delta Regional Authority (DRA), page 18.

⁵⁵ 2022 Regional Plan Data Packet ERD 8, page 2

⁵⁶ Greater Egypt Regional Planning and Development Commission CEDS, page 2.

⁵⁷ Greater Egypt Regional Planning and Development Commission CEDS, page 25.

Poverty remains entrenched in the region. All of the counties in the region exceed the State of Illinois' poverty rate of 14.3%. High poverty rates have been persistent in the region for decades. Six counties (Alexander, Hardin, Jackson, Massac, Pulaski, and Saline) have poverty levels exceeding 20%. The current median household income for the region is \$39,287, compared to \$53,217 for all U.S. households

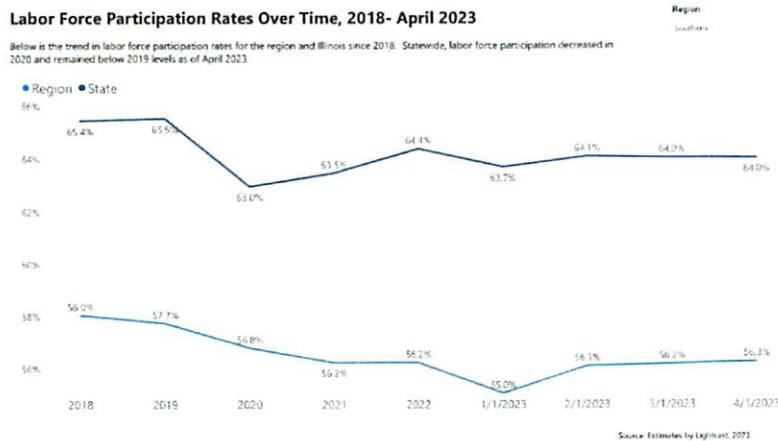
Alice in the Crosscurrents 2023 Report/UnitedForALICE.org

ALICE: Asset Limited Income Constrained, Employed – households that earn above the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) but cannot afford the basic cost of living in their county. Despite struggling to make ends meet, ALICE households often do not qualify for public assistance. Learn more at UnitedForALICE.org/methodology. Taking into account the Household Survival Budget Illinois Average in 2021, of the nearly 5 million households in Illinois, 1.8 million or 36% had income below the ALICE Threshold of Financial Survival in 2021. Pg. 4 of the report.

The wage to cover the ALICE Household Survival Budget for a single adult was \$12.55 per hour working full time. Or for a family with two adults and two children, a combined wage of \$31.46 per hour. “Of the 20 most common occupations in Illinois in 2021, 65% paid less than \$20 per hour.” By household composition, single parents were most likely to be below the ALICE threshold with 51% of single-male-headed households and 65% of single-female-headed households struggling to make ends meet. The rate of financial hardship was slightly higher in rural areas (40%) than urban areas (35).

Traditional public assistance does not reach all people in households that are struggling financially. Due to income and asset limits most ALICE households are not able to participate in public assistance. Income and asset limitations for public assistance can create “benefit cliffs” that limit mobility in Illinois in 2021⁵⁸.

Policies for improving educational attainment are needed to bolster existing education and training programs. Every county other than Jackson, the home of Southern Illinois University Carbondale, and Williamson have more individuals with less than high school education than those throughout the State. These two counties aside, those with less than a high school diploma are nearly 50% greater than in the rest of Illinois. Similarly, those who have obtained a bachelors or advanced degree are approximately half as numerous as the remainder of the State.

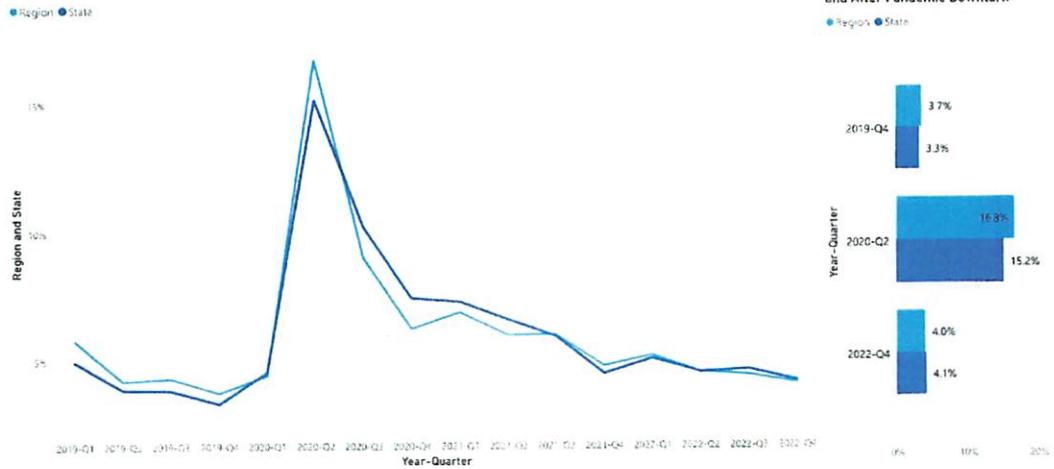


⁵⁸ Alice in the Crosscurrents, 2023 Report

⁵⁹ 2024 Regional Plan Data Packet EDR 8, page 20
SEDR 8 Regional and Local Plans

Unemployment Rates Over Time, 2019-2022

Below are the quarterly unemployment rates over time for the region and the state. On the right are unemployment rates for selected time frames before, during, and after the pandemic downturn.



Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, respective years.

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The figure below documents the residential age profiles for each racial population in our region. The leftmost column are racial age profiles measured as of 2004, while the middle and rightmost column document demographic trends in 2014 and 2024, respectively. The races are organized from lightest to darkest as follows: White, Black, Asian, American Indian, & Pacific Islander / Two or More Races. The leftmost point in each chart is the 0-4 age group, while the rightmost is the 85+ age group.

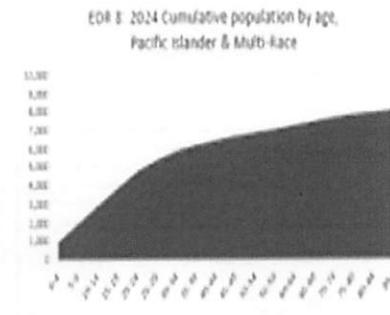
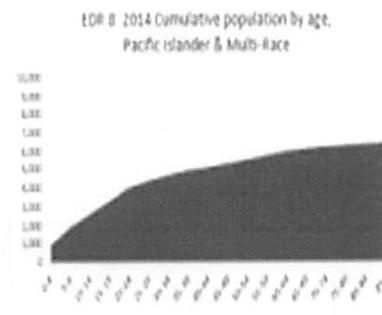
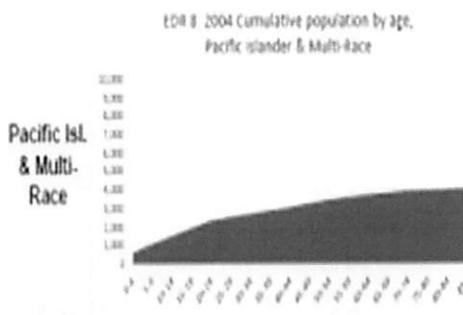
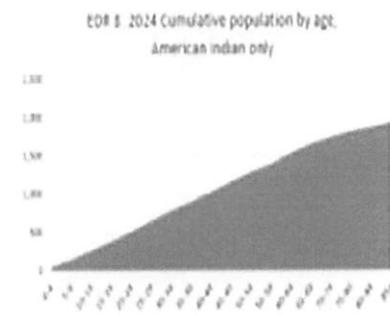
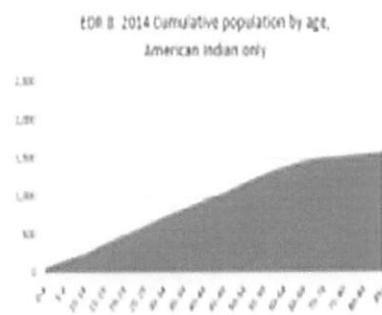
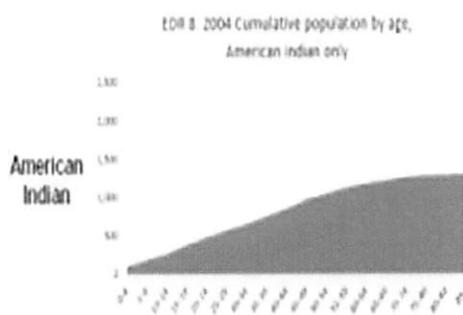
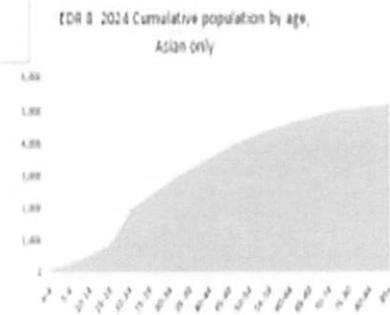
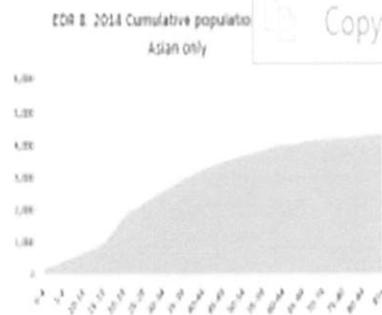
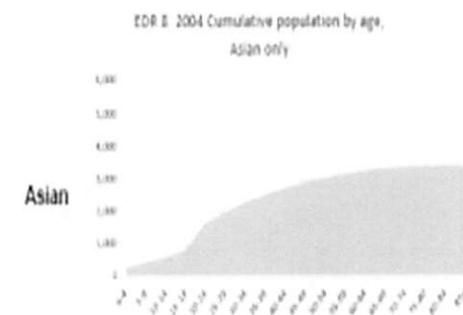
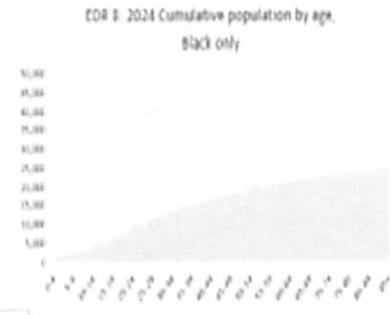
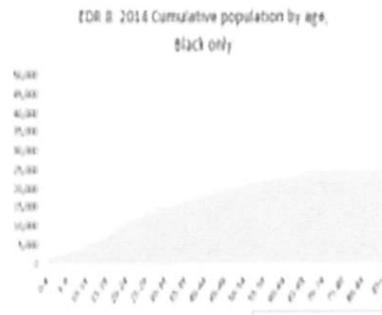
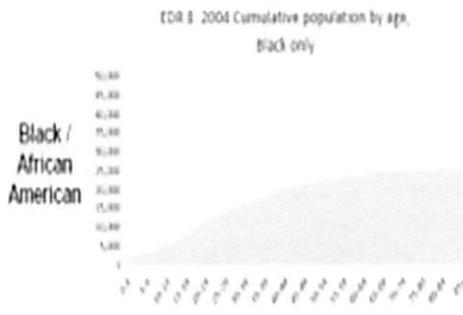
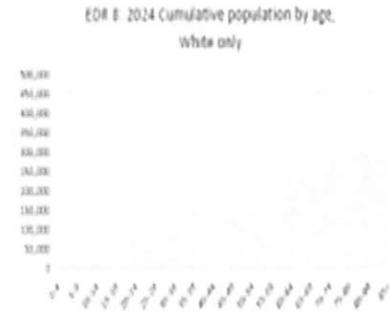
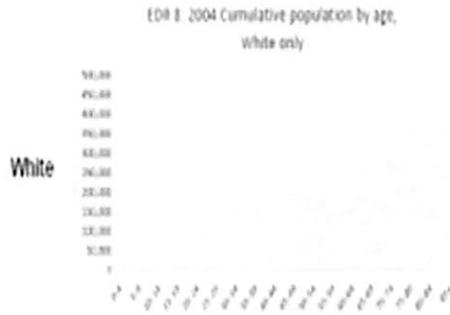
In total, the region’s population in 2024 was 355,854. Of the total, 88.9% of the population reported their race as White. The Black population totaled 24,362, 6.8% of the total. The Asian (5,200, 1.5%), American Indian (1,932, 0.5%), and Pacific Islander / Two or More Races (8,104, 2.3%) resident populations each grew between 2014 and 2024.

Lastly, the curvature of each chart demonstrates the age profile for each racial group in the Southern Region: curves which rise more quickly are younger on average. Curves which have greater area in the right column than the left have added population between 2004 and 2024. Curve regions which have slopes close to zero are indicative of higher mortality rates. Similarly to other regions around Illinois, each minority population has increased in number between 2004 and 2024, while the number of White residents has decreased during that time.

2004

2014

2024



Copy

The region's labor force participation rate in 2018 was 58.0%, while the labor force participation rate in 2024 was 56.2%.

The average monthly number of unemployed persons in 2024 was 7,479, equating to an unemployment rate of 4.7%, among the lowest in Illinois. The unemployment rate among the region's residents typically runs equal to or lower than that of Illinois residents, the result of social trends causing substate levels of labor force participation and substate levels of unsuccessful job search efforts. These social structural trends are manifested in household-level challenges in finding a combination of childcare, transportation, and high-opportunity work that make labor market participation desirable.

Since the beginning of the current plan's enactment, there have been no major shifts in the population's educational attainment demographics.⁶²

Table 6: EDR 8 Labor supply and equilibrium labor demanded by industry and occupation

	2004	2014	2024
Labor Force	186,519	169,835	158,461
Unemployment	11,844	12,726	7,479
Unemployment Rate	6.4%	7.5%	4.7%
Payroll Employment			
Natural Resources and Mining	3,100	4,400	2,400
Construction	5,700	4,200	4,600
Manufacturing	16,000	12,400	12,600
Wholesale trade	3,800	3,500	3,500
Retail Trade	17,800	15,600	14,600
Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	6,400	6,400	5,500
Information	2,200	1,600	900
Financial Activities	5,300	5,500	5,800
Professional and Business Services	7,600	6,700	6,000
Educational and Health Services	18,300	21,000	23,500
Leisure and Hospitality	13,300	12,000	12,100

⁶¹2026 IDES Labor Market Information EDR 8, page 9

⁶² 2026 IDES Labor Market Information EDR 8, page 9

Other Services	5,300	4,600	4,500
Government	37,100	36,000	36,400
Federal Government	2,700	2,800	2,800
State Government	15,400	14,900	14,600
Local Government	19,100	18,400	19,100

Occupation Job Postings

	2023	2024	2025
Management	1,554	1,168	1,681
Business and Financial Operations	559	457	696
Computer and Mathematical	390	227	133
Architecture and Engineering	342	231	250
Life, Physical, and Social Science	225	219	230
Community and Social Service	425	375	592
Legal	21	25	44
Educational Instruction and Library	260	294	408
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, Media	333	265	485
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	7,608	4,536	6,752
Healthcare Support	837	631	1,127
Protective Service	299	176	296
Food Preparation and Serving Related	882	618	1,238
Capital Cleaning and Maintenance	325	274	499
Personal Care and Service	200	178	209
Sales and Related	1,959	1,821	2,259
Office and Administrative Support	1,095	812	1,520
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	99	104	142
Construction and Extraction	234	243	371
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	661	516	963
Production	352	418	634
Transportation and Material Moving	1,241	1,155	2,056

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Illinois Department of Employment Security, Lightcast

Industrial sector payroll employment trends are provided in the middle segment of Table 6. The overall trajectory of sectoral employment trends remains unchanged since the current Regional Plan was created: the number of payroll jobs among employers in Manufacturing remain below 2004 levels despite employers in the sector accounting for nearly 10% of total payroll jobs in the region. Payroll employment also decreased in two of three levels of government between 2004 and 2024. The region maintains a strong core of employers in the Trade, Transportation & Utilities sector, though efficiencies along the supply chain have resulted in a steady dip of payroll employment in those sectors over the last 20 years.

State-level occupational surveys from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in particular the Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) survey, produce data which are not designed to be compared year-to-year. Table 6 does include job postings data categorized by Standard Occupational Classification System (SOC) major occupation groups by Lightcast's data scraping algorithm. On a region-wide basis, the number of job postings increased in 2025 in 21 of the 22 major occupation groups.

Among occupations where the number of job postings increased over 50% between 2024 and 2025, available jobs in Transportation & Material Moving and Food Preparation & Serving were the most numerous. Job posting activity in search of healthcare services workers, including Healthcare Practitioners & Technical Occupation and Healthcare Support Occupations, were also well increased in 2025.

The number of job postings in occupation groups such as Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports & Media (2.2% of total in 2025) and Building & Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance (2.2% of total in 2025) appear increasingly in-demand, with posting shares rising each of the last two years.⁶³

A highly skilled and educated workforce is important to the economic vitality of Illinois. Unfortunately, rural schools are facing shrinking numbers of school-aged children, diminishing funding and decreasing local revenues, and an aging infrastructure. At the same time, schools are being asked to make greater use of technology and meet additional mandates for testing and services. School districts are seeking greater economies of scale through continued consolidations and the use of technology driven instruction, but more must be done to ensure that Illinois is preparing the workforce it needs for the future⁶⁴. High school career training efforts should be maximized and the possibility of a career and technical high school should be reviewed⁶⁵. Further policies are needed for strengthening K-12 education, by examining the ways educators and administrators can collaborate on common shared educational challenges.⁶⁶

WIOA has an increased focus on serving youth, yet EDR 8 is experiencing a decrease in the youth population and school funding, including alternative schools that provide a non-traditional education setting, are facing funding challenges. Information suggests that our youth are not aware of the changing "in demand" industry sectors and occupations in the SEDR. Youth seem less interested in "traditional" opportunities (e.g., manufacturing and health care) drawn instead to more entrepreneurial, non-time clock opportunities. Economic change and subsequent career opportunity change is inevitable. It is essential to include career pathway programs in K-12 education programs in formats that encourage exploration and career development.

Vienna High School is a leader in Workforce Readiness programs. The Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act⁶⁷ includes a voluntary process for school districts to award College and Career Pathway Endorsements to high school

⁶³ 2026 IDES Labor Market Data EDR 8, page 11

⁶⁴ DRA, page 31.

⁶⁵ Greater Egypt CEDs 40, DRA, page 23.

⁶⁶ Greater Egypt CEDS, page 40.

graduates. Students earn endorsements by completing an individualized learning plan, a career-focused instructional sequence, and professional learning opportunities.

Current College and Career Pathway Endorsements are: Agriculture Industries, Construction Craft Preparation Program (Laborers), Education/Southern Illinois Future Teachers Coalition (SIFTC), Health Occupations, and Human Services/Social Work. Several of these career pathways are in consortium with other high schools in the region with dual credit offerings by regional community colleges.

Public-private experiences like Manufacturing Day in Mt. Vernon and the Harrisburg High School Career/Job Fair have been expanded throughout the region. Each Regional Office of Education (ROE) in the nineteen county area has completed or is in the process of completing Career Days. Apprenticeship and Title 1B Youth personnel work with IDES Business Services staff and ROE offices to plan a centralized location and dissemination of information. The Business Services' team is responsible for engaging numerous employers in the region. Employers have expressed satisfaction in these Career Day efforts as an effective way to engage high school youth prior to graduation.

1.A.4.b. Special Populations

Serving the needs of special populations seeking training, employment and career advancement opportunities is an essential part of WIOA services. The special populations include the following: persons below poverty level and receiving public assistance; persons with disabilities, migrant and seasonal farm workers, unemployed adults and dislocated workers, veterans, and youth (under the age of 24). The chart below is based on the State of Illinois 2024 Regional Data Packet⁶⁷. See tables in 1.A.4.

Statistics indicate a growing need to ensure policies are in place to serve special populations. Generational poverty has created a culture of poverty difficult to impact. Strategies for long-term impact for those in poverty require multiple supports. However, funding constraints impact outreach and support across the thousands of miles of rural southern Illinois. Significant policy implications exist for expanding and improving access to additional, sustainable outreach and support programs. Policies to address poverty and to increase educational outcomes are essential. Further developing integrated partnerships to include community-based partners beyond state agency and state core partners is critical to communicating and achieving service goals.

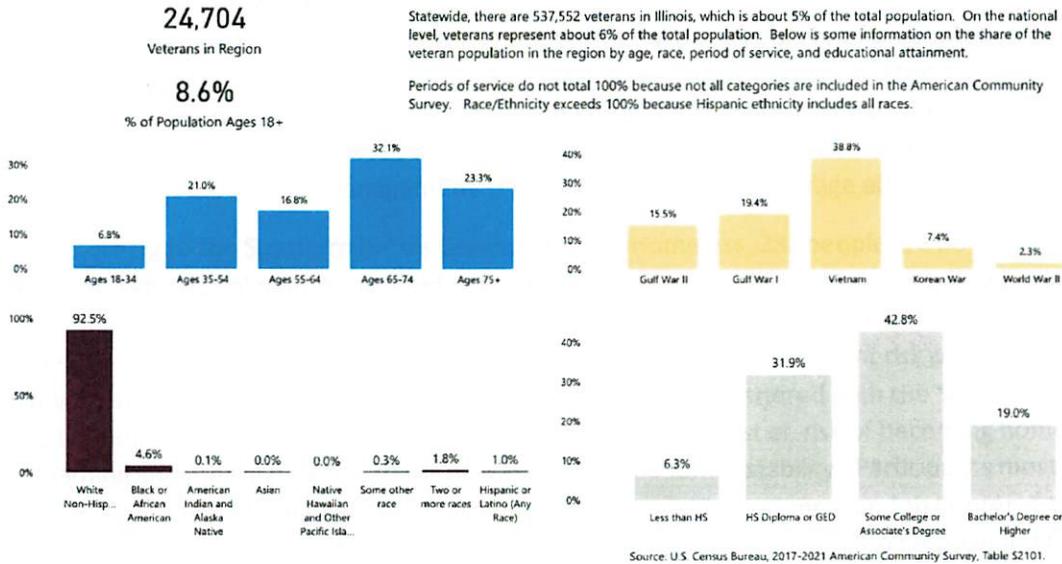
Approximately 19% of Illinois' veterans reside in rural areas⁶⁸. In SEDR, about 8% of the region's population is Veterans (State data, page 6). This is compared to a state average of 5% (State data, page 23). Although agriculture is pervasive in the region, this sector does not pay family sustaining wages. The targeted industries and occupations need to provide veteran's more opportunities with better wages.

Veterans in the United States represent 6% of the total population. Statewide, there are 537,552 veterans in Illinois and 24,704 veterans in the SEDR. Veterans represent 8.6% of the population in the southern-most 19 counties. The largest concentration of veterans is in the 65-74 age range at 32.1%. The region boasts a VA Medical Center with hundreds of both medical and behavioral health services. IDES Veteran Services collaborates well with the WIOA funding partners to provide training services or support not available. The region lacks an effective way to grant credit hours for skill sets obtained in military service and makes the attainment of post-secondary education more difficult. Employers in the region, however, are eager to hire veterans and value the skill sets each may have obtained during service. Several veterans are taking advantage of Apprenticeship opportunities in diesel, automotive, and aviation services.

⁶⁷ 2024 Regional Data Plan EDR 8

⁶⁸ National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics

Veteran Population by Age, Type, Race, & Education



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Within the SEDR, languages spoken at home ages 5 and older shows 95.9% are English only. Only 2.1% speak Spanish in the home according to the US Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey. The planning group believes the Spanish speaking home is under-represented as Hispanic households were hesitant to take part in the last Census process even though significant outreach to the population occurred in marketing and education about the purpose of the Census. English as a Second Language is not a present challenge in the area and few resources exist outside a few adult education programs.

Returning Citizens – The region continues to struggle with placement of individuals formerly incarcerated or “returning citizens.” The low unemployment rate has forced some employers to consider hiring returning citizens – although many employers evaluate the type of conviction before determining employment. ManTraCon recently completed a pilot grant with the state of Illinois through the Department of Commerce. For the past two years, ManTraCon has facilitated a Safe Pathways Home grant with New York University to provide welding training and possible certifications to hundreds of incarcerated men in the southern-most 23 counties of Illinois. A network of American Job Centers worked together to ease the enrollment within each workforce area upon release. The past year, services have been prioritized at the Murphysboro Re-entry Center so the Mobile Welding Classroom does not lose time traveling between correctional facilities. Employment results have fallen as those completing the training are now returning to workforce areas well outside the original coverage area and lack the collaborative WIOA enrollment process enjoyed in southern Illinois.

Virtual Career Fairs remain an important link with incarcerated individuals throughout the state resulting in improved more immediate employment upon release. Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) offers virtual job fairs with southern Illinois employers. The Job Fairs may reach over 100 men each time enabling them with information about WIOA enrollment and employment.

A unique public-private partnership exists with the creation of the Walker's Bluff Casino Resort. For over 10 years, the owners of Walker's Bluff and their investment team, convened the region in public discussions and support for a gambling license from the state of Illinois. The convening took the form of town hall meetings, radio talk shows, Chambers of Commerce meetings, meetings of public and behavioral health leaders, City Council meeting presentations, and frequent trips to Chicago and Springfield. Both Williamson and Jackson County governments worked to fund a new entrance road. While this model may not fit the normal public-private sector partnerships, the creation of this resort will change the face of southern Illinois and its workforce needs. Currently, the owners/operators intend to rely heavily on the public workforce system for recruitment and involve the community college in training. The Community College is convening other hospitality employers and developing short-term training. The owner is a product of receiving an RN through JTPA and has an affinity for marginalized residents and opportunity for a new life through a new career. The Casino continues to impact the need for hospitality employees and may move the retail/hospital to an in-demand sector with family sustaining wages.



A recent public-private partnership has been evolving in the Marion area of the SEDR. The Oasis development is a concept of the owners of Black Diamond Harley-Davidson headquartered in Marion. Black Diamond Harley-Davidson is one of the most successful Harley-Davidson dealerships in the United States. From a town of 17,000 people, Marion, Illinois, the owners, Rodney Cabaness and Shad Zimbro have grown a powerhouse motorcycle franchise. Beginning with a franchise location that drew from 3 states to a destination hosting customers from 34 states in 2022. Now, fifteen years later, the partnership has grown into RV, manufactured homes, watercraft, appliances, electronics, flooring, cabinets, zero-turn mowers, Krispy Kreme doughnuts, and more. In addition, Kokopelli Golf Course and the Mountain Dew Park, home of the Thrillbillies baseball team and stadium are part of the first phase of a new concept. The corporation is home to numerous economic retail drivers in the region and have seriously been engaged in a new leisure hospitality sector initiative.

Millennium Destination Developments have worked for several years to take advantage of the Star Bond District status and numerous state grants to develop a large-scale destination development at the crossroads of Route 13 and 57 in Marion, Illinois. The first phase was the creation of the Oasis Outdoors with a 350,000 square foot mall showroom, The Oasis Sports Complex will include multi-plex youth tournaments to the area. It is estimated over 450,000 non-local visitors, 63,000 hotel room nights, and over \$25 million in direct spending will be occurring. The development will also

include three top-flight entertainment and shopping venues to the newly developed, Oasis Outdoors, Oasis Golf and Pickleball Complex and the Oasis South Shopping Center. Over 500 new jobs are expected in the first phase and the complex will certainly increase infrastructure upgrades. This complex will bring opportunities throughout the beautiful southern Illinois region. Hundreds of regional residents, leaders, and elected officials have taken part in public meetings and feedback opportunities. Millions of dollars in private investment continue to spark both federal, state, county and city investments while growing the leisure and hospitality sector.

1.B.4. Neutral Conveners

Southern Illinois is rich in various convening groups to enhance the economic viability of the 19-county region. The American Job Center Southern Illinois offers a large meeting space equipped with state of the art technology capacity, a smaller Employer Conference room and a 15 station training loab. Staff are important partners offering meeting space and technology meeting platforms. All the neutral conveners associated with target sectors are aware of Title 1B funds and advise on specific activities related to early career development and work-based learning opportunities.

Manufacturing partnerships are led by neutral conveners including: Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center (IMEC), Illinois Manufacturing Association (IMA), and the SIU Research Park and Small Business Development Center.

Healthcare partnerships are led by neutral conveners including: Illinois Area Health Education Network (IHEN), Healthy Southern Illinois Delta Network(HSIDN), and Southern Illinois Healthcare (SIH).

Neutral conveners engage to foster 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. Further develop sector-based partnerships within the three selected demand industries: Healthcare, Transportation, and Manufacturing. Facilitate existing sector-based partnerships with neutral conveners including IMEC, Illinois Area Health Education Network, and Southern Illinois Healthcare (SIH). Work with adult education programs to promote and further develop Bridge Programs in Healthcare and Manufacturing.

The Healthy Southern Illinois Delta Network (HSIDN) is a grassroots effort established to build consensus around the health needs of residents in southernmost Illinois. The Network brings together local health departments, area health centers, hospitals and others interested in improving the health of their communities. Members work together to support healthy communities in the lower sixteen counties in Illinois. HSIDN members include Southern Illinois Healthcare, the SIU School of Medicine Center for Rural Health and Social Service Development and the area's seven health departments covering a sixteen county region. Regional efforts are coordinated by the steering committee and implemented at the local level through healthy community coalitions. Coalition members and action teams engage their own communities to conduct activities and advance the overall mission of the HSIDN. The Network has grown into a strong collaborative effort of community organizations successfully leveraging resources to improve health in the Illinois delta region. The success of the network is a direct result of the regional planning approach supported by active engagement of those representatives interested in improving the health of their communities.

Transportation and Logistics partners are convened by the Southern Illinois Metropolitan Planning Organization (SIMPO) and been created to perform and carry out a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive transportation planning process for the Carbondale Urbanized Area. This major transportation route through southern Illinois impacts much of EDR8. The duties of SIMPO include:

1. Providing a forum for cooperative transportation planning and decision-making, and establishing a public involvement process that ensures opportunities for early and continuing involvement of local governmental units, transit operators, and the general public in the review and evaluation of all transportation plans and programs.
2. Formulating, approving, and periodically updating a multi-modal transportation plan for the metropolitan area

3. Formulating and annually approving the Transportation Improvement Program (“TIP”) for the metropolitan planning area,
4. Complying with all applicable federal, State, and local laws, policies, and federal requirements regarding transportation planning and programming.
5. Formulating and annually approving a transportation planning work program which shall identify all transportation-related planning activities funded with State and federal financial aids and technical assistance, including transit planning and programming, in accordance with the provisions of this Agreement.
6. Other planning and project development activities necessary to address transportation issues in the metropolitan planning area.

The work of SIMPO is guided by the Policy Committee, which shall have final authority over all matters within the jurisdiction of SIMPO. A Technical Committee has been established for the purpose of providing technical advice and recommendations to the Policy Committee and conducting or overseeing the technical planning functions and duties of SIMPO. An Advisory Committee has been formed and will include non-voting members from federal and State transportation agencies and other interest groups, and shall be established for the purpose of providing technical assistance, as needed, to the Technical and Policy Committees on all transportation and related issues. For administrative purposes, Greater Egypt Regional Planning and Development Commission shall serve as the local Lead Agency. The SIMPO recently completed a Transportation Study discussed in 2B.

DLN Visioning

DLN Illinois is a group of community leaders from Southern Illinois that have graduated from the Delta Leadership Institute, an initiative of the Delta Regional Authority. The 75 plus alumni are working together on a multi pronged initiative called DLN Visioning that fits within and supports other grassroots efforts within the community and economic development landscape in the region. Working with SiNOW, One Shawnee and Bridges to the Future, DLN Visioning is focusing on networking, recruitment of future leaders and marketing of Southern Illinois.

Partner Categories	Partners	Description
	Jefferson County Development Corporation (JCDC)	The JCDC is a partnership of private industry, local and state government, local and state agencies, education, cultural entities and faith-based organizations, which provides a resourceful and flexible environment to meet ever changing demands and implement strategies to attract, maintain and develop business in our community. This organization is setup as a 501c3 with membership paid by businesses.
	One Shawnee	The One Shawnee initiative is the brainchild of Rep. Patrick Windhorst. One Shawnee will be the name of a new 501(c)(3). The goal is to bring selected local elected officials, businesses, community services and educators together to approach regional economic

Partner Categories	Partners	Description
		<p>development in a deliberate, intentional and strategic way.</p> <p>The non-profit will help develop long action plans for projects in Alexander, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Jackson, Johnson, Massac, Pope, Pulaski, Saline, and Union counties. There will be a One Shawnee Project Fund grant program that will fund these regional development projects.</p>
	Ready to Work/Fresh Start	<p>Land of Lincoln Legal Aid recently completed the Ready to Work program and launched The Fresh Start Project in January 2020 after receiving funding from the state's Access to Justice Funds to help former justice-involved Illinoisans remove the barriers of past convictions and arrests. Through both programs, Land of Lincoln hosts expungement and sealing events to help people gain employment.</p>
Business and Industry Development	Illinois Small Business Development Center at SIU ⁷³ , Southeastern Illinois College Rend Lake College	<p>The Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Southern Illinois University provides small business owners and entrepreneurs with the tools, guidance and support necessary to start, manage and grow successful and sustainable businesses.</p>
	John A. Logan Community College Center for Business and Industry	<p>The Center is devoted to training the unemployed, underemployed, and currently employed who need to upgrade workplace skills.</p> <p>Programs and Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce Training, Special Programs and Short-Term Courses • Customized training programs geared to specific business and industry needs. • Special needs projects or consulting services.

⁷³ Illinois Small Business Development Center at SIU <http://sbdc.siu.edu/>

Partner Categories	Partners	Description
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying and developing educational programs needed for emerging occupations. Planning and coordination of conferences, seminars, and workshops developed for area businesses, organizational groups, and governmental agencies dealing with work force topics or events. Catering services through Chartwells.
	Shawnee Community College Center for Community and Economic Development	The Center for Economic Development houses a SBDC and Business and Industry Training Center. The Training Center provides workforce development training opportunities for business and industry. A variety of courses are available including computer and general office training, forklift certification, OSHA Safety Courses, Customer Service Training just to name a few or we can customize a program specifically to meet the needs of your business.
Local Workforce Areas and Boards	LWIA 25 / Southern Illinois Workforce Development Board	WIOA services for adults, dislocated workers, youth and employers.
	LWIA 26 / Southern 14 Local Workforce Board	WIOA services for adults, dislocated workers, youth and employers.

1.C. Employer Collaboratives Engaged in TPM

The Career Readiness TPM Academy® is a training developed by the U.S. Chamber Foundation that seeks to enhance partnerships between community colleges and sub-baccalaureate programs, employers, and opportunity population serving organizations to improve completion, credential attainment, employment, and career advancement, particularly for people of color.

Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO) announced sponsoring a Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) Co/Lab Training Program for Title I and Title III employees. The first round of

training has just been completed and the business services team members are able to use the sector-specific data to enhance services provided to regional businesses. A second round of training is being planned. Regional Employer Service Teams remain committed to advancing employer-led strategies consistent with the Illinois TPM framework and continue to evaluate opportunities for broader local application.

The Apprenticeship Illinois Leadership Team continues developing new professional development training programs to support local workforce areas with business sector outreach and apprenticeship expansion opportunities through formula funding. **Sector Strategy is a priority of the workforce system in Illinois.** A business or industry sector partnership is a proven workforce development strategy that puts employers in the driver's seat, identifying needs beyond basic workplace skills and diving deeply into the industry's technical needs while reflecting the actual dynamics within a regional economy.

The training is intended for a member of the business service team to learn the TPM playbook for creating local and regional business sector partnerships as outlined in the Unified State Plan and how to use the web tool for data collection and analysis. In turn, the business services team can train the businesses who will benefit greatly from this training by saving time, saving money, and getting the talent they need. Communities across the world are applying the Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) framework to the most pressing workforce challenges, and

Top Benefits of TPM Include:

- Built on industry best practices
- Authentically employer-led
- Generates granular, actionable data on employer demand
- Provides a structured and agile process for collective action and decision making
- Engages the full spectrum of talent sourcing providers
- Creates shared value, competitiveness, and accountability
- Focused on employer ROI



1.D. Economic Development Opportunities

The southern-most nineteen counties are home to the Southern Economic Development Region (SEDR) 8. The region is supported by five Economic Development Planning Commissions and Local Workforce Innovation Areas 25 and 26. The Southern Illinois Workforce Development Board and Southern 14 Workforce Board lead the public workforce systems in the region. In addition, the sixteen southernmost counties of the area are also part of the multi-state United States Delta Regional Authority (DRA). The DRA counties are eligible each year for federal funding to assist with workforce and economic development in the region. The region is located at the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers and encompass the 289,000 acre Shawnee National Forest. The region was branded, “Little Egypt” by early settlers due to the similarity of the fertile lands surrounding the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers to the lands surrounding the Nile River in Egypt.

The SEDR’s central location in the nation’s Midwest gives it a strong transportation and logistics advantage. Transportation and logistical assets include: four port districts; three interstate highways (I-57, I-24, and I-64); and four rail lines (Union Pacific, Burlington Northern Santa Fe, Canadian National, and Norfolk Southern). Multiple airports including: the Southern Illinois Airport in Carbondale/Murphysboro; Veterans Airport in Marion, with direct service to Chicago; and the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport provide numerous advantages for moving people and products. Southern Illinois is also within easy driving distance from major metropolitan areas, including, St. Louis, Nashville, Memphis, Indianapolis, and Chicago. The region’s 360,000 residents enjoy a low cost of living at 16% of the national average. The region boasts a major research university at Southern Illinois University – Carbondale, and four community colleges. Excellent health care services include: 19 hospitals, six with advanced care services; a regional Marion VA Medical Center; a state of the art cancer center; and a Level II Trauma Center. Numerous Federally Qualified Health Centers provide important services in our rural area, as well.

This area is among the most scenic and temperate areas of Illinois providing rich opportunities for agriculture, tourism, and many industries. The region holds vast energy resources in coal and oil, verdant fields with abundant yields, the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers, the Shawnee National Forest, two state parks, and a national wildlife refuge. Bluffs and hills provide breath-taking vistas of forest, farms, lakes and rivers. The region has the ingredients for economic success, and has begun to recover its economic growth with innovative concepts, strong collaborations and both state and national recognition of its assets.

The region is more than just a location on the map; it’s home to communities, families, students, employers and more. The region has significant opportunities and innovation to reverse negative socio-economic trends and build a world-class workforce and communities where our families and employers want to stay, grow, and prosper. This regional plan will contribute to revitalizing our geographically dispersed communities. Understanding the elements of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies from the Regional Planning Commissions, regional Perkins Plans, and the regional economic development organization goals and strategies has contributed to the important conversations and goal settings of this Plan.

The Southern Region maintains an above-national-average ratio of employment in Agriculture, Ag. Tech & Food Processing, identified as one of Illinois’s target high-growth industries. Agriculture and agricultural products have long been a source of strength for the region’s residents. The region’s geography also makes it competitive for business development in high-impact industries such as Clean Energy Production & Manufacturing and Transportation,

Distribution & Logistics. Regional economic and workforce development partners are continually engaged in business attraction and expansion efforts with businesses using advanced manufacturing processes, while Healthcare & Human Services continues to provide excellent opportunities for households across the region.⁷⁴

1.E. Economic Challenges

While the region is beautiful and home to residents willing to assist one another in times of emergency and disaster, it is also home to pockets of extreme poverty. The ALICE report brings a better understanding of the challenges of moving out of poverty, especially in single parent households with the mother as the head of household. This demographic is associated with almost 30% of households in the SEDR. The report brings the stark reality of what it costs just to financially survive, even in southern Illinois which enjoys a lower cost of living than most areas in Illinois.

Transportation from the last mile into transportation hubs remains difficult and impacts the ability to move residents to work. While improved since the last Regional Plan, it is still a challenge for the labor force.

Affordable and accessible child care is documented in each of the CEDS reports throughout the region. Economic development leaders continue to work with employers to understand the impossibility of moving people into the workforce without solutions to child care in the region.

Lack of adequate housing is also an on-going issue throughout the region and being addressed in numerous studies without resolution in most cases.

Unfortunately, the SEDR is home to numerous food and health care deserts. The U of I Extension is working with those counties most impacted and attempting to resolve the food desert issue with Mobile Food Pantries which travel the region each week. Senator Fowler leads the region in providing food through the Heaven's Kitchen effort. While these solutions are mitigating some of the worst need, the access to fresh food remains serious and contributes to the chronic illness stats which are much worse in our region than in other parts of the state.

The decrease in population, while small, causes concern. The "graying" of the region already experiencing "brain drain" of the region's youth contribute to an even more serious concern. Lack of understanding of immigration opportunities has a few counties already attempting ban immigration attempts. SiNOW and the Southern Illinois Workforce Board are planning a series of Immigration summits in order to help residents understand the benefits of bringing in people ready to work. Major employers are urging municipalities to receive immigrant groups to help with on-going placement challenges. Until the mindset of leaders and residents can evolve, Economic development leaders worry the SEDR will miss an opportunity to give a home to people who want to work and raise a family where they are safe while answering the region's worker shortage.

The region experiences several challenges, nearly all attributable to its relatively small and geographically dispersed population. Some areas which are geographically distanced from both other cities and highway infrastructure lack access to powerful broadband and electrification infrastructure, limiting the possibility of business expansions or relocations to those areas. With much available land, including developed industrial parks, and a sizeable and mobile workforce, the Southern Region can be an attractive location for many businesses. However, the lack of a large local consumer population or ability to source large business tax incentives locally puts the region in a competitive place for business attraction, particularly among employers not already operating facilities in the region, and requiring leverage of the area's geographic, cultural, and workforce presence.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ 2026 IDES Labor Market Information EDR 8, page 12

⁷⁵ 2026 IDES Labor Market Information EDR 8, page 13

1.F. Responsiveness, Inclusivity, and Accessibility Incorporation

The SEDR plans to support the Illinois Vision

Illinois' workforce system will meet employers, jobseekers, 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 jobseekers and communities to thrive.

In addition, the region will understand and adapt the general concepts from the Governor's Commission on Workforce Equity and Access, the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board's Equity Task Force, and other examinations of the state's workforce system and economic trends.

- Using a customer-centered approach to service delivery.
- Ensuring employers know the workforce system can provide them with skilled workers to meet their evolving needs.
- Centering equity and access throughout the Workforce Development System
- Providing job-seekers with pathways to good careers, not just jobs.
- Enhancing coordination and collaboration between WIOA partners and other workforce and education systems.
- Building a broader awareness of the Workforce Development System.

Early implications are to grow the various ways in which residents can access the services of the partners in the American Job Center/One Stop system in the region. The region will pursue continual growth in being present or continuing Pop Up events in the communities most in need. The use of technology to ease access in more rural geographic areas is an important goal. Improved cross-training of partners will be critical to improve the human-centered design of service delivery regardless of point of entry point.

The U.S. Census Bureau collects and distributes detailed demographic information for every county in the nation. Outside the often-subjective views of county residents, business owners and workforce development coordinators, data on the age, gender, racial and ethnic composition of communities is collected through several surveys, including the Current Population Survey (CPS) and American Community Survey (ACS), and distributed through U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Department of Labor channels. These data are core to the labor market information included in this plan.

The U.S. Census Bureau utilizes accessible data collection methods to ensure survey participation by underrepresented groups. The U.S. Census Bureau collects and distributes estimates of coverage rates and data quality for major microdata collection initiatives.

As part of the WIOA mission, many program participants are asked to submit and update information about the accessibility of WIOA services. Results of these assessments are reviewed periodically by the Southern Region's planning and service team and are used to identify areas of potential growth in service distribution.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ 2026 IDES Labor Market Information EDR 8, page 13

Chapter 2: Strategies for Service Integration – Regional Component

2.A. Workforce Development Activities Analysis

Provide an analysis of workforce development activities, including use of cooperative service strategies and the connection of job seekers with employers. Regions are required to provide information and analysis of the steps that will be taken to address the challenges and opportunities associated with the regional service integration strategies.

The COVID-19 public health Emergency, forced American Job Centers to close suddenly in March 2020. In anticipation of closure, LWIA 25 instituted the purchase of laptops for all staff. Zoom meetings were instituted as staff moved to remote work. State partners also worked remotely to continue to serve the customers who needed assistance. Business Service Virtual “Meet the Employer” meetings took place in lieu of in-person job fairs. The region was proud to pioneer Rapid Response activities with DCEO for several plant closures in southern Illinois. Effective partnerships and business service teams proved to be a strong foundation for moving forward through remote service delivery. The system learned valuable lessons about the ability to serve as an integrated system

2.A.1. Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths of the workforce system in EDR8 include:

- A reduction in the former “silo” approach to services within the American Job Center/One Stop system has occurred. Increased cross-training and planning time spent together has resulted in better understanding and respect of each partner role. Increased cross training is also assisting partners to understand their individual importance to the system and improved cross-program collaboration.
- The creation and use of a Common Referral form in LWIA 25 is valuable. The Common Referral form is the first attempt at a universal system approach. Partners continue to utilize the form and ask for updates as new edits are suggested by the group. The referral form remains on the American Job Center agenda each month for discussion and improvements.
- A willingness of partners from across the region to work together in Rapid Response Events, Career Fairs, Workforce Summit and various planning events – an understanding we are reliant on one another.
- Excellent community colleges and a national research university form a strong advantage for up-skilling workers at all levels of education.
- Improved relationships with ROE teams has grown the career awareness of our region’s high school youth through the Regional Career Fairs with employer engagement.
- Strong relationships with our Business Service partners is vital and very apparent to employers and educators. Title 1B utilizes the IJL Business side to document business visits, enters openings into IJL for smaller businesses, and the team works together to plan events. A productive working relationship with Veteran Services and IDES Employment Specialists has allowed us to be more entrepreneurial in our approach with employers, including Virtual Job Fairs with correctional facilities.
- Apprenticeship opportunities have increased awareness of community college business and training services and allowed employers to see the system working in an amicable manner.

- The planning and coordination necessary to plan the annual Workforce Summit has increased the value of the system with partners and the employer community.
- Serving on various Economic Development boards and committees helps employers and community leaders better understand the value of the workforce system.
- Service with economic development organizations allows the privilege of becoming part of site selection visits.
- Willingness to apply for and receive direct Department of Labor (DOL), Delta Regional Authority (DRA), and Economic Development Administration (EDA) grants increases the ability of the workforce system to serve unmet needs.
- Increased services to regional high schools through Regional Office of Education ((ROE) Career Fairs has proven beneficial to employers.
- Sector strategies in Aviation are emerging utilizing the Talent Pipeline Management system.
- Strong collaboration between public and private sectors provide an excellent foundation for success.
- Pop up career events in distressed communities throughout the region.
- Dual credit high school credits give advantage to attending high school students in achieving an Associate's degree more quickly.

Weaknesses in the workforce system would include:

- Lack of a statewide data system or effective linkages between existing data systems requires customers to duplicate effort in order to receive the services requested.
- Data sharing prohibitions cause the inability to group case manage and exhaustive data sharing agreements still cannot allow some state agency staff to access files while working in the One Stop
- Independent agency statutory or regulatory rules have not changed as needed to fully comply with WIOA legislation and intent.
- Differing service levels within the region's One Stops/American Job Centers can lead to confusion or false expectations for customers.
- Continued cuts to funding at the federal level and subsequent funding losses to LWIAs causes less ability to serve those most in need.

2.A.2. Regional Partner Activities

Existing Training programs are in place with High School CTE, Adult Education Bridge, Community Colleges, and university to prepare the workforce for the selected in-demand industries and occupations. In addition, Community College Adult Education programs have increased the number of Bridge or ICAPs programs available. All partner training services are designed to serve those with barriers to employment. Dependent on the barriers, various partner agencies form a coordinated service plan.

The list below shows relevant partner programs within the selected target industries and occupations. These programs lead to certifications, licenses, degrees, etc. which fulfill needs of those with barriers to employment, removing those barriers. Title 1B funds will offer tuition, fees and supportive services to remove the barriers of participation for those individuals with barriers to employment. Mileage reimbursement, childcare financial assistance and on-going career coaching support will continue to be offered throughout the participation in the training mentioned. Community Action Agencies also assist in funding participants in training at local institutions.

Available training through Adult Education and Community Colleges include: Certified Medical Assistant, Certified Nursing Assistant, Licensed Practical Nurse, Registered Nurse, Diesel Mechanics, CDL, Automotive Technology, Welding,

Manufacturing Technology, Advanced Manufacturing, Transportation and Distribution Logistics. Bridge and ICAPS programs are available in health care services, hospitality, manufacturing and personal care aide. SIU-C also offers Baccalaureate Automotive Tech and Aviation Tech through the Glenn Poshard Transportation and Education Center. In addition to Adult Education, Community College and CTE high school training programs, the AJC and partners also offer the following skill services: career counseling, interviewing practice, resume development, career and interest assessments, job search assistance, access to Illinois workNet and Illinois Job Link, and employment workshops.

2.A.3. Regional Partner Capacity – Employer Focus

The region’s Business Service teams work diligently to bring awareness of available workforce services. It is understood that various partners in the system may approach employers with specialized interest in providing services. However, understanding the full spectrum of services available including economic development funding that may benefit an employer is crucial. A Business Service brochure is updated frequently to utilize as a “leave behind” when any partner visits an employer. Important Retention visits made by Economic Development partners offer the opportunity to be present, and at a minimum, send the Business Services brochure. Understanding the needs of Employers occurs through many venues including: workforce board meetings; Employer and Econ Committee meetings, Community College Advisory Boards; Perkins planning meetings; Regional Planning Commission Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy meetings; IMEC and IMA; Employer Forums as part of the Apprenticeship Navigator grant, and the Workforce Summit.

In addition to the regular Employer training opportunities within Title 1B (Work Experience, On the Job Training and Incumbent Worker training) Apprenticeship funding has proven significant to employers. AJC Services for specific employers such as Career Fairs, Recruitment Events, social marketing through Facebook and meeting space for interviews have proven successful in the region. Community college partners continue to be responsive to the needs of employers within their respective districts. In fact, community colleges have begun to work with each other to serve the needs of an employer with two different community colleges providing the instruction for an apprenticeship. Regional high schools have begun to share instruction via technology and actively participate as consortiums on federal and state grant applications to the benefit of multiple high schools. Recently, Vienna High School received a Delta Regional Authority (DRA) Workforce in Rural Communities (WORC) grant for 1.7 million to double the high school participation in the Construction Craft program offered through the Joint Apprenticeship program and Local 773. Juniors and Seniors may participate in the 2 year program which greatly shortens the Local 773 Apprenticeship period and also provides participants dual credit with Shawnee Community College.

Employers recognize the need to interact with students prior to graduation and to better communicate job requirements to training institutions and career counselors at all levels. As a result, regional employers are beginning to provide work-based learning opportunities to foster career exploration at all age levels. In addition, many employers are creating a virtual “walk through” of their facilities explaining the different functions within it and have enthusiastically participated in both the ROE Career Fairs and the Workforce Summit. The AJC is working through the Employer and Econ Committee to create You Tube Employer welcomes and employee testimonials in order to encourage interest in the occupation and/or company.

2.A.4. Existing Training Programs

Existing program models need to be expanded to meet the needs of individuals and employers that are structured to be flexible around how people live, work and learn, and to support acceleration from training to work. The use of technology service delivery within education has increased the ability to complete post-secondary work.

When looking at educational service delivery, the focus has been primarily on those programs that could help to fill the demand in the target sectors. Within the manufacturing sector, many regional community colleges provide Integrated

Career and Academic Preparation System (ICAPS) or Adult Education Bridge Programs to help individuals prepare for entry level industrial positions. Bridge programs prepare adult students with limited academic skills to enter and succeed in credit-bearing postsecondary education and training leading to career-path employment in high-demand, middle-, and high-skilled occupations. The goal of the bridge program is to sequentially bridge the gap between the initial skills of individuals and what they need to enter and succeed in postsecondary education and career-path employment. These programs can be expanded to include more opportunities with a variety of employers in the region.

The region boasts several types of the C.E.O. (Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities) program to connect local employers with high school students who have ideas and a desire to create a product or business. As our region continues to see a decline in youth population (ages 18-24) and many of our “best and brightest” migrate out of the area, this program connects youth with influential business leaders in their community and provides insight into the opportunities that are available in their area. The goal and promise of the program is to keep or bring back high potential young adults to the region after they graduate college. The program reinforces the skills employers seek with critical thinking, communication, and leadership training.

As the workforce demand for individuals with technical skills increases, there has been a call throughout the region to examine expanding career and technical education in area high schools. While budget reductions throughout the region make expanding these program offerings difficult, K-12 education leaders should collaborate to see where they may be able to combine and leverage resources to best serve the area’s students. Training programs utilizing the “consortium” concept may best serve area high schools. The Construction Craft program through Local 773 is an example of providing specialized training in one location for multiple high schools.

The success of job placement and retention utilizing WIOA Title 1B funding is measured through Performance goals. Both the LWIAs in the EDR have met or exceeded Employment rates. It is more difficult to prove success with other WIOA programs since the Performance Measures are not as transparent as Title 1B. Furthermore, it is difficult to speculate about retention rates in this post-pandemic world where there are far more openings than candidates. Employers are driven to change the culture of their work places in order to retain key employees and this shift is not related to any expenditure of funding on training.

2.A.5. Program Partner Commitments

WIOA legislation was built on the provision of shared or integrated services and the subsequent sharing of costs in order to provide them through the American Job Center (AJC)/One Stop. The Memorandum’s of Understanding (MOU) identify formal procedures for integrating services and costs. Newly established Service Integration Goals for each LWIA also underpin the continuing commitment of LWIA partners to supplement rather than duplicate services. All partners have been involved in the creation of the Integrated Service goals and have agreed to continue to work with the AJC during monthly meetings to implement the goals. No additional funding is expected in order to achieve the Integrated Service Goals identified in the local Plan.

2.B. Transportation and Supportive Services

This section describes how transportation and other supportive services are coordinated within the region.

The provision of transportation and supportive services is coordinated within each AJC/One Stop monthly meetings for required partners and also discussed at the quarterly Interagency meetings. Interagency meetings have participation across 30 different partners in the region supporting populations with barriers. Supportive Services is always on the agenda for discussion. At each Interagency meeting, partners share changes in their service delivery and also share information on new grants so the group can make appropriate referrals.

2.B.1. Regional Organizations Currently Providing Supportive Services

Regional organizations provide the low income assistance, health care, and transportation services in the chart below.

Type	Regional Organizations	Area	Description
Health Care	Centerstone	Serves Franklin, Jackson, Jersey, Madison and Williamson Counties.	Centerstone is one of the largest behavioral health care providers Illinois, with more than 50 years of experience serving children, youth, adults and families. Services include skilled counseling, psychiatric and medical services, substance abuse treatment, and services for adults with developmental disabilities.
Health Care	Christopher Rural Health Planning Corporation	Clay, Franklin, Edwards, Gallatin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Perry, Saline, Wayne, White, and Williamson	This is a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC). The Corporation's clinical sites provide comprehensive primary health care to include health maintenance and prevention, acute/episodic care, and case management of chronic health conditions to all life cycles. Nutritional, obstetrical and gynecological care, preventive and restorative dental services are also provided. Specialty care and outreach services are coordinated with other entities for education and screening for various health related issues.
Health Care	Community Health and Emergency Services (CHESI)	Alexander, Jackson, Hardin, Pope, Pulaski, Saline and White	This is a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC). Offers Primary Care, Ancillary, Specialty, and Dental Services, hospital referrals, and preventative healthcare.
Health Care	Egyptian Public and Mental Health Department	Serves Saline, Gallatin and White Counties.	The Egyptian Health Department was founded in 1952 as a Public Health Department. A full complement of Mental Health services was added in 1972 changing the name to the Egyptian Public and Mental Health Department. Egyptian Health Department is governed by a Board of Health.
Health care	Healthy Southern Illinois Delta Network (HSIDN)	Serves Alexander, Franklin, Gallatin, Hardin, Jackson, Johnson, Massac, Perry, Pope, Pulaski, Randolph, Union, Saline, White and Williamson counties	<p>The Healthy Southern Illinois Delta Network (HSIDN) is a grassroots effort established to build consensus around the health needs of residents in southernmost Illinois.</p> <p>The Network brings together local health departments, area health centers, hospitals and others interested in improving the health of their communities. Members work together to support healthy communities in the lower fifteen counties in Illinois.</p> <p>HSIDN members include Southern Illinois Healthcare, the Center for Rural Health and Social Service Development and the areas six health departments covering a fifteen county region. Regional efforts are coordinated by the steering committee and implemented at the local level through healthy</p>

Type	Regional Organizations	Area	Description
			community coalitions. Coalition members and action teams engage their own communities to conduct activities and advance the overall mission of the HSIDN. https://www.hsidn.org/
Health Care	Shawnee Health Services	Southern Illinois	This is a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC). The fundamental mission of Shawnee Health Service is to improve the health and welfare of southern Illinois and southwest Indiana residents through the promotion, development and administration of quality, comprehensive health and social services, while efficiently utilizing limited resources. This will include assessing and serving the needs of the underserved/vulnerable populations and designing programs and services which are culturally and linguistically appropriate.
Health Care	Southern 7 Health Department & Head Start	Alexander, Hardin, Johnson, Massac, Pope, Pulaski, and Union Counties	Currently, there are 7 Public Health Clinics (one per county), 13 Head Start Centers, 1 Administrative Office on Shawnee College Rustic Campus and there are over 200 employees. Funding sources include local taxes, State of Illinois and federal government. Fees for services also provide revenue. These fees also include Medicare and Medicaid.
Low Income	Caritas Family Solutions	Serves all Region 8 counties	Helping families and individuals overcome challenging obstacles so they can achieve healthy family structures and self-sufficiency. Provides adoption, counseling, foster care and therapy.
Low Income Assistance	Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R)	Based at John A. Logan Community College – serves the lower 15 Region 8 counties of Illinois.	Community-based CCR&R works to increase the availability, quality, and affordability of child care in the area served, by undertaking such initiatives as documenting service gaps, conducting market surveys, recruiting new child care program operators, providing technical assistance with program start-up, building collaborations with providers and others to create or improve care, linking providers to training, offering training programs, supporting child care professional associations, encouraging accreditation, establishing equipment lending libraries, managing public and private child care subsidy programs, leveraging additional resources to help pay for care, presenting data on the true cost of care, and more.
Low Income Assistance	Crosswalk Community Action Agency Crosswalk (CAA)	Serves Franklin, Jackson, Jefferson, and Williamson Counties.	CCA administers a variety of programs which assist low-income and disadvantaged individuals and families. The intent is to provide services that promote and improve the level of self-sufficiency, while at the same time, addressing day to day needs.

Type	Regional Organizations	Area	Description
Low Income Assistance	Shawnee Development Council	Serves Alexander, Hardin, Johnson, Massac, Pope, Pulaski, and Union counties.	The mission of Shawnee Development Council, Inc. is to enable individuals, families, and communities to determine their needs and obtain the resources required to accomplish their goals of self-sufficiency and a better quality of life.
Low Income Assistance	Wabash Area Development, Inc. (WADI)	Serves Edwards, Gallatin, Hamilton, Saline, Wabash, Wayne and White counties	<p>Supporting the working poor through Head Start, Early Head Start, literacy programs, rental subsidies, job search assistance, small business development loan program, Dislocated Worker Program, budget counseling, public internet access.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the poor facing crisis through Homeless and homeless prevention programs, emergency food pantries, energy crisis assistance, emergency clothing • Sustaining and honoring the elderly through Senior nutrition centers, home delivered meals, medical transportation, telephone reassurance, circuit breaker and Medicare prescription information • Strengthening the whole family through Comprehensive Family Development, nutrition education, parenting education, assistance completing food stamp and Medicaid applications, weatherization assistance, energy assistance, rental assistance and home ownership programs • Strengthening the whole community through Economic development and support for new business ventures, increase value of local housing stock through housing rehabilitation and weatherization, support for groups working on neighborhood improvements, support for dialogue and planning among all sectors of the community
Low Income Assistance	Western Egyptian	Serves Jackson, Monroe, Perry, and Randolph Counties	Western Egyptian provides a range of services and activities which utilize all available resources to deal with problems of the low income and disadvantaged residents including energy assistance, weatherization, head start and housing.
Transportation	Rides Mass Transit District (RMTD)	Serves 18 area counties	The mission of RMTD is to provide affordable, safe and accessible public transportation for all residents of the communities served by promoting independence, self-sufficiency and economic opportunity.

Type	Regional Organizations	Area	Description
Transportation	Jackson County Mass Transit (JCMTD)	Based in Carbondale and provide transportation to all Jackson County residents.	Provide transportation to all county residents. JCMTD is a public mass transportation system that strives to provide safe, efficient and affordable transportation to the general public, including elderly and the disabled, on a demand-response basis and deviated fixed route (Bus Stop) service.
Transportation	South Central Mass Transit (SCMT)	Serves Marion, Jefferson, Clinton, Franklin, and Perry Counties.	Committed to enhancing economic development and quality of life through affordable, accessible transportation services. Our SCT team pledges to provide courteous service to our customers and aggressively meet the changing needs of our region. Provides transportation to Public Transit to Continental Tire, Walgreens Distribution, Magnum Steel Works, National Railway, and other employers.
Transportation	Shawnee Mass Transit (SMT)	Serves Alexander, Johnson, Massac, Pulaski and Union Counties.	Shawnee MTD's mission is to provide safe, affordable and effective transportation to all the citizens of our five-county district, with emphasis on service to seniors, the disabled and the economically disadvantaged.

2.B.2. Policies and Procedures for Coordination of Services

The MOU in each workforce area outlines coordination of services for partners identified within the MOU. The matrix of Career Services is completed by each partner and includes various types of services provided. However, the partners gathered at the quarterly Interagency Meetings are not mandatory partners. Case managers and resource support workers from agencies throughout the region discuss supportive services. The facilitator updates an informal crosswalk of supportive services. However, the cooperation and discussion is completely voluntary and would be hampered by attempting to formalize procedures. LWIA 25 has a One Stop referral form which outlines supportive services of each partner and there is an agreement between the MOU partners. At this time, there is not a plan to ask non-mandatory partners to create a policy or procedure for coordination of services.

2.C. Services Coordination with Economic Development and WIOA Service Providers

Input for the SEDR Plan was provided by regional economic development organizations listed in the chart below. These organizations helped to identify regional assets and sector partnerships that are already in place. They also participated with analysis of the IDES Labor Market Information and other data to determine the selected demand industries and occupations. The Comprehensive Development Strategy (CEDS) data provided by many of the regional economic planning and development organizations helped to provide an overall roadmap of the economic strengths and weaknesses in the region. The SiNOW Education and Workforce Committee and Business Growth and Development Committee also contributed to the discussions. Businesses participated by reviewing data, and by identifying competencies, and credentials they prefer. They also provided input on preferred training programs. The Plan was discussed at various monthly American Job Center/One Stop Business and Employment meetings with WIOA partners. This discussion mirrors the ongoing MOU preparation discussions.

The SEDR includes several regional planning areas, nineteen counties and two Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIA) with respective Local Workforce Boards (LWB). It is a complex array of organizations that work well with one another in support of southern Illinois' future. Regional planning organizations along with respective LWIAs and LWBs, and

counties are shown in the chart below. Other smaller economic development initiatives are also identified within this plan.

2.C.1. Those Engaged in Regional Planning

The chart below identifies the economic development and business member organizations actively engaged in regional planning. No organizations that were invited to participate in the planning process declined. In some cases, the organizations agreed to edit the Regional Plan individually, however, most participated in the RPLT8 meetings and attended the state mandatory meetings.

Economic Development Organization	Area Served	Description
Champion Community Investments (CCI)	Serves Franklin, Jackson, Jefferson, Perry and Williamson Counties. Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program (RMAP) fund also covers Randolph, Hamilton, White, Gallatin, Saline, Pope, and Hardin Counties.	CCI is a non-profit 501(c) (3) economic development organization with the primary goal of improving the quality of the lives of the residents of communities within the counties it serves. To date, CCI has disseminated over 3 million in low interest loans to small business to promote economic growth in the region.
Greater Egypt Regional Planning and Development Commission (GERPDC)	Franklin, Jackson, Jefferson, Perry, and Williamson Counties	Greater Egypt has been serving southern Illinois communities, citizens, businesses, and local governments since 1961 by providing technical assistance and comprehensive planning. Greater Egypt provides economic development planning and assistance, water quality management planning, local government services, technical assistance, and provides administrative services for local, state, and Federal programs such as: Economic Development Administration grants, Delta Regional Authority grants, Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grant, Community Development Assistance Program, Enterprise Zone, and administers a Revolving Loan Fund.
Greater Wabash Regional Planning Commission (GWRPC)	Serves four SEDR counties: Edwards, Wabash, Wayne, and White.	GWRPC is a federally designated Economic Development District (EDD). It provides numerous services to the seven counties. Services provided include: planning, technical assistance, and project development in the

Economic Development Organization	Area Served	Description
		areas of community and economic development, transportation, housing, land use, public facilities, and natural resources.
Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity – Southern Region	Southern Region	The Regional Economic Development Team recognizes that the best economic development ideas often come via a two-way street. Utilizing an innovative regional approach to economic and workforce development, state economic development reps reach out every day in each of the ten regions in the state to provide businesses with better access to state services.
Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center (IMEC)	Southern Region	IMEC was established in 1996 to improve the productivity and competitiveness of Illinois' small and mid-sized manufacturing firms. They link long-term plans and related goals with on-site implementation services by identifying performance gaps, solving these gaps, and building a culture to support sustained improvements. IMEC optimizes operating capacity, implement advanced product and process innovations, increase sales and enter new markets, and improve profitability.
Illinois Small Business Development Center at Southern Illinois University	Southern Region	The Illinois Small Business Development Center at Southern Illinois University provides small business owners and entrepreneurs with the tools, guidance and support necessary to start, manage and grow successful and sustainable businesses.
Jefferson County Development Corporation (JCDC)	Jefferson County	(JCDC) is a partnership of private industry, local and state government, local and state agencies, education, cultural entities and faith-based organizations, which provides a resourceful and flexible environment to meet the ever changing demands and implement strategies to attract, maintain and develop business in our community.
Office of Economic and Regional Development (OERD)	Southern Region	OERD serves as the Southern Illinois University's primary business and community development outreach arm. OERD has a history of success in enhancing growth and building prosperity throughout southern Illinois. SIU has been supporting the region's entrepreneurs in job creation, enterprise development and expansion, and strengthening the rural southern Illinois

Economic Development Organization	Area Served	Description
		economy since 1985 with the establishment of the Small Business Development Center.
Regional Economic Development Corporation (REDCO)	Williamson County	Promotes economic growth and industrial development in Williamson County and Southern Illinois.
Shawnee Development Council	Serves Alexander, Hardin, Johnson, Massac, Pope, Pulaski, and Union counties.	The mission of Shawnee Development Council, Inc. is to enable individuals, families, and communities to determine their needs and obtain the resources required to accomplish their goals of self-sufficiency and a better quality of life.
Shawnee Regional Economic Alliance (SREA)	Alexander, Johnson, Massac, Pulaski, and Union	Business driven group to help move the region forward in maintaining and attracting businesses.
Southern Illinois Economic Development Authority (SIDA)	Alexander, Franklin, Gallatin, Hardin, Jackson, Johnson, Massac, Perry, Pope, Pulaski, Randolph, Saline, Union, Williamson	The Southern Illinois Economic Development Authority was authorized by the General Assembly in 2013. SIDA's main power is to provide low interest, tax-free bond financing to borrowers and is authorized to issue up to \$250,000,000 in bonds.
SIU Research Park	Southern Region	SIU Research Park has as its mission to establish and support an environment to foster innovation, commercialize University discoveries, and advance entrepreneurship and economic development within SIU and throughout the region.
Southeastern Illinois Regional Planning and Development Commission (SIRP&DC)	Serves Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Pope and Saline Counties.	The mission of (SIRP&DC) is to provide professional quality service to the local governments and residents of our five-county region and to promote and foster growth, economic diversification and prosperity within the region by securing and administering grants for public works, housing rehabilitation, economic development projects and operation of the Revolving Loan Fund. SIRP&DC will also research, develop and implement strategies that will fulfill the needs of sustainable development.
Southern Five Regional Planning District and Development Commission	Alexander, Johnson, Massac, Pulaski, and Union	Administers in-house and local Revolving Loan Funds and prepares Community Development Assistance Program grants for public facilities and housing rehabilitation. Works with USDA Rural Development and the Department of Natural Resources, provides assistance to local governments on land development, offers GIS

Economic Development Organization	Area Served	Description
		lab to produce region maps, and a Center for Regional Statistics.
Southern Illinois Economic Development Authority, and Southeastern Area	Edwards, Hamilton, Jefferson, Wabash, Wayne, and White	Provides a powerful financing tool for economic development.
Workforce & Illinois Small Business Development Center (WISBDC) at Southeastern Illinois College	Gallatin, Hardin, Pope, Saline and White counties and portions of Hamilton, Johnson and Williamson counties	WISBDC is a part of the Illinois Small Business Development Center Network which serves as a dynamic, integrated, small business assistance delivery system. Through this program, the center assists both existing and startup businesses. The Network's mission is to increase the competitiveness, profitability and growth of Illinois businesses in a global economy.

Economic development opportunities for southern Illinois are endless. These include the areas of aviation/avionics, automotive technology, development and expansion of fiber optic connections for innovation enterprises of tomorrow, healthcare expansion, transportation expansion, infrastructure upgrade and expansion, artisan promotion and development, agriculture and agri- tourism promotion, increase in overall tourism promotion and the list goes on.

The SEDR includes several regional planning areas, nineteen counties and two Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIA) with respective Local Workforce Boards (LWB). It is a complex array of organizations that work well with one another in support of southern Illinois' future. Regional planning organizations along with respective LWIAs and LWBs, and counties are shown in the chart below. Other smaller economic development initiatives are also identified within this plan.

SI NOW

Southern Illinois Bridge to the Future has been renamed SI NOW. The SI NOW initiative was established with the purpose to create a positive ripple effect for citizens, communities, business owners, and local governments in the 17 southernmost counties of Southern Illinois⁷⁷ by creating jobs and opportunities for upward mobility, improving well-being and quality of life, attracting new businesses and residents, equipping the workforce with specialized skills, and creating opportunities for existing businesses.

While there are a number of successful economic development organizations representing cities, single counties, and multiple counties in the Southern Illinois region, SI Now was founded to serve as a regional economic development hub in Southern Illinois to:

- Create alignment with a unified message and pooled resources to pursue common goals
- Create synergy – and support that a win anywhere in Southern Illinois is a win for all of us
- Eliminate silos as obstacles to regional economic development
- Achieve benefits of scale by collaborating with outside stakeholders as a region

⁷⁷ Jefferson, Randolph, Perry, Franklin, Hamilton, White, Jackson, Williamson, Saline, Gallatin, Union, Johnson, Pope, Hardin, Alexander, Pulaski, Massac
SEDR 8 Regional and Local Plans

As a first step, economic data points in Southern Illinois were analyzed to determine SI Now's opportunities and metrics for success. Unfortunately, the data showed concerning trends in several areas, including:

- A 3.6% population loss from 2010-2019 (384K to 370K) (Figure 1)⁷⁸
- A 17% reduction in total labor force from 2006-2020 (Figure 2)
- A widening gap in Per Capita Personal Income (PCPI) for the SI Now Region compared to the rest of the United States (SI Now PCPI only 72% of that of U.S.) (Figure 3)

After a close analysis of these trends, the SI Now Advisory Board⁷⁹ established goals to:

- Reduce the 5-year average annual population loss in SI Now region from -0.6% to -0.3% by 2026 (translates to retaining/adding +1,300 more people to our population per year)
 - Improve the annual total labor force change in SI Now region from -2.2% to +0.5% by 2026 (translates to retaining/adding +1,400 more people to the labor force per year)
 - Reduce per capita wage gap between SI Now region and the U.S. from 72% to 75% by 2026

To pursue these goals, Task Forces comprised of regional leaders in business, economic development, education, healthcare, and government from across the 17 southernmost counties of Illinois were created in the areas of Business Growth & Development, Education & Workforce Development, and Marketing. The Industry Cluster Analysis below was developed by SI NOW to discover target areas.

Industry Cluster Analysis

- Top industries poised for success and future growth in Southern Illinois
- Analysis performed in partnership with Intersect Illinois research team – SI Now team shared key regional assets and background information to inform analysis
- Note: SI Now region's average annual wages of \$41,956 as reported by Chmura Economics & Analytics JobsEQ

Industry Bucket	Jobs	Location Quotient	10 Year Cluster Growth Rate	5 Year Cluster Growth Rate	Intra-Cluster Industry Growth Rate Median (10 Year)	Intra-Cluster Industry Growth Rate Median (5 Yr)	Payrolled Business Locations	Earnings Per Worker	Weighted Rank	Industry Name	Industry Jobs	Industry 5 Year Growth Rate	Industry Code
Description	# of jobs in region	Concentration specialization industry in region	Growth rate of ALL the industry's NAICS codes grouped together	Growth rate of ALL the industry's NAICS codes grouped together	Growth rate of the industry's FASTEST GROWING NAICS codes grouped together	Growth rate of the industry's FASTEST GROWING NAICS codes grouped together	# of payrolled bus locations per worker for this industry in the region	Earnings per worker in this region					
1. Purdue: Agribusiness, Food Processing And Technology	6,854	1.68	-1%	-15%	3227%	332%	275	\$ 50,540	3.66	Soil Preparation, Planting, and Cultivating Postharvest Crop Activities (except Cotton Ginning)	252	301%	115112
2. Harvard Cluster: Automotive	1,521	1.90	54%	70%	142%	136%	7	\$ 62,073	3.74	Fruit and Vegetable Canning Animal (except Poultry) Slaughtering Commercial Bakeries Steel Investment Foundries Aluminum Foundries (except Die-Casting) Other Nonferrous Metal Foundries (except Die-Casting)	107 47 537 46 - 10	332% 1483% 7815% 219% 0% 1451%	115114 311421 311611 311813 331512 331524
3. Life Science & Healthcare	19,309	1.18	6%	3%	160%	60%	632	\$ 51,415	3.75	Motor Vehicle Gasoline Engine and Engine Parts Manufacturing Other Motor Vehicle Parts Manufacturing Direct Health and Medical Insurance Carriers Offices of Physicians, Mental Health Specialists Offices of Physical, Occupational and Speech Therapists, and Audiologists All Other Outpatient Care Centers Home Health Care Services	2,882 1,059 72 339 126 943	139% 60% 54% 29% 426% 354%	336390 624114 621112 621340 621498 621610
4. Purdue: Manufacturing Supercluster	4,667	0.94	9%	5%	925%	557%	111	\$ 60,827	4.05	Iron and Steel Mills and Ferroalloy Manufacturing Plate Work Manufacturing All Other Miscellaneous Electrical Equipment and Component Manufacturing Truck Trailer Manufacturing Railroad Rolling Stock Manufacturing Furniture Merchant Wholesalers	182 58 28 141 523 4	852% 557% 601% 183% 266% 607%	331110 332313 335994 336212 336510 423210
5. Transportation & Logistics	6,410	0.75	-12%	-13%	210%	607%	5	\$ 44,016	5.12	Computer and Computer Peripheral Equipment and Software Merchant Wholesalers Service Establishment Equipment and	32	4175%	423430

Delta Regional Authority

⁷⁸ All Figures listed in Appendix at the end of report.

⁷⁹ Advisory Board includes John Dosier (First Southern Bank), Tony Iriti (Jefferson County Development Corporation), Austin Lane (Southern Illinois University), Lynn Andersen Lindberg (Southern Illinois University), Kathy Lively (Man-Tra-Con), Cary Minnis (Greater Egypt Regional Planning and Development Commission), Mike Monchino (Monchino Management), Woody Thorne (Southern Illinois Healthcare), Michael Tison (Tison Wealth Management), Tom Welge (Gilster-Mary Lee), Patrick Windhorst (118th District and OneShawnee)

The SEDR is also part of the larger Delta Regional Authority (DRA)⁸⁰ that includes sixteen Illinois counties encompassing 84% of the SEDR. The DRA Illinois' counties include: Alexander, Franklin, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Jackson, Johnson, Massac, Perry, Pope, Pulaski, Randolph, Saline, Union, White, and Williamson. The Delta Regional Authority (DRA) works to improve regional economic opportunity by helping to create jobs, build communities, and improve the lives of the 10 million people who reside in the 252 counties and parishes of the eight-state Delta region encompassing counties in Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama. Led by the Delta Regional Authority Board-comprised of the Federal Co-Chairman, appointed by the President and confirmed by the U.S. Senate, and the governors of the eight states-the Delta Regional Authority fosters local and regional partnerships that address economic and social challenges to ultimately strengthen the Delta economy and the quality of life for Delta residents. Between Fiscal Year (FY) 2002 through FY 2015, DRA invested \$11,402,304⁸¹ in Southern Illinois. A robust group of leaders from the Delta Leadership Network continue to be engaged in community and economic endeavors. Ongoing work of former Delta Leadership Institute graduates continues to contribute to the region.

In 2022, the DRA awarded a grant to ManTraCon Corp. for the purchase of Oculus headsets for distribution to high schools and community colleges throughout the region. The headsets encourage career exploration of aviation and automotive careers. A prior award by the DRA was made to the Greater Egypt Regional Planning and Development Commission as a result of work on the Regional Plan which included a plan to begin Sector Alliances and find a way to capitalize on the business assets of southern Illinois. An award of \$111,111 was awarded and an RFP has been made available to begin the important work of showcasing the assets and business successes and opportunities of the region. The SIWDB is firmly committed to ensuring the success of this venture and recently agreed to fund the portion pertaining to Jefferson County since it is the only county outside the DRA footprint.

Create Bridges BRE Survey

Select stats from the CREATE BRIDGES BRE Survey of retail, accommodations, tourism and entertainment sector businesses in the southern five counties of Alexander, Johnson, Massac, Pulaski and Union:

63% of businesses surveyed with employees indicated that Support in Hiring Employees would help position their business for success.

45% of businesses responding indicated that the region's business climate for retail, accommodations, tourism and entertainment has experienced growth in the past three years – specifically growth in outdoor tourism.

19% of businesses responding indicated that the COVID had specifically impacted the region's business climate for retail, accommodations, tourism and entertainment within the past three years.

36% of businesses responding indicated that the region's business climate for retail, accommodations, tourism and entertainment is either stagnant or in decline.

64% of businesses surveyed reported that their hours of operation changed either temporarily or permanently during the pandemic.

43% of the businesses surveyed reported that the number of employees decreased within the last 3 years, while 30% reported no change in the number of employees during the same period.

21% of the businesses surveyed reported employing seasonal or temporary workers.

⁸⁰ Delta Regional Authority <http://dra.gov/about-dra/mission-and-vision/>

⁸¹ Delta Regional Authority Fiscal Year 2017 Budget Justification and 2015 Annual Report (Page 25)

https://issuu.com/deltaregionalauthority/docs/j-book-insert_finalforprint

51% of the businesses surveyed reported that rate of employee turnover creates a barrier for their business.

When asked “What are some barriers you face when recruiting quality employees?” – the most cited responses were: pandemic-related unemployment benefits; difficult to find people willing to work the hours expected; struggle to find people with a good work ethic; and basic educational skills lacking.

When asked “Are there any particular jobs that are hard to fill?” – the most cited responses were: restaurant staff (cooks, prep, servers); deli-bakery positions; maintenance-repairs; cashiers; manual labor positions; and positions requiring specialized talent or training.

When asked “What skills would you like to see your employees improve upon?” – the most common responses cited were within the category of soft skills – face to face communications, customer service, time management, teamwork, phone etiquette and being to work on time. The next most cited areas for improvement were in the technical skills categories of marketing, sales and inventory control. Lastly, under educational skills – basic math was the area most cited for improvement.

Select stat is from the CREATE BRIDGES Employee Perspectives Survey of retail, accommodations, tourism and entertainment sector employees in the southern five counties of Alexander, Johnson, Massac, Pulaski and Union:

When asked “Which of the following best describes your current employment situation?”, employees cited the following:

- 33% Hope to stay with their current employer
 - 20% Hope to stay in their current position
 - 13% Want to move up the career ladder with their current employer
- 20% Enjoy working in the industry / the position is a good fit for their work skills
- 30% Will likely pursue a new position or industry
 - 3% Will likely work for a different employer in the industry
 - 10% Enjoy their current position but need more money
 - 17% Indicated the position is temporary until they find a position in a new industry/occupation
- 17% Are Undecided

2.C.2. Those Not Engaged in Regional Planning

No organizations invited to participate in the planning process declined. In some cases, the organizations agreed to edit the Regional Plan individually, however, most participated in the RPLT8 meetings whether in person or by Zoom.

2.D. Administrative Costs

Coordination of administrative cost arrangements include pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate. At this time, continued regional sector alliance/partnership work will be collaboratively funded with time and effort from Title 1B, LWIA 25 and 26, and regional planning commissions including Greater Egypt Regional Planning and Development Commission and Greater Wabash Regional Planning Commission; and Jefferson County Development Corporation.

2.E. Responsiveness, Inclusivity, and Accessibility

A Responsiveness, Inclusivity, and Accessibility continues to be incorporated into the regional service integration strategies. The EDR focuses on the vulnerable and underserved communities within the EDR. The EDR will continue to monitor the service to enrolled participants and American Job Center customers to assure proportional representation.

The definition of &&&Individuals with barriers to employment – one or more of the following populations: displaced homemakers, low income individuals, Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, individuals with disabilities, older individuals with disabilities, ex-offenders, homeless individuals, homeless children and youth, youth who are in or have aged out of foster care system, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers, eligible migrant seasonal farm workers, single parents including pregnant single women, and long term unemployed individuals. Strong service integration strategies, including the coordination of service delivery, will continue as services to job seekers and employers is expanded through the effective use of technology.

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

State Unified Plan Vision

Illinois' workforce system will meet employers, jobseekers, 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 jobseekers and communities to thrive.

SEDR Vision

Collaborate with education, workforce, economic development, and partner agencies serving the unique and diverse nature of southern Illinois to: 1) provide program participants the ability to pursue a career pathway leading to long-term employment with a family-sustaining wage and 2) assist area businesses to be competitive in a global economy while promoting diversity, equity, inclusion and access in the system.

3.A. Local Strategic Vision

Describe the local strategic vision to support state and regional economic growth. Describe how this aligns with the State of Illinois' vision and principles. Include a description of how the region and local areas will accomplish the local strategic vision and support state and regional economic growth.

WIOA STATE PLAN GOALS:

GOAL 1 - Illinois' Workforce Development System is an example of excellence in its approach to collaboration and customer service.

Strategies

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. Jobseekers 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.

GOAL 2 - Illinois' Workforce Development System will enhance employers' abilities to hire and retain skilled workers that meet their emerging needs.

Strategies

6. The Workforce Development System supports, informs and enhances employers' talent strategies.
7. The various partners in the Workforce Development System leverage their business services to provide more holistic support to employers.
8. The Workforce Development System will build out tool and practices that can help employers adopt a culture that promotes equity and accessibility.

GOAL 3 - Illinois' Workforce Development System will use customer-centered and data-informed practices to improve the quality of the jobseeker experience in pursuing fulfilling career pathways in a manner that is equitable and accessible.

Strategies

9. The Workforce Development System educates and supports jobseekers regarding how to navigate the labor market.
10. The Workforce Development System interacts with jobseekers 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 jobseekers who have historically been underserved.

The 2024-2028 State of Illinois WIOA Unified State Plan identifies the strategies for meeting the Three Goals. SEDR will take steps to support these state strategies as the chart below indicates.

State Strategies	SEDR Strategies
<p>Strategy 1: The Workforce Development System uses a customer-centered approach to service delivery.</p>	<p>Continue enhancements of Universal Referral Form utilized by all partners. Pursue ability to utilize technology-based Universal Referral Form. Identify and utilize webinar-based professional development on Human Centered Design in service delivery. Increase use of customer testimonials about success within the Workforce System</p>
<p>Strategy 2: The Workforce Development System Advances diversity,</p>	<p>Utilize data on ethnicity and location of customers served to drive recruitment of underserved populations. Increase outreach to non-WIOA programs currently serving underserved populations to increase ability to recruit into the Workforce System.</p>

State Strategies	SEDR Strategies
equity, inclusion and access.	
Strategy 3: WIOA partners and other workforce and education systems in Illinois enhance coordination and collaboration.	<p>Continue Quarterly Interagency meetings.</p> <p>Continue serving as members on various economic development Boards and Committees.</p> <p>Continue work on CEDS Committee work with Regional Planning Commissions.</p> <p>Continue to serve on Community College advisory councils.</p> <p>Continue to collaborate with IMEC and membership in IMA.</p> <p>Utilize Perkins Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment data.</p> <p>Utilize U of I Extension data and plans.</p>
Strategy 4: Jobseekers and employers have a broader awareness of the Workforce Development System	<p>Continue to enhance Business Service Brochure.</p> <p>Create a technology based, mobile-friendly Business Service Brochure.</p> <p>Invite additional employers to the monthly Employer and Econ Committee meetings.</p> <p>Utilize Apprenticeship funding to enhance status with employers.</p> <p>Increase the number of employers participating in the annual Workforce Summit.</p> <p>Continue ROE high school Career Fairs and increase employer participation.</p> <p>Advocate and assist state development of Awareness marketing campaign.</p>
Strategy 5: The Workforce Development System improves local service delivery through enhanced support of frontline workers.	<p>Create monthly email communication from AJC with input from partner front line staff, including success stories and links to available on-line professional development webinars.</p> <p>Survey frontline staff about the design and content of the Universal Referral Form, including preference for technology platform development.</p>
Strategy 6: The Workforce Development System supports, informs and enhances employers' talent strategies.	<p>Continue to Develop Talent Pipeline Management in Aviation Tech.</p> <p>Continue to convene partners in Health care and emerging leisure and hospitality sectors.</p> <p>Continue to support the high school Construction Craft training program.</p> <p>Enhance current Workforce Summit to include education partners and national experts on talent strategies.</p>
Strategy 7: The various partners in the Workforce Development System leverage their business	<p>All partners in the system, including economic development partners, utilize the Business Service brochure.</p> <p>Continue to develop personal relationships with employers and partners to provide space in the AJC for recruitment activities, interviews, and training.</p>

State Strategies	SEDR Strategies
<p>services to provide more holistic support to employers.</p>	<p>Sponsor more webinars by legal experts on changing labor laws and other issues facing employers</p>
<p>Strategy 8: The Workforce Development System will build tools and practices that can help employers adopt a culture that promotes equity and accessibility.</p>	<p>Showcase employer champions for an accessible workplace as speakers at Workforce Summit and You Tube testimonials.</p> <p>Create a Diversity and Equity workshop to the annual Workforce Summit.</p>
<p>Strategy 9: The Workforce Development System educates and supports jobseekers regarding how to navigate the labor market.</p>	<p>Offer AJC workshops in the Training Lab to lead jobseekers in navigating available labor market data.</p> <p>Create individual plans through the use of Chmura JobsEQ for each jobseeker customer in Title 1B services.</p>
<p>Strategy 10: The Workforce Development System interacts with job seekers in places where they live and visit.</p>	<p>Continue to participate in community “Pop Up” events in underserved areas of the region.</p> <p>Continue to participate with organizations closely connected to underserved populations to maximize trust and awareness of Workforce Development services.</p> <p>Continue to meet in community spaces; libraries, fast food restaurants, churches, and community action agency locations near jobseeker’s home.</p>
<p>Strategy 11: The Workforce Development System will use data informed approach to reduce barriers for jobseekers who have been historically marginalized.</p>	<p>Establish Data Team.</p> <p>Continue to purchase shared license of Chmura Jobs EQ.</p> <p>Continue to work with IDES Labor Market Analyst on better understanding of Labor Market information/data.</p> <p>Form work group of workforce board to better understand ALICE data.</p> <p>Work with U of I Extension on eliminating food deserts.</p> <p>Continue to work with elected officials on creation of affordable housing.</p> <p>Continue work with Child Care Resource and Referral to supply data concerning existing childcare access.</p>

3.B. Local Goals for Preparing an Educated and Skilled Workforce

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. Include a description of how the region and local areas will accomplish the local goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce and goals related to performance.

The publicly funded workforce system envisioned by WIOA is quality-focused, employer-driven, customer-centered system tailored to meet the needs of the local and regional economies. It is designed to increase access to, and opportunities for, the employment, education, training, and support services that individuals need to succeed in the labor market, particularly those with barriers to employment including youth. The State and Regional Plan attempts to align workforce development, education, and economic development programs with local and regional economic development strategies to meet the needs of employers. The Plan provides a comprehensive, accessible and high-quality American Job Center/One-Stop center that connects job seekers and employers with the full range of services available in their communities. Services assist jobseekers whether they are looking to find jobs, obtain basic educational or occupational skills, earn a postsecondary certificate or degree, obtain guidance on how to make career choices and employers attempting to build the skills of existing and potential workers.

Under WIOA, partner programs and entities that are jointly responsible for workforce and economic development, educational, and other human resource programs collaborate to create a seamless customer-focused American Job Center/One-Stop delivery system that integrates service delivery across all programs and enhances access to the programs' services. The one-stop delivery system includes six core programs: (Title I adult, dislocated worker and youth programs; Title II adult education and literacy programs; Title III Wagner-Peyser program; and Title IV vocational rehabilitation program) as well as other required and optional partners identified in WIOA (Senior Community Service Employment Program; job counseling, training, and placement services for veterans authorized under chapter 41 of title 38; career and technical postsecondary education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006; Trade Adjustment Assistance Programs; employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) employment and training programs; Unemployment Compensation programs; programs authorized under the Second Chance Act of 2007, Section 212 (reintegration of ex-offenders); and programs authorized under the Social Security Act Title IV, Part A (TANF), unless the Governor determines that TANF is not a required partner.

Through the American Job Center/ One-Stop Centers, partner programs and their service providers ensure employers and jobseekers have access to information and services that lead to positive employment outcomes. Under WIOA, American Job Centers/One-Stop System and their partners:

- Provide job seekers with the skills and credentials necessary to secure and advance in employment with family-sustaining wages;
- Provide access and opportunities to all job seekers, including youth and individuals with barriers to employment, such as individuals with disabilities, to prepare for, obtain, retain, and advance in high-quality jobs and high-demand careers;
- Enable businesses and employers to easily identify and hire skilled workers and access other supports, including education and training for their current workforce;
- Participate in rigorous evaluations that support continuous improvement of one-stop centers by identifying which strategies work better for different populations;
- Ensure high-quality integrated data-informed decisions are made by policy makers, employers, and job seekers.

The LWIA and Local Workforce Board's Goals for Achieving the State's Strategic Vision are identified in the chart in Section A.

The operational goals and strategies should support meeting and exceeding the required Performance benchmarks, including:

Percent Employed 2nd Quarter after exit (Adult and Dislocated Worker)
Placement in Employment/Education 2nd Quarter after Exit (Youth)

Percent Employed 4th Quarter after exit (Adult and Dislocated Worker)
Placement in Employment/Education 4th Quarter (Youth)

Median earnings 2nd Quarter after Exit (All programs)

Credential Attainment (up to one year after Exit)

Measurable Skill Gains (All Programs except Wagner Peyser)

Effectiveness in Serving Employers (All Programs)

Workforce boards need to understand the process of obtaining performance information of partners other than Title 1B. Performance updates will be given at workforce board meetings and Performance work groups, including board members and Title 1B staff will utilize enrollment data to monitor performance.

In order to better align regional resources and performance, the Executive Committees of the Southern 14 and Southern Illinois Workforce Development Board will meet each fall in Harrisburg and each early spring in Marion. The purpose of the meetings will be to examine our independent, yet linked, performance and search for regional solutions and opportunities.

3.C. Regional and Local Strategies

Provide a description of the regional and local strategies that will achieve the vision and principles. To achieve the vision and goals, the Local Workforce Boards and partners will implement the strategies and services included in the chart contained in 3.A. Specific strategies which have been explained in previous chapters, are briefly summarized.

3.C.1. Engaging Employers in Workforce Development Programs

Employer Forums: The Apprenticeship Navigator Committee will be a valuable tool for convening employers of all sizes, primarily small employers, utilizing Employer Forums. The partners who are part of the Navigator Committee represent relevant education and workforce institutions and leaders. Employer forums throughout the 19 county region will become multi-purpose. Small employers are the most prominent in SEDR 8. The business members of the Southern Illinois Workforce Development Board (SIWDB) representing small businesses comprise 89% of the business membership of the board.

The Business Service Team will continue to meet with small and large employers throughout EDR8 with a newly created brochure marketing the various services available but also the importance of employer input concerning skills gaps.

The Employer and Econ Committee of the Southern Illinois Workforce Development Board monthly convenes employers throughout the region. Over 30 employers give feedback within the group.

The Workforce Summit convenes employers in the three key industries of Health care, Manufacturing, and TDL to participate in Employer Panels. Over 50 regional employers participate in panels and both small and large group discussions.

SINOW's Business Growth and Development Committee convenes employers in demand occupations and lead the work of the Marketing group for business retention and recruitment.

Regional Planning and Development Commissions: The various Regional Planning and Development Commissions will become important conveners of employers within the sub regions of the 19 county area. This convening will aid in the development of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) while assisting with workforce strategies and service to employers.

Participation with numerous Economic Development organizations and Chambers of Commerce will continue to provide access to employers, both small and large.

3.C.2. Meeting Business Needs

Industries in the region are facing the crucial challenge of recruiting and retaining talent with academic, technical, and soft or “work-ready” skills. This presents both education and workforce systems with the opportunity to better meet talent supply needs⁸². Numerous opportunities exist and have been described in previous Chapters of this plan. The Chart of Strategies to Support the State Vision and Goals lists numerous strategies. The goals of the Business Service Team is to fully understand and support employers and businesses in the region. Those needs vary from Virtual Job Fairs with incarcerated individuals to large ROE Career Fairs with high school students. Building personal relationships with Business Leaders and their HR team is an ongoing effort of the Business Services Team.

Serving small businesses on the **Champion Community Board (CCI)** continues to provide important early contact with entrepreneurs in the region as they are beginning business set up. CCI will be facilitating small business roundtables with the SBDC this year to assist existing small businesses and start-ups.

Serving on Economic Development boards proves invaluable as the Economic Development Directors have close working relationships with large and small businesses within their territory. Continuing to serve and be available to assist with business retention visits will be an important tool for better understanding changing business needs.

The chart contained in Chapter 1.A.3.c. contains areas of business concern and workforce strategies to address the concerns.

3.C.3. Coordinating Workforce Development and Economic Development

Input for the SEDR Plan was provided by regional economic development organizations listed in the chart contained in Chapter 2.C.1. The planning commissions and economic development directors participated with analysis of the Labor Market Information and other data to determine the selected demand industries and occupations. The Comprehensive Development Strategy (CEDS) data provided by many of the regional economic planning and development organizations helped to provide an overall roadmap of the economic strengths and weaknesses in the region. Serving on the SiNOW board encourages networking with the larger economic development agency directors and City Economic Development leaders in EDR8. Continued engagement of board staff and partners in the various efforts mentioned throughout this document will create “real time” opportunities for better coordination between workforce and economic development.

3.C.4. American Job Center/One-Stops and U.I. Linkage

American Job Centers (AJC) provide a valuable “in person” experience for residents attempting to file for UI in the state. Since UI applicants are driven to the 1-800 number or the On Line Application, many are confused and frustrated. While partners cannot advise on UI issues, providing technology support and encouragement for frustrated applicants can improve the customer service experience. The AJCs often provide the only technology access points many rural

residents may have. Understanding the documentation filing for UI requires before making the call or applying on line is also beneficial to applicants. A positive face to a bureaucratic process makes a difference.

State front line staff at the AJC, although expert at Wagner Peysner, have taken time to cross train the AJC Navigator staff to better serve customers attempting to file for UI. IDES Management actively participate in monthly AJC meetings and often contribute important information with partners.

Increased cross-training will improve the knowledge base of partners about important services offered in the AJC system.

3.C.5. Entrepreneurial Skills Training and Microenterprise Services

Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program (RMAP) funds are available through Champion Community Investments (CCI). The USDA funds are available to each of the counties in the EDR through their Regional Planning and Development Commissions or CCI. The SIU Research Park and OERD serves as the Southern Illinois University's primary business and community development outreach. OERD has a history of success in enhancing growth and building prosperity throughout southern Illinois. SIU has been supporting the region's entrepreneurs in job creation, enterprise development and expansion, and strengthening the rural southern Illinois economy since 1985 with the establishment of the Small Business Development Center. High School entrepreneurial programs modeled after the Effingham based CEO program allow Seniors in high school to take part in early morning classes where business plans are developed for the creation of a business. Exposure to other business owners in their community is a key feature of the program. Larger municipalities in the region are developing places where start-up activities are supported with office and or maker-spaces. The Innovation Hub in Mt. Vernon is one example.

3.C.6. Business Services Strategies

The region utilizes funding for Incumbent Worker Training (IWT), Work Experience (WE), On the Job Training (OJT), and customized training programs. Partners work closely to develop career pathways, and industry sector strategies as described in earlier chapters. Recent Talent Pipeline work is proving successful with employers in the aviation tech industry. The Business Service Team works with community colleges and the university in the region to assist with building career pathways, dual credit offerings, and stackable credentials as part of a training plan with employers. In addition, workforce board staff serve on numerous employer-convening organizations. Industry and sector strategy activities and engaged community partners are fully described in previous chapters.

3.D. Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning Strategies

Apprenticeship Expansion grant funds have made it possible for the region to expand and promote awareness of apprenticeships as one of several work-based learning opportunities available to employers. Under this initiative, ManTraCon is a designated apprenticeship intermediary and a regional apprenticeship navigator. A Navigator Team of WIOA partners leads the marketing of apprenticeships and recruitment of business and worker participants. With this heightened awareness, apprenticeships are now included in all business services team marketing to employers as one of several strategies available in providing work-based learning opportunities. The apprenticeship funding is improving employer engagement. The development of an apprenticeship is employer driven, as employers determine the competencies and occupational skills required within their occupation. Three community colleges in the SEDR are also apprenticeship intermediaries. An apprenticeship brochure has been developed, highlighting the benefits of apprenticeship, for use by the Intermediaries and Navigators. The apprenticeship marketing campaign will continue

throughout the region via presentations, Forums, website expansion and individual outreach to businesses. Addressing the needs of employers has improved partner collaborations.

Illinois Governor Pritzker has proposed to increase collaboration between community colleges and industry to develop apprenticeships and other training programs that meet the specific needs of employers. This effort will include building a network of industry ambassadors to share experiences and best practices in developing programs at community colleges. Governor Pritzker also implemented a new Apprenticeship Tax Credit, passed by the General Assembly this year, worth up to \$3,500 per person to cover apprenticeship educational expenses, or \$5,000 for programs that occur in unserved or underserved areas.

Delta Workforce Program

In partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Employment and Training Administration (ETA) and the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), approximately \$29.2 million in National Dislocated Worker Reserve: Workforce Opportunity for Rural Communities (WORC) Grants have become available to support workforce training and education in rural communities across the Delta and Appalachian regions. The Delta Workforce Program prioritizes investing in communities and regions that have been slow to recover from economic transition. The funds are intended to build workforce pipelines and strengthen economies. ManTraCon received a WORC grant for 1.1 million for training within the Aviation Tech program at the Poshard Transportation Center at SIU-C. The in-person curriculum was supported by a VR technology-based curriculum. In September 2023, Vienna High School was awarded a WORC grant for 1.7 million. The grant is intended to double the number of high schools participating in the Construction Craft apprenticeship with Local 773 in Marion. The intent of the funding is to serve the most in need in economically distressed communities.

3.E. Credential to Employment Initiatives

Evaluation of training needs must be employer led and employer driven in order to effectively address the skills and competencies desired within a local and/or regional workforce. Employer collaboration via focus groups and workshops have been conducted under the apprenticeship expansion initiative and more of these events will occur throughout the region to foster partnerships, encourage engagement in workforce development, and provide a means for employers to openly and honestly discuss their challenges. In promoting apprenticeship and other work-based learning opportunities to employers throughout the region, specific training and/or credential needs will be addressed with employers. Work completed thus far has uncovered a need for flexible, condensed training schedules within education systems rather than the semester-based courses available. A flexible work schedule in order to accommodate training has been identified as a challenge. On-site delivery of education is the preference for employers but proves challenging for community colleges. Increasing dual credit pathways is shortening the time from credential to employment. Work-based learning with willing employers is proving effective. Stackable credentials allow a jobseeker to achieve certificates leading to an Associate's Degree. Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) allows a jobseeker to receive college credit for prior learning and work experience. The PLAR is not fully implemented in every community college and assessments are necessary to evaluate the knowledge and skills associated with the prior work experience. In concept, this type of credit earning would prove helpful, in particular for those returning from service to our country who have proof of training received.

3.F. Aligning and Integrating Education, Workforce and Economic Development

The chart in 3.A. identifies the local and regional steps to be taken to support state goals to align and integrate education, workforce and economic development.

In addition, an office of Workforce Development within the Governor’s office was a recommendation of the Governor’s Commission on Equity and Access. Many of the challenges surrounding a universal intake form and cohesive service were noted to be the product of separate agency directives that did not always support integration of services. This office would not duplicate independent Education, Workforce, and Economic Development agencies, but rather, ensure the separate entities are working toward State Goals and Strategies. State funding could be set aside for use to encourage integration of activities at the regional and local level.

3.F.1. Employer-Driven Regional Sector Partnerships

Employer-driven sector partnerships are described in detail in Chapter 1.B. One of the challenges within the SEDR is the geographic distance between like industries. In a region with a declining labor force population, industries are in keen competition with one another, making collaboration more difficult. Talent Pipeline Management principles will govern activities.

3.F.2. Career Pathway Opportunities

Career Pathway opportunities and associated credentials in the target sectors are described in Chapter 1.A.3. and in the associated chart in 1.A.3.

3.F.3. Opportunities for Populations with Barriers

Aspects of the Integrated Services Plan outlined in the Chart of Services in 2.B.1. will also enhance the ability to serve participants with multiple barriers.

3.G. Monitoring and Evaluating Goals

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

The Goals will be grouped into categories of responsibility by staff to the board with input from partners through the AJC and Employer and Econ Committees.

AJC centered goals will be the responsibility of the AJC manager, reporting to the AJC Committee with final oversight by the workforce board. For instance, customer satisfaction feedback tools are being enhanced to capture customer feedback not only immediately after receiving service but also one week post service. Immediate customer feedback tools in place often have a “halo” effect. The immediate feedback is not providing insights into areas of possible improvement. It is hoped that with the gap of one week from service, customers will have evaluated the degree of satisfaction with services and may give more insight into service gaps or areas in need of improvement. The creation of a mobile friendly Customer Service Feedback form may increase the probability of receiving post service feedback.

Business Service related goals will be guided by the Business Service Team, reporting to the Employer and Econ Committee and eventually the workforce board. Each LWIA will have a different lead person of the Business Service Team.

Data related items will become the responsibility of the Data team of the workforce board and rely heavily on the guidance of the IDES analyst and those expert with the Chmura Jobs EQ platform.

Goals and strategies requiring the engagement of front line staff will require special approval due to collective bargaining agreements and will be guided by IDES managers.

Board staff will assist in several of the Goals and Strategies as they require graphic design, web design and technology assistance.

In an effort to monitor the progress of both Service Integration Goals and the Goals and Strategies in support of the state vision, monthly progress reports will be created by Staff to the Board. The Board will become engaged in goals and strategies and members may wish to be part of the work of the Committees. It is important to note the full participation of all partners and employers in the work of the Committees. Each Committee will be tasked with giving progress reports toward goals and strategies monthly to Board staff. Board staff will compile the Goal and Strategy Reports for the full workforce board.

3.H. Responsiveness, Inclusivity, and Accessibility

Describe how a Responsiveness, Inclusivity, and Accessibility is or will be incorporated in the implementation of regional workforce, education, and economic development strategies.

The Governor's Commission on Workforce Equity and Access was instituted in 2021. Three members of the Commission resided in southern Illinois. Kathy Lively, former Director of the Southern Illinois Workforce Development Board served as co-chair of the User & Stakeholder Experience Working Group. This working group had a focus on Human Centered Design through journey maps of Illinois residents in need of workforce services. The Governor's goal of creating an equitable, accessible, and effective state workforce system grounded in an understanding of user and stakeholder experience was the foundation of the work. Focus groups were held throughout the state and the workgroup held 18 meetings as the job seeker journeys were explored. General Concepts taken from the Governor's Commission on Workforce Equity and Access, the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board's Equity Task Force, and other examinations of the state's workforce system and economic trends include:

- Using a customer-centered approach to service delivery.
- Ensuring employers know the workforce system can provide them with skilled workers to meet their evolving needs.
- Centering equity and access throughout the Workforce Development System
- Providing job-seekers with pathways to good careers, not just jobs.
- Enhancing coordination and collaboration between WIOA partners and other workforce and education systems.
- Building a broader awareness of the Workforce Development System

In an effort to monitor the progress of equity and access goals in both Service Integration Goals and the Goals and Strategies in support of the state vision, monthly progress reports will be created by Staff to the Board. In order to achieve goals it will be necessary to perform tasks which will lay the foundation for understanding current service conditions in order to accomplish strategies the goals. For instance, it will be necessary to examine enrollment data monthly to ascertain level of enrolled service by demographics to guide outreach to marginalized populations who may be under-represented. Other tasks that will lead to strategy and goal attainment include the comparison of AJC service records compared to enrolled service records to identify possible gaps in service from applicant to enrollment status and identify unintentional bias in the process. Current locations of service delivery will be examined and GIS mapped to ensure services are made available where customers live and visit. Numerous tasks will be completed in the quest to improve equity and access in outreach, services, and collaborations, leading to good jobs for all the residents of Illinois.

2026

Southern 14 Workforce Investment Board

LOCAL PLAN

618-382-5024
304 East Robinson St.
PO Box 186
Carmi, IL 62821

LOCAL COMPONENTS

CHAPTER 4: OPERATING SYSTEMS AND POLICIES

This chapter provides an overview of all the operating systems and policies within the Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIAs). LWIAs must incorporate key documents into the plan that describe the one-stop delivery system and the services that are provided by the workforce partners. LWIAs are required to provide information and analysis regarding the challenges and opportunities that are associated with the local operating system and policies.

The chart below includes the comprehensive one-stop and access point locations. There are no specialized workforce centers in LWIA 26.

LWIA	Type	Location	Services
26	Comprehensive One-Stop	Illinois WorkNet Center – 1700 College Avenue, Carmi Illinois 62821	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WIOA Title I – Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Basic Services ○ Individualized Services • Adult Education (Title II) • Career and Technical Education (Perkins / Continuing Technical Education) • Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) • IDES Job Matching (Title III (Wagner-Peyser)) • IDHS Vocational Rehabilitation (Title IV) • Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers • Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP) • Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) • Veterans Job Counseling (IDES) •
26	Access Point	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alexander County – Shawnee Development Council, office 2035 Washington Ave, Cairo, Illinois 2. Edwards County – Wabash Area Development, 	<p>The following services are at all of the affiliate locations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title I (Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth) • Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) • Referrals to partner locations.

LWIA	Type	Location	Services
		office 334 Industrial Drive Albion, Illinois	
		3. Hamilton & White County– Wabash Area Development, office 100 South Jackson Street, McLeansboro, Illinois	
		4. Hardin & Pope County - Shawnee Development Council, office 1509 North Main Street Rosiclare, Illinois	
		5. Johnson & Pulaski County – Shawnee Community College 8364 Shawnee College Road Ullin Illinois	
		6. Massac County - Shawnee Development Council, office 1 Superman Square, Metropolis, Illinois	
		7. Saline & Gallatin County - Wabash Area Development, office 14 Veterans Drive, Harrisburg Illinois	
		8. Union County - Shawnee Development Council, office 1000 North Main Street, Anna Illinois	
		9. Wabash County - Wabash Area Development, office 823 West 9 th Street, Mt. Carmel	

LWIA	Type	Location	Services
		Illinois 10. Wayne County - Wabash Area Development, office 2004 West Delaware Street, Fairfield Illinois	

- A. Coordination of Planning Requirements: The plan will incorporate the Memorandum of Understanding and Service Integration Action Plan. As part of this plan, the LWIA will complete a Service Integration Self-Assessment of its progress on service integration. A copy of the documentation associated with the self-assessment process will be submitted as an appendix to this plan. Additionally, this plan must include the following statements in this chapter:
1. *The Local Workforce Innovation Area (26) Memorandum of Understanding provides a description of the one-stop delivery system, and other information that is essential to the establishment and operation of effective local workforce development systems as required by the WIOA Rule (20 CFR Part 678.705). The Memorandum of Understanding and any subsequent modifications is incorporated by reference into this plan.*
 2. *The Local Workforce Innovation Area (26) Service Integration Self-Assessment Tool provides a description of how local workforce partners will align and coordinate services as required by the State of Illinois Service Integration Policy (WIOA Policy Chapter 1, Section 13). The Service Integration Self-Assessment Tool, and any subsequent modifications, are incorporated by reference into this plan.*
- B. Provide a copy of the following local policies and agreements:
1. Chief Elected Official (CEO) Functions and Agreement Between Multiple Chief Elected Officials (WIOA Policy Chapter 1, Section 2)
 2. Chief Elected Official Delegation of Authority and Acknowledgment of Financial Liability (WIOA Policy Chapter 1, Section 3)
 3. Local Workforce Innovation Board (LWIB) Certification and Recertification Requirements (WIOA Policy Chapter 1, Section 5)
 4. One-Stop Operator Procurement (WIOA Policy Chapter 1, Section 7)
 5. Career Planning (WIOA Policy Chapter 4, Section 2)
 6. General Follow-Up Services (WIOA Policy Chapter 4, Section 3)
 7. Selective Service Registration Requirements (WIOA Policy Chapter 5, Section 1.1)
 8. Youth Eligibility (WIOA Policy Chapter 5, Section 4)
 9. Service Priorities (WIOA Policy Chapter 5, Section 6)
 10. Veterans' Priority of Service Requirements (WIOA Policy Chapter 5, Section 7)
 11. Individual Training Accounts (WIOA Policy Chapter 7, Section 2.1)

12. On-the-Job Training (WIOA Policy Chapter 7, Section 2.2.1)
13. Incumbent Worker Training (WIOA Policy Chapter 7, Section 2.2.3)
14. Work Experience (WEX) and Transitional Jobs (WIOA Policy Chapter 7, Section 2.5)
15. Training Provider and Training Program Eligibility – Eligible Training Provider List (WIOA Policy Chapter 7, Section 3)
16. Supportive Services (WIOA Policy Chapter 7, Section 4)
17. Privacy and Security (Personally Identifiable Information) (WIOA Policy Chapter 8, Section 2.2)
18. Property Control for Property Purchased with WIOA Funds (WIOA Policy Chapter 8, Section 3.6)
19. Compliant and Grievance Procedures (Nondiscrimination) (WIOA Policy Chapter 8, Section 5)

C. Describe how the use of technology and other alternative means of service delivery in the one-stop delivery system, including a description of:

1. How the workforce centers are implementing and transitioning to an integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information system for programs carried out under WIOA (§ 679.560(b)(20)).

The One-Stop Career Service Career system is committed to the creation and maintenance of a universal, seamless, holistic, quality customer driven workforce investment system. Each Service Center provides job seekers with career development, training, and employment opportunities to become economically self-sufficient and provides employers with the skilled workforce they require to effectively compete in the global economy.

- Customers (both employers and job seekers) are assisted by responsive and knowledgeable staff through a user-friendly quality driven service delivery system. All partners will assign adequate staff to facilitate customers through the identification, access, and use of services.
- Customers (both employers and job seekers) are aware of and can access services in a timely manner. Customers will learn about the services, understand the services available to them, and be directed to services immediately upon entering the One-Stop Career Service system.
- Job seeker customers receive services consistently, and in a coordinated way. Customers will be facilitated through an integrated, seamless process related to the various services/functions offered in order to reduce duplication, hand off referrals, and duplicate number of contacts. Employer customers will view the One-Stop Career Service System as a business resource. The business customer will be offered a broad range of services that address the needs of the business community.
- Customers (both employers and job seekers) access the services they need to successfully achieve their career or business goals. Customers will receive the most appropriate services along a continuum of services to meet their established short-term and long-term goals.
- Customers (both employers and job seekers) will receive quality services in a facility that is easily accessible, accommodating to all special needs customers, professional, and inviting.
- Customers (both employers and job seekers) can expect that services offered through the Illinois WorkNet Centers will be continuously improved and that their input for changes is welcome by the partner agencies. All staff and management team participate in, and contribute to, the evaluation of center services, as well as, the development and implementation of improvement measures.

- Customers (both employers and job seekers) can expect that the Illinois WorkNet Centers are well managed and supported by the One-Stop Career Service Operator(s), Workforce Development Board, and remaining partners. There exists regular, meaningful communication between all involved entities to identify and achieve quality performance indicators and required outcomes.

2. How the local area is using multiple methods to provide orientations for customers, including but not limited to, virtual and asynchronous orientations.

On-demand access is provided for programs, services and through online, real-time technologies at all comprehensive one-stop locations. This includes the LWIA 26 comprehensive one-stop and its affiliate sites, Illinois WorkNet Web Portal System, and Illinois JobLink. Services to individuals with disabilities and veterans are also available on-demand through in-person assistance and accommodations for technology and materials.

3. How the Local Board will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system through the use of technology and other means, such as online meeting software and mobile workforce centers. (§ 679.560(b)(5)(ii)).

The Local Workforce Board will facilitate access by ensuring outreach and communications across regional partners that fosters access to broadband Internet access, wherever possible. However, due to the rural nature and topography of our fourteen counties that access is simply not available in all areas. The Local Workforce Board acknowledges that online access and communications are integral to plan implementation. Citizens of all ages need equal access to online information and services that connects to in-person services through the Local Area. To aid this access, computers with internet access are available at all of the Title 1 county offices, the local community colleges, as well as most community public libraries.

- D. Describe how the Local Board will support the strategies identified in the WIOA State Plan and work with entities carrying out core programs, including a description of the following (§ 679.560(b)(1)(ii)):

1. Expanding access to employment, training, education and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment (§ 679.560(b)(2)(i));

Title 1b staff work closely with their partners to expand access to employment, training, education and supportive services. Illinois Department of Employment Securities is a valued partner in providing access to employment. For example, through referrals participants are provided with one-on-one assistance with resumes and job search skills. Title 1, as well as other partner agencies provide supportive services, such as transportation assistance or child care, on an as needed basis. LWIA #26 contracts with Community Action Plan Agencies to provide the Title 1B WIOA and Trade direct client services. This unique structure allows participants direct access to other non-traditional assistance such as energy assistance, Head Start, weatherization, rent assistance, food pantries and other essential services. Our local community colleges play a significant role as well, for example Southeastern Illinois College has a CTE Support Specialist that works with Perkins-eligible

students to assist with career exploration, resume writing, job search and job shadowing . In addition, the Adult Education providers offer transition personnel to aid the student in continued activities. The partners within the fourteen county area meet on a quarterly bases and are familiar with the services offered by each partner agency. Referrals are made for services not provided at a particular partner to give that holistic support for the success of the individuals.

2. Scaling up the use of Integrated Education and Training models to help adults get their State of Illinois High School Diploma and work on other basic skills and English language acquisition while earning credentials and industry-recognized credentials that lead to in-demand occupations;

All of the Adult Education and Literacy providers funded by ICCB in Illinois are scaling up the use of Integrated Education and Training programs across the state. Many programs are still in the development or redevelopment stage, as sector-specific initiatives are more challenging in our rural region. Geographic, economic, connectivity, availability of supportive services, and low enrollments are some of the barriers being addressed. Bridge programming exists in Healthcare, Transportation, Distribution, & Logistics, IT, and Hospitality that also seeks to integrate education and training through the use of contextualized curriculum, provision of supportive services, and career development services. The emphasis on partnerships in WIOA legislation allows for braided funding opportunities that did not previously exist. Community college, workforce, agency, and industry partnerships are deepening exponentially as work is being focused and partners are taking on more clearly defined roles allowing each to do what they do best. The sharing of knowledge, resources, and best-practices that is occurring in the area is moving the work forward.

Local Adult Education programs have implemented both Google IT ICAPS, as well as an ICAPS in Entrepreneurship, Welding and Early Childhood. These programs allow students to earn their High School Equivalency and improve basic skills while earning an industry recognized credential. Staff work with students upon entry to create a Career Portfolio. These students all have access to a Career Pathway Bridge, regardless of their educational functioning level at entry. The Career Pathway Bridge allows students access to the knowledge and skills necessary for success in their chosen field and to begin their preparation regardless of where they enter the Career Pathway system. If they need basic skills preparation, or need to complete a secondary credential to be eligible for their postsecondary education or career training, they are able to gain those skills in the context of their chosen field.

3. How the core programs in the local area will leverage their business services to provide more holistic support to employers;

The MOU outlines the use of a Business Services Team made up of frontline core partner programs. The BST collaborates and updates members on services available and upcoming events within all the required partner agencies. This collaboration provides a more holistic support to employers within our area.

4. Increasing the awareness of the services the workforce development system offers to both individuals and employers in the local area;

Outreach and presentations are at the forefront of our approach. Every opportunity to

present this information is utilized. This includes career fairs at both secondary and postsecondary institutions, places of incarceration, employment seminars, all county board meetings, employer round tables, and presentations to individual businesses. None of the efforts involved are just one core partner, but are a collaborative effort to increasing the awareness of core partners. As we have in the past, core partners are committed to working together to promote all of our services and make are communities more aware of opportunities.

5. Determining the most effective marketing methods and messages for informing college and university students about Prior Learning Assessments;

Colleges use a variety of marketing methods based on their target market. Generally the individual is directed to the Institution's web-page or catalogue, which contains the latest information regarding Prior Learning Assessments, specifically what type are used or accepted at that particular Institution. Decisions regarding the specifics of marketing are at the desegregation of the Institution.

6. How targeted marketing will be used to reach various segments of the labor force, such as mature workers and the underemployed, who may not require extensive education or training to qualify for jobs in high demand occupations, as well as younger jobseekers that do not yet have a plan for a post-high school career;

We complete individual packets for different segments of the labor force. This includes flyers about all WIOA services. We also work closely with IDES and utilize the UI profile list to send out flyers regarding WIOA opportunities. Employment 101 on Illinois WorkNet is also utilized for youth career exploration.

7. Facilitating the development of career pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs (§ 679.560(b)(2)(ii)); and

Currently the Adult Education programs in our area offer Career Bridge courses. These courses support the development of soft skills, life skills, and job skills to help learners obtain employment. These programs are also working towards developing their online curricula to streamline guided pathways. We use the relationships that have been developed from years of necessity to aid in the co-enrollment between core programs. The needs of the individuals are considered by the enrolling partner and then referrals made to other core partners for potential co-enrollment. The referrals do not stop with the core partners or the boundaries of our fourteen counties, other non-WIOA community resources, as well as resources in neighboring regions and states are also utilized.

8. Improving access to activities leading to a recognized post-secondary credential (including a credential that is an industry-recognized certificate or certification, portable, and stackable) (§ 679.560(b)(2)(iii)).

Local Adult Education programs within our area, have implemented both Google IT ICAPS, as well as an ICAPS in Entrepreneurship, Welding and Early Childhood. These programs allow students to earn their High School Equivalency and improve basic skills while earning

an industry recognized credential. Staff work with students upon entry to create a Career Portfolio. These students all have access to a Career Pathway Bridge, regardless of their educational functioning level at entry. The Career Pathway Bridge allows student access to the knowledge and skills necessary for success in their chosen field and to begin their preparation regardless of where they enter the Career Pathway system. If they need basic skills preparation, or need to complete a secondary credential to be eligible for their postsecondary education or career training, they are able to gain those skills in the context of their chosen field.

- E. Describe how local strategies will be coordinated with state (including the Illinois' WIOA State Plan), regional and local partners to enhance services and avoid duplication of activities, including a description of the following:

One of our greatest assets in our area is the staff's commitment within each of the core partners to not just serving our participants, but also aiding them in finding solutions to the barriers they face. We are fortunate to have a highly supportive relationship within the core partners group crafted by years of trust and support, along with necessity. This relationship allows the system to benefit from what each partner offers, rather than putting each partner in a silo- the goal is to highlight the strengths of each partner and the fact that close collaboration allows for customers and partners to benefit from what is available in not only the area, but the region.

In LWIA #26 we enhance services and avoid duplication of activities by encouraging and facilitating continuous open communication. We do with cross training, not only by staff housed at the One-stop, but with front line staff at each core partner. The One-Stop Operator hosts a quarterly partners meeting and a quarterly business service team meeting which focus on changes in programs and resources ensuring all agencies are aware of options for the communities we serve. All of the core partner agencies are involved in a variety of other interagency efforts, such as the Adult Education's Area Planning Council, that meet regularly. On an annual basis, all partners are asked to evaluate the One-Stop Operator. During this evaluation, partners are given the opportunity to ensure services are valued and enhanced.

1. Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth employment and training activities under WIOA Title I (§ 679.560(b)(6)).

- Basic Services - Determinations of whether the individual is eligible to receive assistance from the adult, dislocated worker, or youth programs; Outreach, intake (including worker profiling), and orientation to information and other services available through the one-stop delivery system; Initial assessment of skill levels including literacy, numeracy, and English; Labor exchange services, including - (i) Job search and placement assistance, and, when needed by an individual, career counseling, including - (A) Provision of information on in-demand industry sectors and occupations (as defined in sec. 3(23) of WIOA); and (B) Provision of information on nontraditional employment; and (ii) Appropriate recruitment and other business services on behalf of employers, including information and referrals to specialized business services other than those traditionally offered through the one-stop delivery system; Provision of referrals to and coordination of activities with other programs and services, including programs and services

within the one-stop delivery system and, when appropriate, other workforce development programs; Provision of workforce and labor market employment statistics information, including the provision of accurate information relating to local, regional, and national labor market areas, including - (i) Job vacancy listings in labor market areas; (ii) Information on job skills necessary to obtain the vacant jobs listed; and (iii) Information relating to local occupations in demand and the earnings, skill requirements, and opportunities for advancement for those jobs. Provision of performance information and program cost information on eligible providers of training services by program and type of providers; Provision of information, in usable and understandable formats and languages, about how the local area is performing on local performance accountability measures, as well as any additional performance information relating to the area's one-stop delivery system; Provision of information, in usable and understandable formats and languages, relating to the availability of supportive services or assistance, and appropriate referrals to those services and assistance, including: child care; child support; medical or child health assistance available through the State's Medicaid program and Children's Health Insurance Program; benefits under SNAP; assistance through the earned income tax credit; and assistance under a State program for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and other supportive services and transportation provided through that program; Provision of information and assistance regarding filing claims for unemployment compensation, by which the one-stop must provide meaningful assistance to individuals seeking assistance in filing a claim for unemployment compensation. (i) "Meaningful assistance" means:

- (A) Providing assistance on-site using staff who are well trained in unemployment compensation claims filing and the rights and responsibilities of claimants; or
- (B) Providing assistance by phone or via other technology, as long as the assistance is provided by trained and available staff and within a reasonable time. (ii) The costs associated in providing this assistance may be paid for by the State's unemployment insurance program, or the WIOA adult or dislocated worker programs, or some combination thereof; and Assistance in establishing eligibility for programs of financial aid assistance for training and education programs not provided under WIOA.

- Individualized Services - Services, if determined to be appropriate in order for an individual to obtain or retain employment; Comprehensive and specialized assessments of the skill levels and service needs of adults and dislocated workers, which may include - (i) Diagnostic testing and use of other assessment tools; and (ii) In-depth interviewing and evaluation to identify employment barriers and appropriate employment goals; Development of an individual employment plan, to identify the employment goals, appropriate achievement objectives, and appropriate combination of services for the participant to achieve his or her employment goals, including the list of, and information about, the eligible training providers; group counseling; individualized counseling; career planning; Short-term pre-vocational services including development of learning skills, communication skills, interviewing skills, punctuality, personal maintenance skills, and professional conduct services to prepare individuals for unsubsidized employment or training; Internships and work experiences that are linked to careers (as described in § 680.170); Workforce preparation activities; Financial literacy services as described in sec. 129(b)(2)(D) of WIOA; Out-of-area job search assistance and relocation assistance; English language acquisition and integrated education and training programs.

2. Adult education and literacy activities under WIOA Title II. This description must include how the Local Board will carry out the review of local applications submitted under Title II consistent with WIOA Secs. 107(d)(11)(A) and (B)(i) and WIOA Sec. 232 (§ 679.560(b)(12)).

Southern 14 Workforce Investment Board, Inc. Executive Director attends the Area Planning Council meetings at each of the three Community Colleges - Illinois Eastern Community College, Southeastern Illinois College and Shawnee Community College - within LWIA #26. Local applications submitted under Title II consistent with WIOA Secs. 107(d)(11)(A) and (B)(i) and WIOA Sec. 232 (§ 679.560(b)(12)) are reviewed by the Executive Director and a report presented to the Southern 14 Workforce Investment Board.

In partnership with Illinois Department of Employment Securities, Employment Services Team, Adult Education and Title 1, Southern 14 LWIB hosted a series of employment workshops. These informal workshops were held at the libraries in our communities and gave individuals the opportunity to get one-on-one assistance with job searches, resume, cover letters as well as information on continuing their education or obtaining their GED. In our rural area, public transportation is very limited if even offered so bringing this service to our smaller communities provided access that some would not have otherwise had. Additionally, IDES and Title 1 provided employment workshops targeted directly to completers, or near completers, in the GED program.

We are fortunate to have an alternative high school serving students in our southern-most counties. Title 1 works closely with the staff and teachers to provide work-based training to those enrolled students.

3. Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 49 et seq.) services (§ 679.560(b)(11)).

Wagner-Peyser - Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) serves all 14 counties in LWIA #26 and provides outreach, intake, orientation, labor exchange services, program coordination and referral, labor market information, performance information for the local area, information and referral on supportive services.

4. Vocational rehabilitation service activities under WIOA Title IV (§ 679.560(b)(13)).

Vocational Rehabilitation - Referrals to the local Department of Human Services/Vocational Rehabilitation offices who help people with disabilities find and keep jobs. DHS-ORS staff talks to people about their employment needs and helps them find a job or helps with employability skills. They also make sure that people have the supports services they need to stay on the job. DHS-ORS offers specialized VR services for people who are:

- Blind or Visually Impaired
- Deaf or Hard of Hearing
- Hispanic or Latino with disabilities
- They also offer the following programs to persons with disabilities:
- Transition and STEP programs for high school students.
- Work Incentive Planning and Assistance Program (helps people who receive SSDI/SSI benefits understand how working will affect their benefits).

Supported Employment Program (SEP) (serves eligible people with significant disabilities who want to go to work and need on-going support services to succeed on the job)

5. Relevant secondary and post-secondary education programs and activities with education and workforce investment activities (§ 679.560(b)(9)).

Shawnee Community College administers an Alternative High School program providing an innovative path toward diploma completion. Students earn credits in a nontraditional setting which emphasizes attendance, academic achievement, and positive attitudes. Classes for high school credit are offered to students who have dropped out of high school and wish to earn a high school diploma. WIOA Title 1B providers work closely with the Alternate High School program to provide eligible participants with work-based learning opportunities, as well as the opportunity to further their education.

The CEO (entrepreneurship) program seeks to prepare youth to be responsible enterprising individuals who contribute to the economic and sustainable development communities. We have programs in Saline, White, Wayne, Wabash, and Edwards high schools. Additionally, Co-op work programs are available most of our county high schools which allow high school seniors the ability to take classes in the morning, and work in the afternoon/evening. One of our more rural counties, Pope County, reported eight students are taking advantage of the work skills programs this year.

Over 52 employers are coming to Harrisburg High School to make Saline County Juniors and Seniors aware of the job opportunities within our communities. Gallatin county high school junior and seniors will be participating in a Job Search Clinic where they will learn about job search, resume writing and mock interviews. WIOA Title 1 has partnered with IDES and DHS to present both of these events.

All of the students completing the Electrical Distribution and Automotive programs at Frontier Community College participated in a mock interview. Students were interviewed by employers in their field of study. The employers gave feedback to the student on ways to improve their interviewing skills. LWIA #26 plans to expand this to the other CTE programs at Frontier, as well as those at Shawnee Community College.

Southeastern Illinois College is hosting a virtual job fair this spring. Employers will work with a vendor to create an individual web page for the event. The site will be live on the day of the event and each employer will be available to chat with job seekers. After that the web pages will be available to view for 30 days. This is a new approach for our area and we are excited to see the results.

6. How the Local Board will support the state strategies identified under § 676.105 and work with the entities carrying out core programs and other workforce development programs, including programs of study and career pathway programs under the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.) to support service alignment and needs identified in regional or local level assessments including the Perkins Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (§ 679.560(b)(1)(ii)).

We have been able to establish and maintain a highly supportive relationship amongst the partners and local community leaders, allowing the system to benefit from what each partner offers, rather than

putting each partner in a silo- the goal was to highlight the strengths of each partner and the fact that close collaboration allows for customers and partners to benefit from what is available in the region. The Local Board will continue to use these unique relationship to support the strategies included in Illinois' 2024 – 2027 WIOA State Plan.

The LWIA #26 board works closely with training providers assessing the needs of the business in our area to ensure curriculum of the career and technical programs, as well as students completing those programs continue to meet the industry needs. Additionally, Board Staff are involved in the Perkins advisory meeting, as well as the Adult Education Area Planning Council and receive periodic updates on the number of students, program interests, etc... These reports are presented to the Board to ensure that each member is kept aware of the Perkins and Adult Education program and its goals.

7. Provide a copy of the local supportive service policies and describe how the Local Board will coordinate the provision of transportation and other appropriate supportive services in the local area (§ 679.560(b)(10)) and include information on the supportive services by each local program as appropriate.

Supportive services will be provided only to individuals who are participating in career or training services, including work-based training and are unable to obtain supportive services through other programs providing such services. LWIA #26 provides supportive services such as transportation and child care assistance, as well as other items necessary to enable individuals to participate in WIOA Title I activities. Other supportive services may include but are not limited to vehicle insurance and repairs, clothing and shoes, payment of medical services (such as physicals or shots when related to training or employment), eye glasses and dental procedures, linkages to community services, housing and utility assistance can be provided to eligible individuals who cannot afford to pay for such services to participate in authorized WIOA activities. All requests for services must be substantiated and must further the employment goal for that participant and will be determined on an individual basis.

Local Policy #6 – Supportive Services is included in the appendix.

- F. Describe how the local area will provide adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities including:

LWIA 26 may provide the following training activities adult and dislocated worker employment:

- occupational skills training, including training for nontraditional employment;
- on-the-job training;
- incumbent worker training in accordance with subsection (d)(4);
- programs that combine workplace training with related instruction, which may include cooperative education programs;
- training programs operated by the private sector;
- skill upgrading and retraining;
- entrepreneurial training;
- transitional jobs in accordance with subsection (d)(5);
- job readiness training provided in combination with services described in any of clauses (i) through (viii);

- adult education and literacy activities, including activities of English language acquisition and integrated education and training programs, provided concurrently or in combination with services described in any of clauses (i) through (vii); and customized training conducted with a commitment by an employer or group of employers to employ an individual upon successful completion of the training.

1. A description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local area (§ 679.560(b)(6)).

Annually, the LWIA 26 Board offers a request for proposal for organizations to provide the direct client services. The 50% minimum direct training expenditure rate is a condition of the contract and monitored on a monthly bases to ensure that each provider is on track to meet this requirement.

The local area encourages the use of work-based learning by working closely with our service providers as well as IDES Business Services staff to recruit potential employers. At the present time the area does not have a specific goal, but work sites are closely monitored by service provider and board staff for not only the progress of the participant, but also the current and future needs of the employer.

Training services available to adults and dislocated workers may include:

- (i) occupational skills training, including training for nontraditional employment;
- (ii) on-the-job training;
- (iii) incumbent worker training in accordance with subsection (d)(4);
- (iv) programs that combine workplace training with related instruction, which may include cooperative education programs;
- (v) training programs operated by the private sector;
- (vi) skill upgrading and retraining;
- (vii) entrepreneurial training;
- (viii) transitional jobs in accordance with subsection (d)(5);
- (ix) job readiness training provided in combination with services described in any of clauses (i) through (viii);
- (x) adult education and literacy activities, including activities of English language acquisition and integrated education and training programs, provided concurrently or in combination with services described in any of clauses (i) through (vii); and customized training conducted with a commitment by an employer or group of employers to employ an individual upon successful completion of the training.

In the region, our citizens are fortunate to have access to a variety of career and technical programs that results in an industry recognized credential and ultimately a career in a demand occupation through our local community colleges. Nursing continues to be a popular program of study for our adults and dislocated workers. Once the program is completed and licensure obtained the individual has several opportunities close to their residence. Truck driving (CDL) is also a popular program of study as it allows the individual to obtain a industry recognized credential in a relative short amount of time, with many employment opportunities.

Local Policy No. 7 - Local ITA Policies and Local Policy No. 8 - Training Services Provider Requirements are included in the Appendix.

2. A description of how the Local Board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with statewide rapid response activities (§ 679.560(b)(7)).

The Southern 14 Workforce Investment Board and its service provider entities uses the most current Department of Commerce policies/notices and its attachments in order to ensure an effective, planned and coordinated response to plant closings and mass layoffs under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014.

We continue to work closely with our partners to identify those individuals who have been dislocated and utilize the UI Profile reports available on IWDS to reach out with information and options available.

G. Describe how the local area will provide youth activities including:

In LWIA #26, the needs of local youth, including low income youth and those youth determined to be deficient in basic literacy skills, school dropouts, homeless or foster, pregnant or parenting and offenders are a combination of those elements identified and required by WIOA regulations. These youth will continue to require additional supportive services including but not limited to: child care, health care, transportation and programmatically required specialty items such as uniforms and/or tools. These youth rarely achieve the skills necessary to become gainfully employed and self-sufficient for a variety of reasons. School dropouts often are stuck in a go-nowhere job and rarely do they achieve the skills necessary to advance in the labor market. Those deficient in basic literacy skills are not prepared for the projected job openings that are going to exist in the local area. Those characterized as homeless, runaway, or foster children, offenders, and pregnant or parenting teens, have a lack of a stable environment and parenting responsibilities overshadowing the importance of an education which in most cases develops into serious problems relating to one's work ethic. Individual needs within this grouping will be determined through a comprehensive assessment and evaluation of each youth registrant.

1. A description and assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce investment activities in the local area, including activities for youth who are individuals with disabilities, which must include an identification of successful models of such activities (§ 679.560(b)(8)).

In order to support the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, entry into postsecondary education, and career readiness for participants, LWIA #26 will provide eligible area youth with:

- Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies that lead to completion of the requirements for a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent (including a recognized certificate of attendance or similar document for individuals with disabilities) or for a recognized postsecondary credential;
- Alternative secondary school services, or dropout recovery services, as appropriate;
- Paid and unpaid work experiences that have as a component academic and occupational education, which may include—
 - Summer employment opportunities and other employment opportunities available throughout the school year;

- Pre-apprenticeship programs;
- Internships and job shadowing; and
- On-the-job training opportunities;
- Occupational skill training, which shall include priority consideration for training programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials that are aligned with in-demand industry sectors or occupations in the local area involved, if the local board determines that the programs meet the quality criteria described in section 123;
- Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster;
- Leadership development opportunities, which may include community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social and civic behaviors, as appropriate;
- Supportive services;
- Adult mentoring for the period of participation and a subsequent period, for a total of not less than 12 months;
- Follow-up services for not less than 12 months after the completion of participation, as appropriate;
- Comprehensive guidance and counseling, which may include drug and alcohol abuse counseling and referral, as appropriate;
- Financial literacy education;
- Entrepreneurial skills training;
- Services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services; and
- Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training.

2. A description of how local areas will meet the minimum expenditure rate for out-of-school youth.

As a part of the annual budgeting process, LWIA #26 budgets 75% of the allocated funding to the out of school youth category and 25% of allocated funding to the in-school youth category. A minimum of 20% of those funds budgeted in both youth categories are budgeted for paid work-based learning. Expenditure levels are monitored monthly to ensure that these goals are being met. In most of our rural community's traditional starter jobs are very limited so service providers work closely with perspective employers as well as the local high schools to identify work sites and youth to participate in the work-based learning.

3. The design framework for youth programs in the local area, including how the 14 program elements will be made available within that framework (§ 681.460).

Service providers will deliver or make accessible tutoring, study skills training, instruction and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies that lead to completion of the requirements

for a secondary school diploma.

Service providers will provide summer employment opportunities for local youth through our Work Experience Program by working with local municipalities and businesses. Service providers will provide business outreach strategies with a clear intent to work with local businesses and employers to establish meaningful relationships to enhance work-based learning activities for the participants. Service providers will provide participants with state-approved training leading to an industry recognized credential. The youth participant can partner with a local training provider of their choice. Service providers will assess and document the participant for the need of support services and provide them on an as needed basis.

Service providers will assess the participant by using the TABE and Career Scope assessment tests. Service providers will provide LMI data for the LWIA 26 district for high demand occupational industries.

Service providers will authorize Individual Training Accounts in accordance with the Workforce Development Investment Board high priority occupational list.

Service providers will provide activities that expose the participants to jobs, industries and employers in LWIA 26. These activities, as defined by WIOA, include but are not limited to job application preparation, resume writing, mock interviewing. Participants will also complete the Employment 101 activity on Illinois Worknet website.

Apprenticeships are available with the training programs when needed.

Service providers will provide participants with follow-up services. All participants will provide 12 months of meaningful, two-way communication during follow-up services.

Activities that help youth prepare for postsecondary education and training include the Illinois Worknet Job Finder, Youth Guide, Resume Builder, and Virtual Job Fair.

H. Provide a description of how the local area will provide services to individuals with barriers to employment and training⁶ as outlined in Illinois' WIOA State Plan:

1. How priority will be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals and individuals who are basic skills deficient consistent with WIOA Sec. 134(c)(3)(E) (§ 679.560(b)(21)).

⁶ The term "individual with barrier to employment" means one or more of the following populations: displaced homemakers, low-income individuals, Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians, individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities, older individuals, ex-offenders, homeless individuals, or homeless children and youths, youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system, individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers, eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers, individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act, single parents, including pregnant single women, long-term unemployed individuals, and such other groups as the Governor determines to have barriers to employment (WIOA Sec. 3(24)). individuals who are basic skills deficient consistent with WIOA Sec. 134(c)(3)(E) (§ 679.560(b)(21)).

LWIA #26 local policy number 9a addressed the priority of service to low income and basic skills

deficient individuals. All Title I staff have been trained by State DCEO staff in priority of service and routinely review the State and Local Plans to ensure compliance. As described in TEGL 10-09 and 03-15, when programs are statutorily required to provide priority for a particular group of individuals, such as are outlined in WIOA Policies on Eligibility in Chapter 4 - Adult Eligibility, the Local Workforce Investment Board will establish priority of service based on guidelines listed below.

Low Income – Participants of the adult program must receive priority for individualized career services and training services funded with WIOA Adult funds;

- a) Participant receives or received in the past six months, or is a member of a family that receives or received in the past six months, assistance through the supplemental nutrition assistance program established under the Food Nutrition Act of 2008 or
- b) Is in a family with total family income that does not exceed the higher of; 1) poverty line, or 2) Seventy percent of the lower living standards income level or
- c) Individual with a disability whose own income does not exceed the 1) poverty line, or 2) Seventy percent of the lower living standards income level, but who is a member of a family whose income does not meet this requirement.

Basic Skills Deficient – Basic skills deficient is defined in WIOA sec 3(5) as:

- a) An individual who has English reading, writing, or computing skills at or below the 8th grade level, or
- b) An individual who is unable to communicate or solve problems, read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, or
- c) An individual who lacks a secondary education diploma.

2. Provide information on local programs, policies and procedures to address and mitigate barriers to employment and training.

As well as the above-mentioned policy (Local Policy 17) Southern 14 also has a youth barrier policy which states:

The Southern 14 Workforce Investment Board, for the purposes of Youth eligibility, will define *'faces serious barriers to employment'* as a youth with:

- a. Minimal / Poor or No Work History
 - Minimal / poor work history will be defined as: *'A non-seasonal job that lasted less than 3 months, or was fired from or quit more than two jobs'*.
- b. Truancy or excessive absence from school as documented by the school.
- c. Member of a single-parent household
- d. Public assistance recipients
- e. Court-involved youth or at-risk youth
- f. Disabled individual aged 14-24 years old
- g. Test scores below completed grade level
- h. Have repeated at least one secondary grade level or are one year over age for their grade
- i. Have a core grade point average of less than 1.5
- j. Are emancipated youth
- k. Have been suspended 3 or more times or have been expelled
- l. Are deemed at risk of dropping out of school by a school official