



Leading
CareerForce™
Southwest Minnesota
Workforce Development Board

WIOA REGIONAL AND LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

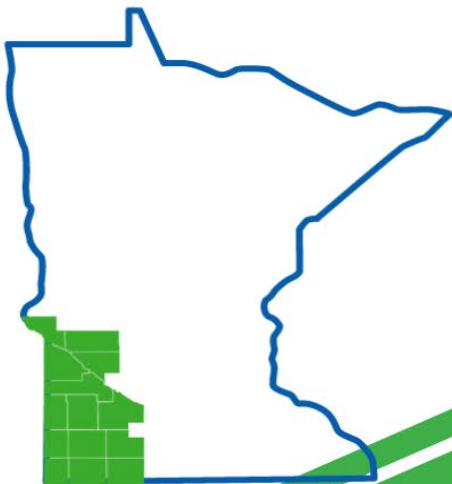
**Southwest Minnesota
Regional Workforce Development Area #5
Local Workforce Development Area #6
2024-2027**

Prepared by:

Regional Plan - Workforce Development Board of South Central and
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REGIONAL PLAN

SECTION A: REGIONAL VISION, GOALS AND STRATEGIES

A.1. Describe the regional workforce development area's vision for a skilled workforce.

Regional Workforce Development Area #5 has adopted the state's vision as our own. The strategic vision for Regional Workforce Development Area #5 (South Central and Southwest Minnesota) is a healthy economy where all Minnesotans have equitable access to a workforce development system in which partners across the region are working toward a collective goal of providing workforce development programs that are responsive to employer needs in in-demand occupations and lead to good jobs with family-sustaining wages.

A.2. Describe the region's strategic alignment with the State's Vision, Goals and Strategies.

Workforce Development Area #5 Regional Plan is strategically aligned with the State's Vision, Goals and Strategies while also addressing the unique needs and priorities of the region. The Region has adopted the State's vision, and the Regional Goals and Strategies also support the State's Plan. Region #5 Workforce Development Goals are:

1. Increase high school student's understanding of and exposure to regional occupations in demand.

Minnesota has a shortage of school counselors as shown by a student to school counselor ratio of 544-to-1 in the 2022-2023 school year. This is the third highest in the nation. The American School Counselor Association recommends a 250-to-1 ratio, and the national average is 385-to-1. This shortage is especially evident in smaller, rural school districts. There is a need to support school districts with career counseling services and work-based learning opportunities. In addition, a new study released by the Center of Rural Policy and Development showed that only 25% of high school students who graduated in southwest Minnesota had meaningful employment in southwest Minnesota 6 years after graduating from college. Career and technical education and work-based learning opportunities were shown in the study to increase worker retention. With a significant regional labor shortage, it is imperative to create opportunities such as career awareness and career exploration events, business tours, business speakers in the classroom, job shadows, internships, and other work-based learning opportunities for students to learn about the great employers and jobs in the area. This was one of the top goals prioritized by employers and stakeholders at our Workforce Development Forums and Surveys.

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2. Expand the number of skilled workers through sector-based career pathway approaches in key industries.

This goal was another priority identified by employers and stakeholders at the Forums and through the surveys. It greatly aligns with the State’s goal to “Build employer-led industry-sector partnerships across the state to create or expand responsive and equitable workforce development programs and career pathways with embedded work-based learning or on-the-job training, including Registered Apprenticeships, focused on closing gaps in participation and representation based on race, ethnicity, disability, gender, veteran status, and age.” Region #5 develops and implements sector-based career pathway programming with local partners focused on in-demand, quality occupations. Key industries include Agriculture, Construction, Education, Health Care and Social Assistance, IT, Manufacturing, and Transportation and Warehousing.

3. Provide training and assistance to help businesses retain and attract the diverse workforce they need now and into the future.

“The number of jobs held by minorities has more than doubled in southwest Minnesota since 2000 when people of color held 6% of jobs (DEED Regional Profile).” Demographic reports show that population growth in the region is coming from new immigrants moving to the area. The need for employers to create inclusive and welcoming places of work is essential. Expert trainers, best practices highlighted, and individual support provided will assist employers in developing and implementing plans to retain and attract a diverse workforce, promote quality jobs, and create inclusive work environments.

This goal also aligns well with the State Plan to “Create a more inclusive, equitable, accessible, and proactive workforce system to serve all Minnesotans, preparing employers and the current and emerging workforce for the changing nature of work including new and emerging technology, changing labor market demands, and for the state’s shifting demographics, including our new Minnesotans.”

- A.3. Describe best practices or area of strength of the region as it relates to the State’s Vision, Goals and Strategies that should be considered for replication or scale across the state.

Regional Workforce Development Area #5 is known for its partnerships and collaboration with colleges, Adult Basic Education, school districts, service cooperatives, CAP agencies, community-based organizations, tribal nations, Initiative Foundations, Regional Development Commissions, economic development, chambers, trade unions, and employers. This has been demonstrated through a decade of delivering successful career pathway programming including the MAWB #1 Promising Practice awards in 2021 for the Community Interpreter Training Program and in 2022 for the Construction Training in partnership with the Lower Sioux Indian Community. Regional partnerships have won many other awards through the years.

Partners are adept at making cross-referrals, creating a “no wrong door” approach, and helping job seekers access the resources they need to succeed. We also partner on numerous regional events targeting youth, new Americans, service providers, and/or employers.

- A.4. Describe the strategy to work with the entities within your region to carry out the core programs to align resources available in the region to achieve the strategic vision and goals of the local area boards and the state.

Region 5’s strategy to align resources and achieve the strategic vision and goals starts with a comprehensive assessment of local workforce needs. This is the basis for the board’s strategic goals. In partnership, we work to align WIOA core programs and key stakeholders to create a coordinated approach to provide training and services, facilitate outreach, and address unmet needs. Data is used to inform decisions and measure impact. Regular meetings and feedback sessions keep work moving forward and provide continuous improvement opportunities.

Key partnerships with our Regional Development Commissions provide alignment of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy with the Regional Workforce Development Plan. Additionally, we partner with the college and service cooperative to align the Perkins Plan with the WIOA Youth Plan. This alignment facilitates coordinated joint initiatives and innovation in addressing our local needs.

- A.5. Describe any additional goals being set by the regional leadership or individual local area boards.

An additional goal is to optimize the newly legislated North Star Promise for workforce development. As Minnesota residents will now be able to access free tuition, we will be adopting and adjusting our employment and training programs to utilize these additional resources to further build out a comprehensive continuum of employment and training services resulting in increased employment outcomes. A focus will be on promoting more learn and earn program models.

- A.6. Describe how the region is working together to prepare the workforce for state and federal investments in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), the Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors (CHIPS) and Science Act, and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) (collectively referred to as Investing in America (IIA)).

Our partnership with DEED, the Regional Development Commissions, and local economic development professionals will be key to understanding how the legislation impacts on our local area and the workforce needs that result from it. As we become aware of new projects, we will allocate resources and convene stakeholders to address any skilled labor shortages. Clean energy projects of wind, solar, and transmission lines are currently being discussed in southwest Minnesota. Our community and technical colleges have related programs, and we are currently assessing the workforce needs.

SECTION B: REGIONAL OPERATIONS

- B.1. Provide a Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats (SWOT) analysis of the regional workforce system.

The RWDA #5 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis was completed through a Workforce Summit in Southwest MN and two Workforce Development Forums in Southwest and South Central Minnesota. There were approximately 40 participants at each of the three events that included a mix of private sector employers, education, community partners, economic development representatives and other stakeholders. Attendees heard from MN DEED Labor Market Analysts on demographics and workforce conditions in the regions. Executive Directors from the respective regions provided a summary of the current workforce strategies. Both Southwest and South Central MN contracted with Cheryl K. Glaeser with Achieve Consulting as a neutral facilitator to gather insights from stakeholders to inform the regional WIOA plan and help establish regional priorities. The methods used and insights gathered were collectively themed and results of key findings are described below.

Strengths

Forum attendees were asked to identify what is working well in the region. Notable strengths included:

- Targeting and providing **career exposure to high school students**. Last year, over 15,329 students from 87 school districts received career services in RWDA #5 including career events, labor market information, career exploration, career planning, post-secondary information, job search assistance, business tours, job shadows, and information on CareerForce services available.
- Vast **work-based learning opportunities** for students and adults seeking to enter the workforce, noting specifically the opportunity to create advanced partnerships between employers and high school students. Work-based learning opportunities include work experiences, internships, On-The-Job Training programs (hands-on instruction completed at work to learn core competencies necessary to succeed in an occupation), Incumbent Worker Training programs (up-skilling designed to ensure that employees of a company can acquire the skills necessary to remain employed and/or advance within the company).
- Comprehensive **Adult Career Pathway** programming to eliminate the barriers contributing to economic disparities by supporting adult learners to increase their basic skills, provide work readiness skills training, attainment of industry related certificates for in-demand occupations that will lead to employment opportunities and advanced training options.

- **Partnerships** with Career and Technical Education (CTE) including secondary education, post-secondary education and CTE legislative initiatives through LYFT in Southwest and Future Ready CTE in South Central. As well as partnerships with employers and school districts. The dual goal of connecting students to local post-secondary institutions and local employers is best achieved when CTE programs attract students to fields that support local jobs in local industries.

Weaknesses

Forum attendees were asked to identify what could be improved in the region. Notable weaknesses included:

- **Expanded Efforts to Increase Student Awareness and Skills** - Participants noted a desire to expand efforts to increase student and family awareness of local careers/jobs and encourage more skills-based training in high schools.
- **Preparing Employers for a Non-traditional Workforce** - Participants noted the opportunity to assist employers with understanding the non-traditional workforce, noting the desire for more flexible scheduling and part-time opportunities.
- **Assisting Employers with DEI barriers** by providing training and resources to create inclusive environments that attract a diverse workforce.
- **Business Assistance** including finding skilled workers; work-based learning; job promotion/application process; how to engage in high school programs.
- **Advocate for Changes in Education** Participants discussed the need to advocate for changes in our education system, noting changes education may face with technology advancements such as Artificial Intelligence, remote-learning, limited electives with graduation requirements.

Opportunities

Several opportunities for addressing workforce challenges through new/additional strategies emerged in survey responses and forum discussions. Those most noted were as follows:

Advancing Employer and Education Partnerships to Provide Work Experiences/Learning

Numerous participants noted the opportunity to engage employers in work-based learning opportunities for students and adults. Specific ideas that emerged included:

- Helping students and teachers better understand the world of work by offering more work experiences and work-based learning (school/work programs in addition to advanced CTE).
- Promoting “real” jobs in the region through business presentations, tours at area high schools/colleges, etc.
- Bringing core and career and technical education (CTE) teachers and employers together for better alignment of learning with workplace skills. For example, helping students meet graduation requirements through work-based learning (e.g. Algebra through a Manufacturing Internship).

Alleviating Barriers to Employment

- Classes to assist individuals with obtaining a Driver's License
- Assisting with transportation needs (taxi's, busing, etc.) especially for evening jobs/classes.
- Helping employers adapt to and prepare for demographic changes (creating inclusive, welcoming cultures)

Threats

When asked to identify key influencers of regional priorities for the next four years, survey respondents identified leading influencers; workforce shortage, skills gap, and limited awareness of local careers. In addition, growing cultural diversity, youth out-migration (leaving the region after high school), and retirements were noted to a slight/moderate extent. Forum participants also noted the lack of available workers and skills mismatch challenges. Southwest and South Central MN continue to experience low unemployment with Mankato as the second lowest in the nation compared to other Metropolitan Statistical Areas. In addition, our region is showing lower labor force projections for 25–44-year olds, which will tighten an already short supply of workers. Population growth for the region is largely due to foreign born populations indicating the need for employers to diversify their workforce as a viable strategy to meet workforce needs.

Forum participants were asked to identify the ways in which labor market, workforce trends and influencers might shape or impact workforce strategies. Participants noted the following:

- A need to better understand the barriers to entering the workforce in the region, noting potential barriers as changes in individual work preferences, childcare costs/availability, and housing. It also noted that interest in part-time work has increased due to rising childcare costs with parents sharing care and work responsibilities.
- The need to advance student awareness of regional/technical jobs, promote and encourage 2-yr college opportunities, and advance technical skills for students.
- The opportunity to tap into non-traditional workers and/or become more efficient and productive with lower numbers of employees.
- The opportunity to help workers acquire technical skills, specifically noting opportunities for underserved populations and workers seeking to advance/up-skill.
- The need to advocate for policy changes related to graduation standards. The North Star Promise was discussed, with concerns shared that it may harm 2-year colleges/programs and exacerbate the workforce shortages in rural areas.

In summary, the SWOT analysis identified the following workforce strategies:

- Increase **work-based learning** opportunities for high school/college students and adults.
- Support **employer-education engagement** to better align education/skills and promote regional careers.
- Offer **employer/employee training** on changing workplace dynamics and provide short-term training for needed skills.
- Identify true **barriers to employment** and help alleviate those barriers. Potential barriers noted were childcare, housing, language, and transportation.
- **Support employers** in hiring under-represented populations and creating welcoming environments for all.
- **Promote regional careers to all** – students, families, and to people beyond the region.

B.2. Describe the selection process for the membership who will provide the leadership to oversee the development and coordination of the regional plan.

The Southwest MN Workforce Development Board (LWDA 6) and the South Central WorkForce Council (LWDA 7) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding to provide oversight of the development and coordination of regional planning. The Regional Leadership Team is comprised of the Chair and Vice Chair of each of the Local Elected Officials Boards; the Chair and Vice Chair of each of the LWDA Boards; the LWDA directors and supporting staff. The Regional Leadership Team has the responsibility to understand the workforce development needs, establish priorities for resources based on these needs, set goals and metrics to report on results and communicate strategies developed to address the identified needs.

B.3. Describe how the selected organizations from the region will provide oversight to development and implementation of the regional plan. Complete Attachment A - Regional Oversight Committee

The Regional Leadership Team agrees to the following:

- Review labor market and economic information about the region, including identification and status of strategic industries, as well as employer and jobseeker needs.
- Explore opportunities to share resources and to seek additional resources (including leveraging state and federal funds) to meet mutually identified needs of employers and jobseekers in the region.
- Organize and create a regional vision that is employer-driven based on industry needs, identify lead industry and regional partnerships (champions), and create solutions based on those needs.

- Collaborate with Workforce System partners, e.g. Adult Education and Literacy, Career and Technical Education, Wagner-Peyser, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, higher education, and other community partners.
 - Follow the provisions for the Regional Planning process set forth in WIOA, Section 106 (c)(1), as follows:
 - Establish regional service strategies, including cooperative agreements.
 - Develop and implement sector initiatives for in-demand industry sectors/occupations.
 - Collect and analyze regional labor market data.
 - Establish administrative cost arrangements, as appropriate, for the region.
 - Coordinate transportation and other support services, as appropriate, for the region.
 - Coordinate services with regional economic development providers.
- B.4. Describe how the approach used will ensure that partner engagement includes diverse representation, specifically among populations experiencing barriers to employment.

The Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council and the South Central WorkForce Council and its partners have committed to and embedded equity and inclusion into the fabric of our organization and it is reflected in our outcomes. We strive to provide person-centered, culturally responsive services that are accessible to all and welcome and treat all people with dignity and respect. Our core strategies to address equity include increasing the diversity reflected on our boards and staff; growing in our understanding and implementation of best DEI practices; being data-driven and intentional in our outreach to historically marginalized communities; and increase the number of BIPOC to explore careers, earn industry recognized credentials, and gain marketable experience in high-demand, high-pay occupations, including non-traditional careers. We deliver services in a **cultural responsive** way through: 1) a commitment from leadership and the board; 2) reflecting this priority in our mission, values, structure, strategic goals, policies, and practices; 3) ensuring all program participants feel valued, programming that builds on their strengths, and translation or interpretation services being available; 4) having a diverse board and staff; 5) engaging ethnic communities in the planning and implementation of services; 6) facilitating equity and inclusivity training for board and staff; and 7) through personal performance measures that include skills related cultural responsive programming.

The representation from BIPOC communities in our board, committees and staff is 20% more than the population as a whole and includes Black/African Americans, Hispanic/Latinos, Asians and American Indians. We partner with Integration Collaboratives, Community Connectors/Advocates, Lower Sioux Communities, Greater Mankato Diversity Council, Upward Bound/Trio, Migrant Services, PACER Center, MN Council of Churches, Vocational Rehabilitation, MRCL, school districts, Adult Basic Education, and others. We also engage with leaders of the African and Karen immigrants, as well as the Hispanic, Latino, and Hmong communities that live in

different cities throughout the region. We do this often to build relationships with potential board members/staff, gain a greater understanding of their cultures and need for services; incorporate their feedback into the workforce development plan, organizational policies, and program practices. We also solicit direct, regular feedback through focus groups, individual meetings, and surveys from our participants.

Overall, our regional approach to ensure engagement includes diverse representation, specifically among populations experiencing the greatest barriers to employment or communities facing the greatest levels of economic disparities include:

- Reviewing labor market information and demographics, the leadership team will focus on assuring that, to the extent possible, the populations experiencing barriers to employment are engaged in both the regional and local workforce development area meetings, discussions, goal setting, strategy development and implementation strategies.
- Engaging stakeholders and individuals from diverse backgrounds and populations, as well as those experiencing barriers to employment is critical in establishing the goals and strategies that will lead to success.
- Assuring that the diverse demographic make-up of the RWDA #5 area is strategically involved in the identification of issues and solutions, goal setting and strategy development broadening the scope of success and advancement of workforce development in the region.
- Include partners in the engagement of individuals, decision makers representing specific populations and other key stakeholders including, but not limited to: individuals with disabilities; tribal communities; communities of color; K-12; higher education; individuals involved and/or representing the criminal justice system; and representatives specifically focused on addressing employment and education disparities.
- Provide career exploration, advising services and work-based learning opportunities with local employers to help students make informed career choices. These services are essential to successfully addressing employment disparities.
- Support and deliver cultural competency training for employers and staff.

The Boards and staff will make a concerted effort in designing and implementing programming that will directly engage diverse populations and groups experiencing specific barriers to employment. Both organizations practice and are compliant with equal opportunity hiring practices and will assure that appropriate outreach for employment opportunities is shared and targeted to special populations.

B.5. Describe how the local area boards will direct system alignment within the region through shared policies and practices.

The South Central WorkForce Council and Southwest Minnesota Workforce Development Board have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding to establish our regional partnership and cooperative service arrangements.

Together, we developed regional goals that align our workforce strategies. We jointly developed the required local area WIOA policies that align with state policy. The regional policies can be found at <https://www.workforcecouncil.org/regional-local-policies/> and including the following:

- Assessment
- Computer Policy
- Customized Training and On-The-Job Training
- Dislocated Worker Eligibility
- Discrimination Complaints
- Electronic Document Storage
- Employment Status Underemployed
- Follow-Up
- Incumbent Worker
- Language Access
- Program Complaints
- Provision of Training Services
- Transitional Jobs
- Statutory Priority for Adult
- Support Services

Staff from both local areas meet on a quarterly basis to review progress on regional goals, share best practices and collaborate on joint initiatives such as: Pathways to Prosperity programming for On-Ramp, Bridge, and Individualized Training Pathways; Women’s Economic Security Act (WESA) and youth competitive grants focused on serving youth from BIPOC communities and youth with disabilities.

In addition, we conduct annual regional monitoring where we select participant files to review eligibility determination and documentation, documentation of privacy and complaint procedures, assessments, case management, employment plans, appropriate activities, training

services for demand occupations, recording and documentation of credentials, work based learning and work experiences, job search/placement and follow up services.

- B.6. Describe any cooperative service arrangements being planned for the region and how they will promote consistency within the regional workforce development area and with state policy.

Areas of cooperative alignment and consistency within the region include:

- Development of fifteen regional workforce development area policies. The two local workforce boards have jointly developed required local WIOA policies in alignment with required state policies.
- Engaging stakeholders in the development and updates of the Regional Plan.
Connecting with and informing local legislators on local and regional workforce development issues.
- Jointly direct the Rural Career Counseling Coordinators and their work with local school districts to increase career awareness and career counseling opportunities for students and parents. An example of this is the development and utilization of the “Know Before You Go” labor market infographics.
- Jointly provide professional development and sharing of best practices.
- Jointly respond to grant opportunities that advance our regional goals including the alignment of sector-based career pathways. Subcontracts are developed for each grant to ensure alignment and consistency across the region.
- Track program outcomes for individuals experiencing employment disparities and develop strategies to increase outcomes.
- Conduct regional monitoring to ensure consistency in program implementation, policies, and practices.
- Explore and implement joint marketing for the CareerForce system including use of social media.

SECTION C: PROGRAM AND SERVICE DELIVERY

- C.1. Describe the condition of the regional economy (cite the sources of data and analysis);

Regional Workforce Development Area #5 (RWDA #5) or the Southwest Minnesota planning region consists of the 23-county area of South Central and Southwest Minnesota. The region includes three Economic Development Regions (Regions 6W, 8 and 9), two local workforce development areas (South Central and Southwest) and one metropolitan statistical area (greater Mankato/North Mankato area).

The RWDA #5 economy was analyzed by a thorough review of labor market information through our MN DEED Regional Labor Market Analysts and engaging board members, local employers and community partners in a dialogue about workforce development needs. This approach gives us a good understanding of the region by combining what statistics reveal with the real-time knowledge of local employers and community partners. The MN DEED Regional Profile for the 23-county labor market area is attached (Attachment 1). Sources of data and analysis are notated on the attached profile. Below is a summary of the data.

To better address the current needs of employers, we gathered input through a workforce development survey and two regional workforce development forums with employers and stakeholders in the region described earlier. They overwhelmingly identified workforce shortages and skills gaps as their top areas of concern. In addition to the regional labor market analysis provided by MN DEED, we rely heavily on dialogues with our regional employers and data updates from our Regional Analysts. Workforce development strategies will be responsive and adapted as needed.

The labor market in RWDA #5 is supported by a diverse industry base. As of 2022, the top industry sectors are: Manufacturing, Health Care & Social Assistance, Retail Trade, and Educational Services (see Table 14, Attachment 1). These four largest industries account for 56% of the region's employment. Manufacturing is the largest industry sector in RWDA #5 with nearly 1 in 5 jobs in manufacturing. Southwest is the only region of the state where Manufacturing is still the largest industry. After experiencing years of steady growth, Health Care and Social Assistance industry lost jobs over the last three years but remains our second largest industry. Retail trade were severely impacted during the pandemic but still remains a significant industry in the region due to part-time opportunities and lower-skill requirements. While over half of the industries in the region added jobs during the past year, the largest gains were in Manufacturing and Educational Services. Other industries that are more concentrated in the region include Accommodation & Food Services, Public Administration, Construction and Wholesale Trade.

Industry sectors with the largest projected growth from 2020-2030 includes: Arts, Entertainment & Recreation as well as Accommodation & Food Services. These industries were hardest hit during the pandemic and are now expected to have the fastest growth as the pandemic recovery continues (see Table 16, Attachment 1). Health Care & Social Assistance is projected to add the most new jobs over the next decade which would surpass Manufacturing as the largest industry in the region.

Based on location quotient, RWDA #5 stands out for having a high concentration of farming (2.6 location quotient), production, installation/maintenance/repair, transportation & material moving and education occupations (See Table 10, Attachment 1).

Occupations in Demand: There are well over 200 occupations showing relatively high demand in RWDA #5. These occupations are spread across different sectors but are concentrated in the region's major industries including manufacturing, health care,

transportation, and other related industries (see Table 12, Attachment 1). A complete list of occupations in demand in RWDA #5 is provided as Attachment 2.

Other notable labor market information for the region includes:

Declining Population: Nineteen of the 23 counties in RWDA #5 lost population from 2010-2022. The four counties experiencing growth during this time period: Blue Earth, Le Sueur, Nicollet and Nobles counties (see Table 1, Attachment 1). Although births exceeded deaths in the region, out-migration outpaced in-migration. The number of immigrants in the region increased by 41% since 2010, outpacing the statewide growth of 30.6%.

Population by Race: Although the region is less diverse than the state, it is becoming more diverse over time. RWDA #5 had a higher percentage of people reporting Hispanic/Latino origin than the state and Nobles County, reporting 29.2% of residents with Hispanic origin, has the highest rate in the state. Blue Earth, Cottonwood, Lyon and Watonwan counties are also relatively diverse.

Labor Force Change: The pandemic recession greatly impacted the labor force in RWDA #5. In 2021, the region had the fewest people working or looking for work in more than 20 years (see Figure 6, Attachment 1). This was the most severe decline of the 6 planning regions in the state and the region has not fully recovered. Increasingly tight labor markets and growing scarcity of workers is now recognized as one of the most significant barriers to future economic growth in the region. A more diverse workforce in terms of age, gender, race, ethnicity, disability status and immigration has been and will continue to be a vital source of workers as white, native-born workforce continues to age, these younger workers of different races/countries will comprise the fastest growing segment of the labor force. In addition, Labor Force Projections reveal that the region is expected to see a significant decline in the 25-44 year olds in the labor force by 2035. These declines are believed to be a result of the pandemic as individuals left the workforce due to safety concerns, being needed in the home to care for school age children and finding alternative ways to support their household, such as having one parent instead of two parents working. There are also significant barriers such as lack of transportation and childcare that impact individuals ability to participate in the labor force.

Jobseekers per Vacancy: RWDA #5 experienced three straight years of less than one job seeker per vacancy prior to the pandemic, indicating an extremely tight labor market. The pandemic caused a spike to a ratio of 2.3 but it quickly declined. RWDA #5 has one of the tightest labor markets in the state as evident in the job seeker per job vacancy rate, which stood at an all-time low of .3 in RWDA #5 in the second quarter of 2022 (See Figure 9, Attachment 1). In other words, for every 10 job openings there are only three job seekers available. This does not take into account the skills or education requirements needed for the job. With the declining populations, labor force changes and low unemployment rates in the region, we anticipate that this ratio could decrease.

Unemployment Rates: With our diverse industry base, RWDA #5 has experienced relatively low unemployment rates. The annual unemployment rate for 2022 was 2.6% (see Figure 8, Attachment 1). According to the Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate for South Central in November 2023 was 1.7%, which is the lowest rate on record since 1990. Comparing Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA), Mankato/Blue Earth County have the second lowest unemployment rate in the nation.

Employment Characteristics: Although unemployment rates have been relatively low in RWDA #5, not all populations are benefiting from low unemployment rates. Populations experiencing employment disparities were highest among young people, minorities and individuals with disabilities. Unemployment Rates in 2021 for these populations include (see Table 6, Attachment 1):

- Youth ages 16 to 19 (9.1%)
- Youth ages 20 to 24 (4.9%)
- Black or African American (7.6%)
- American Indian & Alaskan Native (3.7%)
- Asian or Pacific Islander (6.3%)
- Hispanic or Latino (8.4%)
- Individual with disabilities (9.6%)

Household Incomes: Household incomes are significantly lower in RWDA #5 than the state as a whole. Median household income in RWDA #5 was \$64,119 in 2021, compared to \$77,706 statewide. Almost 40% of households in the region had incomes below \$50,000. Income disparities by race and ethnicity also exist. African American households reported the lowest incomes in the region at \$37,546, American Indians at \$55,723, Asians at \$48,802 and Hispanic/Latino at \$51,805 (Figure 12, Attachment 1).

- C.2. Describe the sectors or occupations of focus for region, including:
Upon review of labor market information and input from employers and stakeholders, RWDA #5 will focus on key industry sectors:

- **Agriculture**
- **Construction**
- **Education**
- **Health Care and Social Assistance**
- **Manufacturing**
- **Transportation and Warehousing**

Although industries like Retail Trade and Accommodation & Food Services provide a number of employment opportunities in the region, they are often the first job for individuals; these jobs are frequently low skilled and/or low wage jobs; and were significantly impacted by the pandemic.

Agriculture: RWDA #5 has 5.9 percent of the total employment in the state of Minnesota; however, RWDA #5 accounts for 26.6 percent of the farms in the state (see Table 18, Attachment 1). Agriculture has one of the highest share of non-white employment (21%) in the region. Occupations in demand include farmworkers-crops, farmworkers-animals, agriculture equipment operators and farm equipment mechanics. RWDA #5 is fortunate to be the home of the Southern Minnesota Center of Agriculture to promote agricultural education opportunities in the state. In addition, GreenSeam, which is also located in our region, is an economic development organization that supports agricultural businesses in the state.

Construction: Although new employment growth under Construction is only expected to be a little over 400 jobs, the industry is expected to need about 2,600 replacement openings to fill jobs left by retirement and other career changers. Of the key industries in the region, construction provides higher paying job opportunities with an average annual wage of \$63,309. Occupations in demand include carpenters, electricians, laborers, operating engineers, and plumbers & pipefitters. Support occupations like Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning are also in demand. Employers and labor unions work closely with partners to connect with local high schools to develop a pipeline of workers for this industry.

Education: The Southwest region stands out for having a higher concentration of Education, Training and Library employment in the state with a location quotient of 1.2%. The industry's employment projections based on job growth mirror the current job vacancies, which would show signs that the industry is stable. However, Education is expected to need over 4,608 replacement openings. This industry was greatly impacted by the pandemic when schools were forced to close, and classrooms pivoted to remote learning. Local school districts experienced losses in enrollment as families chose other education options such as homeschooling, which impacted district budgets and resulted in layoffs. Schools are now challenged with addressing education gaps that occurred during the pandemic as well as mental health issues affecting our youth. There is also a shortage of substitute teachers. Teachers are retiring early as well as changing careers, leaving an immense strain on this industry.

Health Care & Social Assistance: The Health Care & Social Assistance industry was greatly impacted by the pandemic losing more than 2,300 jobs, a 7.5% decrease. However, this industry is projected to grow from 2020 to 2030 by adding 2,729 jobs, a 9.3% increase. This anticipated growth would surpass Manufacturing as the region's largest industry. Occupations in demand include Dental Assistants, Dental Hygienists, EMTs, Home Health Aides, LPNs, Medical Secretaries, Medical Assistants, Mental Health Counselors, Nursing Assistants, Personal Care Aides, Pharmacy Technicians and Registered Nurses. Long-term care facilities indicate that CNAs are difficult to hire at this time and continues to drive the wage increases. Hospitals/clinics indicate they are looking for LPN and RN. The pandemic caused many nurses to

retire early. Large providers who have historically provided higher wages and better benefits (hospitals & clinics) are starting to revise their minimum qualifications, eliminating required experience and certifications, and providing flexible scheduling in order to attract more workforce. In addition, employers are considering other perks for employees such as on-site daycare as well as transportation or car purchase assistance to support workers. Prior to the pandemic there was a great demand for health care workers, and now that demand is even higher.

Manufacturing: With 32,109 jobs at 634 firms, manufacturing is the largest industry in the region. Like construction, manufacturing provides higher wage employment opportunities with an average annual wage of \$61,942. Occupations in demand include industrial machinery mechanics, industrial engineers & technicians, machinists, machine operators, production workers and welders. Employers indicate they are significantly impacted by retirements. Many employers indicate they are targeting non-traditional talent pools, upskilling their current workforce and developing partnerships with local high schools. In addition, manufacturing hires the highest share of non-white employment at 29%.

Transportation & Warehousing: The Southwest region has a higher level of transportation & warehousing employment with a location quotient of 1.2%. Transportation is expected to need over 7,500 replacement openings to fill jobs left by retirements (see Figure 15, Attachment 1). Transportation & warehousing is projected to grow by 5.8% from 2020-2030 or 432 jobs. Occupations in demand include laborers & freight stock movers, stock clerks and tractor-trailer truck drivers. In addition, supporting occupations in demand include automotive service technicians & mechanics and diesel mechanics. An emerging occupation in this industry is shuttle and chauffeur services with the rise in Uber and Lyft services as well as delivery services such as DoorDash.

- a. How the region will use the labor market information and conduct outreach to business and industry to select the targeted sectors for developing sector partnerships for occupations in demand that provide family sustaining wages. If sectors and occupations have been already selected, describe them within this response.

As described above, we utilized a rich set of labor market information to determine key industry sectors: agriculture, construction, education, health care/social assistance, manufacturing and transportation/warehousing. RWDA #5 has developed the regional workforce strategy to expand the number of skilled workers through sector-based career pathway approaches in key industries.

Our regional strategies to coordinate efforts to address workforce needs in target industry sectors and occupations is through a four-prong approach:

1. Development of employer-led industry sector partnerships for in-demand industry sectors.

2. Development and implementation of sector initiatives for in-demand industry sectors led by industry leaders.
3. Expand the number of skilled workers through sector-based career pathway approaches in key industries.
4. Employer engagement through boards, committees, career awareness, work-based learning and employer events.

Development of employer-led industry sector partnerships for in-demand

industry sectors: In partnership with our MN DEED Workforce Strategy Consultant we started two employer-led industry sector partnerships for our two largest employment industries: Health Care/Social Assistance and Manufacturing. These two partnerships started strategic planning and the development and implementation of action plans. Strategic planning has revealed that their key issues revolve around recruiting talent, retaining talent, and training. Strategies these two partnerships are especially interested in pursuing include innovative recruitment strategies for diverse populations, connections with local high schools to expose students to in-demand careers and developing a pipeline of workers, providing work-based learning opportunities and knowledge/access to workforce development resources in the region. The MN DEED Workforce Strategy Consultant position has been vacant and is in the hiring process. We look forward to resuming this activity when the position has been filled.

In addition, we anticipate developing new sector partnerships as we expand career pathway opportunities and partnerships between students and local employers.

Development and implementation of sector initiatives for in-demand industry

sectors: In partnership with local employers representing key industries, a number of sector initiatives are being implemented to support expanding the talent pipeline for the industry. Initiatives include:

- The development of industry-specific infographics and newsletters that provides “customer friendly” labor market information for our key industries including: agriculture, construction, education, health care/social assistance, manufacturing and transportation. The infographics and newsletters are specifically targeted to high school students and their parents to assist in making informed career choices. With Minnesota having the third worst student-to-school counselor ratio in the nation, this information as well as career advising services in general is greatly needed and welcomed by our school and community partners.

- The development of industry-specific career exploration events for high school students spotlighting key industries and in-demand occupations in the region including:
 - Construct Tomorrow: a one-day, hands-on event that allows high school students to explore the multiple trade occupations in the construction industry.
 - Construction Trades Boot Camp: a two-week summer event that allows high school students to explore more in-depth occupations in the trades/construction industry. This year, we piloted a school year program on early release days where students were able to explore occupations in the trades with a hands-on activity. In the morning, a session was held for students from Adult Basic Education. In the afternoon, another session was held for high school students.
 - SCRUBS Camp: a 3-day hands-on summer event for high school students to explore in-demand occupations in the health care industry.
 - Tour of Manufacturing: a one-day event that allows high school students to tour local manufacturers to expose them to the demand occupations in the manufacturing industry.
- Conducting industry-specific roundtables. Roundtables are conducted to convene employers from a specific key industries to identify and address issues specific to the industry. Roundtables have been held with the health care industry, manufacturing industry and transportation industry. An example of addressing a specific issue to an industry is working with employers to explore ways to address the lack of behind-the-wheel CDL training in the local area.

Career pathway approaches for key industry sectors and occupations in the region: In partnership with area employers, Adult Basic Education, post-secondary and CareerForce partners we have developed a regional approach to adult career pathways for the construction, education, health care, manufacturing, and transportation industries. Career pathway development is constructed based on employer input on industry and occupational skill needs and on the input from targeted populations including race/ethnicity, disability, gender and age. Partners develop strategies to address the unique needs of targeted populations and provide the additional supports necessary to ensure individuals can be successful in their education/training pathway and employment. Consistent with the mission in the state plan, our career pathway approach aligns local, state, and federal resources, policies, services and system partners to meet the workforce needs of business and industry and improves access to

employment, education, and training services for Minnesota’s current and future workforce.

In addition, partnerships with career pathway programs at local school districts provide industry sector-based work experience opportunities for youth. One example is a rotational healthcare work experience with Benedictine Living Center and River’s Edge Hospital and Clinic in St. Peter, which allows students to explore different careers in the healthcare setting.

Employer engagement through boards, committees, career awareness, work-based learning opportunities and employer events: Finally, we receive industry-specific input from employers through their involvement on our workforce development boards, participation on committees and by engaging them in career awareness and work-based learning activities. This engagement is instrumental to ensuring our strategies and initiatives meet the skill needs of our local industry employers. We engage employers through four Career Expos in the region, Career Institutes, Breaking Traditions, College Experience Day, and Pathway Exploration Events. We are facilitating partnerships between workforce development, employers and local high schools to provide work experience, internship and job shadowing opportunities. In addition, through employer events we are showcasing innovative recruitment strategies, best practices and the sharing of resources available for local employers.

Other initiatives that engage employers include:

- The development of Skills for Success in Education, Employment and Life curriculum. Originally, Skills for Success was designed as classroom presentations on the following topics: career assessment, career planning & exploration, labor market information, work readiness skills, job search, post-secondary planning and financial literacy. To compliment the curriculum, a video series was developed on [Skills](#), [Interviewing](#) and [Maintaining Employment](#). Each video contains advice from four local employers representing the healthcare, manufacturing, construction and agriculture industries.
- In 2023, we launched a new initiative to create the Career Passport Video series. The Career Passport videos are modeled after PBS’ Road Trip Nation where students interview members of their communities with fulfilling careers, learn about their work and industry and video tape it to be shared with peers. This is a student-center approach that expands the scope of career possibilities and understanding of a career pathway while partnering with local employers to feature in-demand occupations in key industry sectors. The Career Passport videos will be shared with students, educators, CareerForce partners and others through social media stories and in newsletters. Career Passport video stories featuring agriculture are being finalized and we are in the planning stages to record videos in healthcare.

Our outreach methodology to contact employers from key industry sectors includes:

- Partnering with our regional MN DEED Workforce Strategy Consultant to provide direct connections with individual employers and groups of industry employers.
- We have specific staff Rural Career Counseling Coordinators (RC3) and Work & Learn Coordinators (paid through agreements with our local Service Cooperatives) provide outreach and connections between local employers and local school districts.
- We conduct outreach to local employers through social media and newsletters.
- Connecting with employers that have been engaged with the CareerForce system through WIOA and Wagner Peyser staff.
- One on one contact with area employers to develop work-based learning opportunities.
- Collaborating with Chambers of Commerce, economic development and other local partners to provide referrals and assist in outreach to area employers.
- Utilizing business representatives on our workforce boards to provide outreach to industry and community groups they are involved in.
- In partnership with our MN DEED Workforce Strategy Consultant and Job Service staff, utilizing MN DEED's gov delivery email blasts to employers from specific industries.

Employers are connected to the workforce system through all of the activities identified above. Whether serving on a sector-based partnership, committee, attending a roundtable, or participating in a sector initiative, we provide information on how to connect with the workforce system and the services that are available.

These strategies are aligned with Goal #2 in the state plan to: build employer-led industry-sector partnerships to create or expand responsive and equitable workforce development programs and career pathways with embedded work-based learning or on-the-job training, including Registered Apprenticeships, focused on closing gaps in participation and representation based on race, ethnicity, disability, gender, veteran status, and age.

- b. Alignment to the five sectors of focus in Drive for 5, including which local area in the region is focused on each or any of the Drive for 5 sectors. Complete Attachment G – Local Workforce Development Area Key Industries in Regional Economy.

The RWDA #5 key industry sectors: agriculture, construction, education, health care/social assistance, manufacturing and transportation/warehousing align with four of the Drive for Five industry sectors. The fifth industry sector, Information Technology is intertwined in all industries. RWDA #5, which includes local workforce

development areas (Southwest and South Central) applied for a Drive for Five grant to expand employment and training services to encompass all Drive for Five sectors.

- c. The make-up of the sector partnerships will be determined and the expertise and resources they bring to the partnership.

As mentioned above, there are a variety of ways sector partnerships will be utilized in the region including: employer-led sector partnerships, sector initiatives, career pathway approaches and employer engagement in workforce development activities. The makeup of each sector partnership is determined by the specific industry and employers (champions) that volunteer to participate. Employers that lead sector partnerships/initiatives are encouraged to recruit their peers within their industry.

- C.3. The demographic makeup of the labor force in those sectors as compared to the regional labor force, and how the region will work to close any identified gaps. In RWDA #5, Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) account for 13.9% of the total population in Southwest Minnesota and hold roughly the same share of jobs, compared to the state overall where they amount to 22.5% of the population but only hold 15.2% of jobs. The number of jobs held by minorities has more than doubled since 2000 when BIPOC held only 6% of the jobs.

Among key industry sectors in RWDA #5, Manufacturing employs the largest number of non-White workers (9,135 jobs), followed by Healthcare & Social Assistance (3,572 jobs), Agriculture (1,093 jobs), Construction (875 jobs) and Transportation & Warehousing (470 jobs). The highest share of non-White employment is in Manufacturing at 29% and Agriculture at 21%.

As the white, native-born workforce continues to age, younger workers of different races/countries will comprise the fastest growing segment of the labor force and will be a vital source of workers to meet employer workforce needs in an increasingly tight labor market in the region. Demographic information identifies gaps as well as opportunities that exist for employers. This region will use this information to address regional goals to expand the number of skilled workers through sector-based career pathways in key industries by targeting BIPOC populations for career pathway programming. This information will also guide our regional goal to provide training and assistance to help businesses retain and attract a diverse workforce.

- C.4. How the local board will make opportunities in these areas known to customers, including employers and job seekers, and how the local board will create, modify or expand responsive workforce development programs and initiatives.

The regional partnership will work in collaboration to market services to employers and job seekers through proven targeted campaigns. We have established relationships with local employers and with different ethnic communities including contact information. We share

information and opportunities directly with employers and community leaders. We utilize personalized calls, emails, text messages; presentations to groups; regional videos representing diverse populations; social media; culturally specific materials in multiple languages at locations where targeted populations go, shop, eat, worship, and receive services; as well as reaching out to current/past participants. We participate in many community meetings. Highlighting our past successes and having past participants help in recruiting is a key strategy. Materials/Videos are sent out to community partners and distributed at CareerForce, libraries, community events, career fairs, and more. We are also flexible in where and how the services are delivered to better ensure greater participation.

C.5. Based on the regional/local assessment of workforce development system services, describe how strategies will be created to pursue a more responsive alignment of employment and training services.

Strategies to include responsive alignment of employment and training services include regularly bringing stakeholders together to talk about the services including how to: improve them, meet industry demands, facilitate community outreach to targeted populations, fill gaps in services, and partner to promote greater alignment. CareerForce partners meet monthly, the private sector led Workforce Development Boards meet six times a year plus the Youth Committee and other board committees meet regularly. These committees have representation from key stakeholders and partners in the region. Labor Market Information and program outcomes are shared regularly to promote data-driven solutions. Partners widely share information about available services and resources and work together to avoid unnecessary duplication of services. This collaboration with community partners also helps to provide comprehensive, wraparound services to participants. The location and method of service delivery are considered to better ensure all residents have access to programs and services. This includes but not limited to individuals: who are traditionally underrepresented, with disabilities, lacking basic skills or digital skills, who speak languages other than English, who are BIPOC, who live in small rural townships, and/or who were formally incarcerated.

C.6. Describe how the entities responsible for participating in this process will be selected, including their expected roles and responsibilities.

All entities who provide services related to employment and training are invited to participate. We are intentional about engaging as many stakeholders as possible and recognize that greater impact is found in collaboration. Adult Basic Education provides English Language Learning, basic skills and digital literacy training, and contextualized bridge, work-readiness instructor, and integrated skills training in our career pathways programming. Region #5 colleges, Minnesota West Community & Technical College and South Central College provide credentialed course instruction, space, equipment, and issue credential and/or academic credit as applicable. The Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council, South Central WorkForce Council/Minnesota Valley Action Council, DEED Job Service, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, MRCI, and DEED Veterans Services are the workforce development providers. Their role is to be the facilitator/fiscal agent, provide coordination of all partners, and hire/train the Navigator

who recruits/enrolls/supports participants, provides case management, approves training plans, collects data, engages employers, and establishes career exploration activities. Employer partners provide curriculum input, assistance in teaching employability and essentials skills training, business tours, mentorship, interviewing and hiring program participants. School districts and service coops coordinate courses with CTE courses in the high schools, provide training space and refer students to career pathways training courses to ensure course offering are filled for economies of scale. Community organizations and counties are a great source of referrals and partners when addressing the individual barriers to success. We also partner with Integration Collaboratives, Community Connectors, Lower Sioux Indian Community, Greater Mankato Diversity Council, Migrant Services, PACER Center, Minnesota Council of Churches, and others for outreach and referrals, and culturally specific services. We also engage with leaders of the African and Karen immigrants and the Hispanic and Hmong communities. The partners of this collaboration learn from each other, avoid duplication of services, address unmet needs, innovate, and improve outcomes.

C.7. Describe how outcomes will be determined in terms of employment and training services.

Employment and training outcomes include employment rates, retention rates, skill and/or credential attainment, training completion rates, measurable skills gain, wage progression, and sometimes additional ones depending on the grant/program. Other data tracked may include participant enrollment by demographics, attendance, participant performance at a worksite, placement rates by industry, occupation, and demographic factors, cost per participant, and customer satisfaction surveys. The specific outcomes are determined by a combination of the grant and/or funder, historical data, input from the communities served, and overall strategic goals for the region. Systematically measuring these outcomes can provide valuable insights into program improvement and demonstrate the impact of our employment and training services on individuals and the region as a whole.

LOCAL PLAN

SECTION A: LOCAL BOARDS VISION, GOALS AND STRATEGIES

- A.1. Describe the local area board’s strategic vision for preparing a skilled workforce and how it aligns with the State’s Vision, Goals and Strategies.

As a partner in Regional Workforce Development Area #5, the Southwest Minnesota Workforce Development Board and region has adopted the state’s vision statement:

The vision of Regional Workforce Development Area #5 is a healthy economy where all Minnesotans have equitable access to a workforce development system in which partners across the state are working toward a collective goal of providing workforce development programs that are responsive to employer needs in in-demand occupations and lead to good jobs with family-sustaining wages.

This vision aligns with the state’s priorities and expresses our intent to “leave no populations behind”, ensuring all individuals have the resources and services they need to make informed career choices, obtain the skills necessary to compete for demand occupations with family sustaining wages, based on sector-based career pathway approaches that meets employers’ needs for a skilled workforce. This vision will be accomplished through our employer-led boards and sector-based career pathway partnerships.

- A.2. Describe the local area board’s goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including youth, individuals with barriers to employment, and individuals underrepresented in the local labor force.

In order to accomplish the vision above and in response to regional priorities identified by local stakeholders, RWDA #5 has identified four goals:

1. Increase high school student’s understanding of and exposure to regional occupations in demand.
2. Expand the number of skilled workers through sector-based career pathway approaches in key industries.
3. Provide training and assistance to help businesses retain and attract the diverse workforce they need now and into the future.

This vision and goals will be accomplished through our employer-led boards and sector-based career pathway partnerships. To compete for high growth, high demand jobs that pay a livable wage, our target populations need to acquire the skills and industry-recognized credentials required by employers in high-demand industries. The vision and goals will address the needs of the identified target populations by providing pathways to skill training that leads to stackable credits, credentials, and the skills necessary to compete for employment in high-

demand industries that lead to self-supporting wages and also meets the needs of employers for a skilled workforce.

In addition to addressing the priority issues identified by our regional stakeholders, these goals also align with the goals of the state to: 1) reduce educational, skills training and employment disparities based on race, disability, gender, or disconnected youth, and 2) build employer-led industry-sector partnerships that expand the talent pipeline to be inclusive of race, disability, gender, and age to meet industry demands for a skilled workforce.

A.3. Describe how these goals relate to the performance accountability measures based on the primary indicators to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency.

Annual WIOA Performance measures are negotiated with DEED on an annual basis. WIOA Law outlines the following primary indicators:

WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs

- **Initial Employment Indicator:** The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program.
- **Subsequent Employment Retention:** The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program.
- **Initial Earnings:** The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program.
- **Credential Attainment:** The percentage of program participants who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential, or a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent (subject to clause 4 (iii)), during participate in or within one year after exit from the program. This includes the attainment of a high school diploma or equivalence; pathway license, industry certification, or apprenticeship certificate; pathway certificate and diploma; or pathway associate degree attainment.
- **Skill Gain:** The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skills gains toward such a credential or employment.

WIOA YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT PROGRAMS

- **Entered Employment, Education or Training:** The percentage of program participants who are in education or training services, or in unsubsidized employment during second quarter after exit.
- **Retention:** The percentage of program participants who are in education, training services, or in unsubsidized employment during second and fourth

quarter after exit.

- **Initial Earnings:** The median earnings of participants in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit.
- **Credential Attainment:** The percentage of participants who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential, secondary school diploma or equivalent during participation or within one year after program exit.
- **Measurable Skills Gains:** The percentage of participants who during a program year are in education that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable gains toward those goals.

The performance accountability measures under WIOA measure our effectiveness in serving job seekers and their economic self-sufficiency. Our goals align well with these performance accountability measures and support economic growth. Our effectiveness in addressing Regional Goals 1, 2, and 3 above is measured by how many individuals attain the skills and credentials necessary to be placed and retained in employment, resulting in earnings gain through employment in demand occupations that lead to self-sustaining wages. Achievement of these goals effectively serves employers in that they increase our labor pool and provide a skilled workforce for employers providing demand occupations in key industries. Our goal to expand skilled workers includes closing the gap in participation and representation of individuals experiencing employment disparities. This is achieved through achieving the WIOA performance measures.

- A.4. Describe the strategy to work with the entities within your local workforce development area that carry out the core programs to align resources available to the local area to achieve the strategic vision and goals of the local area board and the state.

The established Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is the master document that identifies each WIOA partner's responsibilities related to the core programs and aligning resources. Regular partner meetings; business and partner involvement in identification of career pathway training needs; membership on the local workforce development board; job fairs and other special events that provide customers (youth, adults and individuals with barriers) with career services and employment; partnering with school districts and employers on work-based learning opportunities for customers; partnering when appropriate on customer education plans; and implementing career pathway training programs with ABE, college partners, and employers are all examples of strategies that are used to carry out the core programs and align resources to achieve the strategic vision and goals of the local board. LWDB 6, in alignment with our regional partner, LWDB 7, will continue to identify best practices and develop a regional work plan outlining the opportunities to work collaboratively to assure that core programs are aligned with resources throughout the region.

- A.5. Describe a best practice or area of strength of the local area as it relates to the State's Vision, Goals and Strategies that should be considered for replication or scale across the state.

A best practice or area of strength in the local area is our local partnership with the Southwest West Central Service Cooperative on aligning the Perkins Plan with the Local Workforce Development Plan. We also collaborate on stakeholder engagement and asset mapping and gap analysis of the workforce needs. Occupations in demand and industry needs become highlighted and guide the creation of new career and technical courses in the high schools. We have partnered to braid LYFT funding with Minnesota Youth Program Outreach to Schools funding to address unmet need in the high schools around career exploration, career assessments, and work-based learning opportunities. Youth Career Connectors from the workforce service provider provide these services to school districts across the region. Working together, we do not duplicate services, have clear roles and responsibilities, and achieve greater impact.

- A.6. Describe the sectors or occupations of focus for the local area board, including:
- a. How those sectors compare to the sectors of focus within your workforce region;

The local area industry sectors are the same as the regional industry sectors.

- Agriculture
- Construction
- Education
- Health Care and Social Assistance
- Manufacturing
- Transportation and Warehousing

- b. The demographic makeup of the labor force in those sectors as compared to the local labor force, and how the local area will work to close any identified gaps;

Skilled occupations are predominately filled by the dominant culture in our local workforce development area. With our population and workforce growing primarily from new immigrant communities, the local board is focusing on our three regional goals to fill the gap with exposing and training the new immigrants in the high demand, skilled occupations. Additionally, employers will be offered training opportunities to promote increased diversity in their workforce and create inclusive and welcoming environments.

- c. How the local board will make opportunities in these areas known to customers, including employers and job seekers, and how the local board will create, modify, or expand responsive workforce development programs and initiatives.

These opportunities are promoted to both employers and job seekers in many different ways. We follow the regional best practices, including directly contacting established partners and leaders in the different ethnic communities. We utilize personalized calls, emails, text messages; presentations to groups; regional videos representing diverse populations; social media; culturally specific materials in multiple languages at locations where targeted populations go.

We create, modify, and expand workforce development programs and initiatives based on the needs of job seekers and employers in the area. Career exploration events, work-based learning, and skilled training opportunities are offered related to local occupations in demand. Programs adapt and respond to the job seekers' needs to better ensure success. This could include the time the classes are scheduled, the length of the initial application for services, language assistance and more.

- A.7. Describe the process used by the local area board to provide opportunity for public comment, including comment by representatives from businesses and comment by representatives of labor organizations, and input into the development of the local plan, prior to submission of the plan.

Opportunity for Public Comment WIOA Unified Plan was provided as follows:

- Draft of Plan emailed to all Southwest Minnesota Joint Powers/Local Elected Official Board Members.
- Draft of Plan emailed to all Southwest Minnesota Workforce Development Board members.
- Opportunity for public comment posted on the www.swmnpic.org website (official site of LWDB #6) for 30 days.
- Legal Notice for Public Comment placed in Marshall, Montevideo & Worthington newspapers.
- Notice for Public Comment will be on our monthly E-Newsletter which is sent to Chambers, EDA's, CAP's, ABE consortia, education representatives, and other key stakeholders and community partners.
- Following the posting period, Executive Committee of LWDB and CEOB Officers will take comments into consideration and revisions will be made prior to submitting the plan to DEED.
- The Chairs of both the Local Elected Official Board and the Southwest Minnesota Workforce Development Board have been charged with final approval and sign-off to meet submission deadline.

Any input/comments received on the plan are documented for the record.

- A.8. Describe how the local area is working together to prepare the workforce for state and federal investments in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), the Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors (CHIPS) and Science Act, and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) (collectively referred to as Investing in America (IIA)).

Just as in our regional plan, our partnership with DEED, the Regional Development Commissions, and local economic development professionals will be key to understanding how the legislation impacts on our local area and the workforce needs that result from it. As we become aware of new projects, we will allocate resources and convene stakeholders to address any skilled labor shortages. Clean energy projects of wind, solar, and transmission lines are currently being discussed in southwest Minnesota. Our community and technical colleges have related training programs, and we are currently assessing the workforce needs.

SECTION B: PROGRAM OPERATIONS

CareerForce Operations – Connection to Services

- B.1. Describe how local area boards will work with each other, core title providers and available data to designate at least one CareerForce Center per local workforce development area as comprehensive and make recommendations on recognizing affiliate and standalone partner sites.

The Southwest Minnesota Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) is responsible for the designation of the CareerForce locations within Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) 6. Due to the large geographic area of LWDA 6 (14 counties), and the challenge to meet the needs of the area’s customers effectively, the Board has established CareerForce locations in Marshall, Montevideo, and Worthington. The CareerForce locations in LWDA 6 are staffed by the core partners:

- WIOA Title I Adult, Youth & Dislocated Worker - Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council
- Wagner/Peyser Employment Services – DEED Job Service
- DEED Vocational Rehabilitation Services
- DEED Veteran’s Services
- DEED Reemployment Assistance (REA)
- Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) - Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment & Training - Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council
- Pathways 2 Prosperity Partnership Team (P2P) - Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council

Staff are based at the sites on a full-time or an itinerant basis.

LWDB 6 maintains compliance with the DEED WorkForce Location System Certification Standards policy for Comprehensive, Affiliate and Specialized Stand Alone Locations at each of the three locations.

Specialty service sites will continue to be available throughout the local area including ABE offices human service offices; city halls; libraries; K-12 locations; college campuses; and others as identified by customer need. The specialty sites are staffed by local partner staff on an itinerant basis as needed.

B.2. Describe the strategies to ensure proper connectivity and coordination among the physical sites within the local workforce development area.

Connectivity and coordination among the sites occur on a regular basis through a variety of methods including, but not limited to:

- Core staff provide career services at the LWDA CareerForce locations on a regular scheduled basis (8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.). Specialty/itinerant locations are staffed on a regularly scheduled or as needed basis. This provides the staff the capacity to communicate and coordinate services to meet customers' needs and alleviate barriers for the customers.
- Staff from the following partners/programs provide itinerant services throughout the LWDA: Management Staff; DEED Job Service; DEED Vocational Rehabilitation Services; Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council (WIOA Adult, DW, Youth; MFIP; and SNAP E&T); Pathways 2 Prosperity Partnership Team (P2P); DEED Veteran Services and others as deemed necessary and available.
- Management Team meetings - conducted on a regular basis to assure operations and services are in compliance with rules and regulations and are meeting customer expectations and quality service is being provided.
- Joint Partner Staff meetings - held monthly; the meetings provide opportunities for cross-training and open communication and sharing on matters impacting the local location, as well as overall LWDA issues.
- Job Services Management Team/One-Stop Operator - includes management staff from core partners; meets regularly to review customer and business needs and exchange information.
- Pathways to Prosperity (P2P) Partnership Team - meets monthly for purposes of planning, review of existing career pathways programs; evaluation of business needs; and review of grant opportunities; and
- Staff Development Opportunities – Location and partner staff support shared training opportunities as a method to assure professional development for

staff, so they have the relevant information and expertise to meet the needs of consumers and overall operations.

- Representation of the core partners on the Southwest Minnesota Workforce Development Board.

The One-Stop Operator agreement delineates the responsibilities and duties of the One-Stop Operator, including connectivity and coordination among the physical sites. One-Stop Operator responsibilities include:

- Provide leadership for local CareerForce locations on-site operations, space configuration, customer flow and integration of services.
- Maintain appropriate and updated publicly posted ADA posters, ensure building accessibility meets requirements and develop/address safety plans/requirements.
- Address building/facility needs, including recommending solutions related to growth and space utilization.
- Promote CareerForce program services, internally and externally.
- Participate in partner meetings.
- Participate in CareerForce location certification process.
- Report operational updates and outcomes to the Southwest Minnesota Workforce Development Board as requested.
- Support and develop networks between workforce, economic development, education, and community groups.
- Create and maintain a welcoming and professional CareerForce environment.
- Facilitate inclusive services and operating environment.
- Ensure career lab area and reception staff are trained and provide quality customer services to job seekers and employers.
- Participate in the evaluation of customer needs and satisfaction to continually refine and improve service strategies.
- Participate in the development and sign the Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) and infrastructure funding agreements (for example, cost allocation plans, office closing policies, dress codes, holiday scheduling, etc.).
- Be knowledgeable of the mission and performance standards of all partners and facilitate/participate in cross-training among staff.
- Comply with all WIOA and MN DEED regulations and policies governing the operations of a one-stop location.

B.3. Describe the strategies to ensure proper connectivity and coordination among the service providers within the local workforce development area.

The workforce development area works hard to develop and strengthen collaborative partnerships with the belief that together we truly achieve more. The core CareerForce partners work collaboratively with employers, Adult Basic Education, higher education, Southwest West Central Service Cooperative, secondary and charter schools, economic development agencies, regional development commissions, chambers, counties, CAP agencies, libraries, Upper and Lower Sioux Tribes, local units of government, community-based organizations, community leaders, and more. A memorandum of understanding has been developed to define roles and responsibilities of the required WIOA partners.

Partners and other stakeholder organizations, not physically located in the CareerForce locations, regularly partner with cross-referrals, providing comprehensive services and implementing special projects and events. They are also partners in serving on the board and committees. Two examples of partnering include the delivery of the areas career pathways programs and the Career Expos which provide 2000 students annually the opportunities to explore careers with local businesses.

To ensure connectivity and coordination, service providers regularly:

- Provide cross-referrals of eligible participants for services.
- Meet to plan and coordinate services and events.
- Share important information on services, service delivery, best practices, meeting minutes, announcements and more.

B.4. Describe other strategies that will be used to maximize services and access to services, such as non-traditional hours or using partner facilities.

The LWDB utilizes these strategies to maximize services and access to services:

- WIOA Partner staff are based at Human Service offices on regularly scheduled basis.
- WIOA Partner staff are located at MNSCU campuses.
- Provide support services such as gas cards to customers, as eligible, to reduce barriers to accessing services.
- Build greater access to online services through partnering with a refurbished laptop giveaway program, launching a laptop loan program, purchasing necessary equipment/internet service, and providing digital literacy training.
- Provide services in local communities and at special locations such as: treatment locations, jails, schools, Chamber, libraries and other civic organization events and other appropriate locations/events as a means to reach underserved and special populations.

- Provide interpreter services, as needed; and
- Maintain strong partnerships with community-based organizations that provide complimentary services to address unmet needs.
- Engage partners, often through our Pathways to Prosperity partnership, to increase assess and better align services.

Opportunities for expansion to strengthen access to services are reviewed and discussed at the management team level, shared with staff for input and practical application, and moved to Board level for final analysis and approval for implementation as appropriate. Expansion options may include, but not be limited to:

- Review and consideration of non-traditional office hours and potential implementation at the CareerForce locations.
- Work with culturally/ethnic focused community-based organizations to review opportunities to offer programming and services for special populations and/or in locations such as: housing units; community locations, libraries, etc.
- Conducting workshops and Job Fairs at locations other than CareerForce locations and potentially expanding to other area communities.
- Review and consider opportunities to partner with business to reach the under-employed and incumbent workers; develop and/or expand career pathway and incumbent worker training to provide opportunities for employee advancement; and
- Build upon and expand marketing strategies (including social media) to increase awareness of Southwest Minnesota and local career opportunities.

B.5. Describe the strategic approaches to ensure all elements of Career Services are available at service locations or online, including services for youth and individuals with barriers to employment or service access.

WIOA Career Services are available at the three CareerForce locations and are defined in TEGL 3-15:

- Basic Career Services include eligibility; outreach; intake and orientation; initial assessment; workshops, labor exchange services and information; program referrals; performance and cost information; Unemployment Insurance information; financial aid information; and information to the availability of support services.
- Individualized Career Services include comprehensive and specialized assessments of skill levels and service needs; development of individual employment plan; group and/or individual counseling and mentoring; career planning (case management); short-term pre-vocational services; internships and work experiences linked to careers; workforce preparation activities; financial literacy services; out-of-area job search and relocation assistance; English Language Learner services; and integrated education and training programs.

- Follow-Up Services will be provided as appropriate for participants who are placed in unsubsidized employment, for up to 12 months after the first day of employment.
- Resource Area - located at each of the three CareerForce locations in LWDA 6, provides an online avenue for business and job seekers to access multiple tools related to career services. Similarly, this information is also available at local libraries, human service agencies and other locations with public internet access. Online career services information such as labor market information, career assessments, and other services can be located through various online sites including but not limited to: DEED's website (www.CareerForcemn.com); Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council's website; Career Profile; Southwest Minnesota Adult Basic Education website; financial literacy site; NorthStar Digital literacy; and others. In addition, the three Locations have assistive technology with trained personnel to assist individuals with disabilities as needed.

WIOA Career Services are provided at each of the locations through the core CareerForce partners including Wagner Peyser, Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council WIOA Title I. A Memorandum of Understanding also delineates across the partnership and WIOA titles the providers of career services.

To address the barriers to service access, WIOA Career Services are not only offered in the CareerForce locations, but throughout the region at various partner locations including school districts for youth. Virtual services are also available. Interpretive services are available for non-English speaking customers and services are often customized to best meet the needs of the customer. The LWDA is also partnering to provide free refurbished laptops and created a laptop loan program for eligible participants to better address the need for computers and internet access to successfully complete employment and training goals.

The Southwest Minnesota Workforce Development Board reviews service levels and outcomes for individuals with barriers to employment on an annual basis. The Regional and Local Plan articulates a focus on serving individuals experiencing employment disparities and will review processes and services to ensure that all elements of Career Services are readily accessible to all populations including youth and individuals with barriers to employment or service access.

- B.6. Describe how the local area board will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system, including in remote areas, through the use of technology and other means.

The Southwest Minnesota Workforce Development Board continues to explore the use of technology and other means to facilitate access to services, especially for rural areas of our area. The use of technology helps us to maintain contact with job seekers, provide case

management services and provides easy access to services for those individuals who are able to self-serve. A positive outcome of the pandemic is the accelerated development and use of technology to continue services while our CareerForce locations are closed to the public.

Strategies to facilitate access to services through technology and other means include:

- Assess job seekers' access to computers, internet, and digital literacy skills.
- Partner with programs such as ResQZone, a refurbished computer program in Lyon County that gives computers away to individuals in need.
- Creative Job Search, Resume Writing, New Leaf and other workshops are on-line.
- Access to MinnesotaWorks and the CareerForce platform on-line.
- Access to Unemployment Insurance on-line and/or by telephone.
- The delivery and completion of applications and screening tools through technology.
- Utilization of email, texting, and social media for enhanced communication with participants, limiting the number of times an individual has to travel to our offices.
- Allocate program funds to purchase computers and Hot Spots for use by customers. An example of this is the SNAP E&T Laptop Loan program.
- Partner with Adult Basic Education to provide digital literacy training and promote the use of Northstar Digital Literacy.
- Engage employers in a virtual format. Employers have provided virtual job shadows, virtual tours, and other career exploration activities.
- Providers utilize a variety of technology formats to engage with program participants including the Workforce One Connect App, Teams and Zoom for virtual meetings, Google forms to start the application process, and DocuSign for electronic signatures.

B.7. Describe how the one-stop centers are implementing and transitioning to an integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information system for programs carried out under WIOA and programs carried out by one-stop partners.

The LWDB recognizes the necessity for technology applications and ability to use technology to reach a broader population of customers and for efficiency of service. The Board also recognizes that with the limited broadband access and resources available locally, the area of technology will be one that we will need to partner with the statewide partners to continue to refine an integrated case management system.

Current technology uses already in place include, but are not limited to online application, assessment tools, texting, and virtual meetings, job shadows and business tours. The Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council has also begun implementing electronic document storage on Workforce One for selected documents in MFIP, Youth and Career Pathways programs.

- B.8. Describe how supportive services, such as transportation and other needs, will be coordinated to better serve individuals with specific barriers to training, education and employment.

Support Services is a critical component of assuring that program participants can overcome identified barriers, such as childcare, transportation, housing, and other needs. Addressing and assisting the customer with meeting the identified needs is one of the first steps toward self-sufficiency. Staff work with each individual to identify their needs and then look to assist customers with a comprehensive package of resources (including support services).

Through cross-training of CareerForce partner staff, it is assured that the core partner staff have a broad understanding of available partner resources and community resources available. Monthly staff meetings with all partners within the CareerForce location and guest speakers from community collaborators help facilitate this knowledge sharing. Staff work together to avoid duplication of services and maximize all available resources for the benefit of supporting the customers' path to self-sufficiency.

Support services available through the CareerForce core partners and community resources include:

- Transportation
- Childcare and Childcare Resource & Referral
- Housing
- Work Related Clothing and Tools
- Emergency Assistance
- Food Shelf
- SNAP
- Fuel Assistance
- Weatherization
- Head Start – both early and standard
- Computers and Hot Spots - A regional policy has been developed for the purchase of computers/technology for customers.

A regional policy has been developed for the provision of support services in our WDA.

CareerForce Operations - Accessibility

- B.9. Describe strategies that will be used to leverage technology for services and ensure compliance with accessibility standards.

Access to technology is a challenge in portions of rural LWDA 6 since the WDA experiences pockets of limited broadband and connectivity. Federal, state, and local resources are being targeted to address the issue of broadband, connectivity, and affordability in respect to technology. Understanding the needs of both job seekers and business is critical to assuring

that job seekers and businesses in southwest Minnesota area can compete locally, at the State level, as well as national and international levels.

From the strategic perspective, the LWDB understands the need to leverage technology to provide services and ensure compliance with accessibility standards. The multi-generational, multi-lingual make-up of today's workforce in southwest Minnesota requires a new look at the wide range of needs, abilities, and preferences when it comes to learning and gaining access to materials and information using technology.

LWDB 6 recognizes that due to the significant financial investment of bringing technology to scale in LWDA 6, the Board will work with the State (DEED), as well as at the regional and local level to enhance online access for services. To address individual needs, job seekers access to technology and digital literacy skills are assessed and addressed. Digital literacy training is available through Adult Basic Education. In addition, Adult Basic Education, MNSCU campuses and other education training providers, offer online workshops and training opportunities for customers, which allows customers the ability to access online career education at a local level with minimal travel expense. Free refurbished computers are available in Lyon county and the Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council started a Laptop Loan Program for SNAP E&T participants. Computers may also be purchased for customers who are enrolled in training programs requiring a computer for classes. Service providers do what they can to ensure customers have access to the technology they need to achieve their employment and training goals. Services can be delivered in varies ways including in-person, over the phone/text messages, or online. Interpreters and/or adaptive equipment are available when needed. The LWDA is an early implementor of MFIP Connect and also has WF1 Connect available in all the programs.

Participants have the option for an online application for services, as well as other online materials. The Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council's website (www.swmnpic.org), DEED's website (<http://mn.gov/deed/>) and www.CareerForcemn.com host an array of labor market and career information and provide links to other relevant sites.

Social media and virtual learning options have expanded greatly since COVID with the development of virtual tours of local employers and the first ever virtual Breaking Traditions career exploration event. These options will continue to be incorporated and expanded to varying degrees throughout LWDA 6 services and most notably in the youth services area.

Compliance with accessibility standards is addressed by:

- Review and update locally developed hard copy materials and online documents and services, to assure the materials meet the accessibility standards outlined by DEED policy.
- Continue to provide accessibility equipment and software within the resource areas at the CareerForce locations.
- Providing interpreters when necessary when meeting with individuals with limited

English skills.

- Partnering closely with MN DEED Vocational Rehabilitation Services and State Services for the Blind to utilize their expertise in ensuring accessibility compliance and access to services for individuals with disabilities.
- Participate in an annual on-site accessibility review by DEED to assure that LWDA 6 is in compliance with the established DEED accessibility standards.
- Assure that identified corrective action is completed on a timely basis.

B.10. Describe the replicated cooperative agreements (as defined in section 107(d)(11) of WIOA) between the local area board or other local entities described in section 101(a)(11)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 721(a)(11)(B)) and the local office of a designated state agency or designated state unit administering programs carried out under title I of such Act (29 U.S.C. 720 et seq.) (other than section 112 or part C of that title (29 U.S.C. 732, 741) and subject to section 121(f)) in accordance with section 101(a)(11) of such Act (29 U.S.C. 721(a)(11) with respect to efforts that will enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities and to other individuals, such as cross training of staff, technical assistance, use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers, and other efforts at cooperation, collaboration, and coordination.

The Southwest Minnesota Workforce Development Board, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and core partners under WIOA enter into a cooperative Memorandum of Understanding. The Memorandum of Understanding delineates the roles and responsibilities of the core partners and how services will be coordinated and delivered; how costs will be shared across the core partners; methods of referral between the core partners; and methods to ensure the needs of youth and individuals with barriers to employment are addressed. An updated MOU is in development and is expected to be completed by prior to June 30, 2024.

LWDB 6 and Vocational Rehabilitation Services collaborate to enhance services to individuals with disabilities, individuals with other barriers to employment, and individuals living in poverty. To the extent possible, services are co-located in CareerForce locations to provide access to a wide variety of services. Each CareerForce Location provides an orientation to services available to assist job seekers make an informed decision on choice of service provider. Direct service staff participate in cross-training to ensure they understand the services offered by the various partners, and the eligibility criteria for each program.

Vocational Rehabilitation staff are available for consultation without the need for the person to apply for services. Typical topics include how and when to disclose a disability, effective use of assistive technology, Social Security work incentives, and benefits planning. A Vocational Rehabilitation Services representative serves on the Southwest Minnesota Workforce Development Board and the Youth Council. Referral forms and data sharing forms have been developed to assist in collaboration of services with shared customers. Vocational Rehabilitation participates in the Job Fairs and other community events. The local partners also

share job leads, and Vocational Rehabilitation may purchase placement services from the local Board as part of a performance-based funding agreement.

LWDA 6 is one of the Workforce Development Areas that are participating in the Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). Overall project objectives are to:

- Provide work experiences, introduction to career pathways and related support services to VRS-eligible youth.
- Demonstrate effective intra-agency collaborations and local partnerships which improve outcomes for VRS-eligible youth.
- Identify best practices, co-enrollment strategies with Minnesota Youth Program (MYP) and success stories that can be shared across states and local workforce system providers.

Specific services outlined in the LWDA #6 are: Local VRS staff in coordination with the Private Industry Council Youth Coordinator(s) will incorporate pre-employment transition services, which may include: job exploration counseling; work experiences in an integrated environment in the community (including internships in public and private sector); and workplace readiness training for each participant.

The Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council Youth Programs provides youth with *work-based learning* opportunities through placement in entry level paid work experiences that provide them with an opportunity to learn basic skills and competencies for success in employment, for instance:

- Provides an opportunity for youth to learn about and meet employer expectations while gaining transferable skills.
- Allows youth to try out different jobs to help determine what they like and dislike.
- Helps build work-readiness skills to prepare them for a future career.
- Gives youth exposure to work/careers that will improve their employment prospects.

B.11. Describe how entities within the one-stop delivery system will comply with section 188 of WIOA, if applicable, and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities.

The CareerForce locations, in LWDA 6, are mandated to comply with section 188 of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology and materials for individuals with disabilities including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. On a statewide level CareerForce offices are certified as ADA compliant by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development prior to certification and

are periodically reviewed by DEED for compliance. In addition, we have assistive technology devices and software which are designed to be fully accessible. Necessary paperwork, meetings and technology are offered with an option of alternative formats. Staff have been trained in the use of the adaptive technology and on how to create accessible documents for all of our flyers and letters for services to ensure compliance and equal access. We provide outreach regionally to ensure accessibility to outlying areas. All programs within the Minnesota CareerForce system are expected to be fully accessible to all Minnesotans.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services located within the CareerForce Locations are available for consultation with other programs, should unexpected issues of accessibility occur. There is co-enrollment and collaboration between Vocational Rehabilitation Services, the local Disability Resource Coordinator, and the other partners, which further enhances overall accessibility.

CareerForce Operations – EEO Compliance

B.12. The local workforce development area and their partners are aware of the responsibilities of the Equal Opportunity Officer, including attending DEED sponsored EO Training?

Yes X

B.13. The local workforce development area is aware of and conducts annually a physical and program accessibility review.

Yes X

B.14. Does the local workforce development area have in place an agreed upon WIOA Discrimination complaint process per the [regulations](#)?

Yes X

B.15. Does the local workforce development area have in place an agreed upon WIOA Program Complaint Policy per the [regulations](#)?

Yes X

B.16. Does the local workforce development area have in place a [language access policy and plan](#)? Describe your local workforce development areas language access policy. If you do not have a policy in place, use the following link as a guide in creating your policy [Language Access Assessment and Planning Tool for Federally Conducted and Federally Assisted Programs \(lep.gov\)](#). This link on pages 9-15 includes sample assessments, questions and information on: 1) Understanding how LEP individuals interact with your agency; 2) Identification and assessment of LEP Communities; 3) Providing language assistance services; 4) Training of staff on policies and procedures; 5) Providing notice of language assistance services. Should you have questions pertaining to your LWDA's language access policy contact the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity at DEED.ODEO@state.mn.us

Yes X

The purpose of the WIOA Region 5 Language Access Policy is to provide guidance and establish procedures for ensuring that limited English proficient (LEP) customers are being provided meaningful access to program information, activities and services and are able to participate effectively regardless of their ability to speak, read, write or understand English. The policy outlines reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access, explains the process we use to identify LEP populations and need, the language assistance services available, and how that will be monitored. A copy of our Language Access Plan can be found on our website at: <https://www.workforcecouncil.org/regional-local-policies/>

B.17. Describe the affirmative outreach strategies your local workforce development area will employ to recruit participants that are representative of the populations in your region. (You may also attach an outreach or engagement plan if one exists for your LWDA).

Our affirmative outreach strategies include:

- Community outreach through established relationships with community leaders and partner organizations.
- Participate in community meetings and events.
- Conduct information sessions and/or workshops at community locations.
- Provide culturally appropriate and tailored marketing messages and materials in multiple languages.
- Hire diverse, multilingual staff.
- Use culturally specific media channels and social media sites for reaching different demographics.
- Provide virtual and other flexible options for services.

CareerForce Partners

B.18. Describe the roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners.

A copy of the Memorandum of Understanding and the IFA for the comprehensive One-Stop Center in Marshall is attached. The MOU delineates the roles and IFA the resource contributions of each of the required partners of our CareerForce locations.

B.19. Describe how the local area board will ensure continuous improvement of eligible providers of services through the system.

Continuous improvement and staff development are critical to the system for success. The LWDB supports staff development through a variety of activities, including but not limited to:

- Annual review of program outcomes;
- Customer satisfaction surveys and focus groups;

- Monthly joint partner staff meetings;
- Work in partnership with DEED’s monitor team for technical assistance and related trainings;
- Sharing of best practices through our regional partnership with South Central Workforce Council;
- Rural youth providers meet to discuss implementation of youth programs and to share best practices;
- DEED and other State and National Sponsored Workforce Trainings;
- National Association of Workforce Board, Minnesota Association of Workforce Board, and Minnesota Social Service Association training;
- Quarterly Staff Development Days; and
- Specific Trainings including but not limited to:
 - Labor market information and tools;
 - Reception and Resource Area Training and Certifications;
 - Minnesota Performs and Roster Training;
 - Services to individuals with disabilities;
 - Individual Intercultural Development Assessments and Equity Training;
 - Veterans services;
 - WorkForce One;
 - Assessment tools;
 - Rapid Response Process;
 - TAA Training;
 - Opportunities for ex-offenders; and
 - Customer registration system.

B.20. Describe the local workforce development area’s processes to assure non-duplicative services and avoid duplicate administrative costs.

The local workforce board has worked hard to develop collaborative relationships that work together to address gaps in services, strategically coordinate and braid resources, facilitate cross referrals, and meet regularly to ensure non-duplicative services and administrative costs. This happens formally through the One-Stop MOU and career pathway programming and informally in our day-to-day work and information sharing. Southwest Minnesota is known for its partnerships and ability to work together toward a common vision.

- B.21. Describe how the Memorandum of Understanding will be or has been developed and used to ensure commitment of resources from service providers and required partners.

The Southwest Minnesota Workforce Development Board, with the agreement of the Joint Powers Board, has the responsibility to ensure that the Partner Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is developed in accordance to WIOA and state policies and that the commitment of resources from all required and participating partners be clearly defined. Partners reviewed the document and provided feedback before signing the final document.

As outlined in WIOA law, the MOU contains, at a minimum, the following elements:

- List of all parties to the MOU.
- A list of the comprehensive and affiliate One-Stops in the local area.
- Agreement period – maximum of 3 years.
- Partner responsibilities.
- All parties to the agreement must ensure at a minimum that they will:
 - a) Make their career services available to individuals through the area’s One-Stop delivery system.
 - b) Share in the costs of the one-stop system.
 - c) Remain as a party to the MOU throughout the agreement period.
 - d) Participate in the operation of the one-stop system as agreed to in the MOU.
 - e) Provide priority of service to Veterans.
 - f) Comply with WIOA regulations as well as all applicable federal, state, and local laws, rules, and policies.
- Description of services to be provided through the one-stop delivery system including list of services and how the services are delivered to customers in the one-stop system.
- Methods of referral; and
- Agreement on how the costs of the services and the operating costs of the system will be funded.

The local Infrastructure Funding Agreements (IFAs) are an addendum to the Memorandum of Understanding which delineates each required partners/programs’ commitment of resources.

- B.22. Describe how local area boards will ensure state policies on infrastructure funding requirements are adhered to and the process for addressing any discrepancies or disagreements.

The local board will train its own staff on infrastructure funding requirements and protocols for addressing discrepancies using WIOA policies, state policies and material to be jointly

developed in partnership with the Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards. The local board will rely on the existing Memoranda of Understanding, WIOA and state policies, and internal audit processes to address any serious compliance issues.

In compliance with all WIOA and state policies, local IFAs are developed and negotiated amongst partners to identify a fair and equitable method to disburse shared costs at CareerForce locations for co-located partners/programs. Shared costs include items such as staffing of the career labs and reception, and infrastructure costs such as space, telephone, and data lines. Costs may be allocated based on staffing levels of each partner, space usage and/or customer data through the Customer Registration System and Workforce One. Required partners that are not co-located at CareerForce locations are also contacted for their contribution to the IFAs. Once the IFAs are completed, all required partners sign the final document.

If disagreements occur with local partners, it would be brought to the Executive Committee of the Southwest Minnesota Workforce Development Board for local resolution. If the dispute cannot be resolved locally it would be brought to the Governor/MN DEED designee for resolution or adoption of state funding mechanism.

B.23. Describe how local area boards, who contract out for provider services, will ensure that providers fully participate in infrastructure funding requirements and the alignment of service delivery within the local workforce development area 134(c)(3)(G) of WIOA.

As outlined in the contract with the local board, the One-Stop Operator will train providers and ensure that they fully participate in infrastructure funding requirements and with aligning service delivery in each of the one-stop locations. The one-stop operator will provide the local boards will information detailing what different Titles spend on their infrastructure and how services are aligned within each CareerForce location. Service alignment is required of partners and issues will be addressed through the Memoranda of Understanding; WIOA, state and local policies; and with regular communications with the partners.

B.24. Describe the competitive process to be used to award the sub-grants and contracts in the local workforce development area for activities carried out under section 107(d)(16) WIOA.

Based on the established delivery system in LWDA 6, the LWDB provides direct delivery of service and does not contract out services for Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs. LWDB 6 reviews the current delivery system every four years and should the LWDB determine the need for awarding sub-grants and contracts, based on regulations, they will adhere to procurement requirements as identified in CFR 97.36.

The process that would be followed in this case would be for the LWDB to issue a competitive Request for Proposal, which would include solicitation for bids that request information addressing the following: knowledge of identified need; administration and staff experience;

identification of services to be provided; ability to achieve identified performance outcomes; confirmation of ability and willingness to collaborate and partner; detailed budget and costs; and overall operational capacity. A point value will be assigned to each factor and then ranked for a total score. The specific outline of the proposal will be developed in detail should the solicitation process be required. Should that happen, LWDB 6 would look to LWDB 7's expertise in guiding them through the process, since LWDB 7 has the experience and expertise with the competitive process.

B.25. Describe and identify the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds described in section 107(d)(12)(B)(i)(III) of WIOA.

Based on WIOA Section 107 (d)(12)(B)(i)(I) the Chief Elected Official Joint Powers Board has designated Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council, Inc. to serve as the local grant recipient and serves as fiscal agent for WIOA Title I funding. The Current Joint Powers Agreement, approved by the 14 County Boards comprising LWDA 6, affirms the designation.

Levels of Performance

B.26. Describe how the local levels of performance negotiated with the Governor and chief elected official will be used to measure the performance of the local workforce development area and to be used by the local area board for measuring the performance of the local fiscal agent, eligible providers under subtitle B of WIOA and the One-stop delivery system.

The WIOA partners are required to provide a quarterly report to the LWDB reflecting negotiated performance levels and actual performance. Partner staff will keep the Board apprised of modifications. A comprehensive year-end report will be provided to the Board by each partner. LWDA 6 has achieved and exceeded the performance measures in the past. Should deficiencies be identified, the LWDB will work with appropriate provider in identifying corrective action and plan for improvement. In addition to performance measures, the board also conducts a thorough review, on an annual basis, of demographics, services, trends, training occupations and outcomes of service providers. DEED provides annual monitoring visits of core programs where case files are reviewed for compliance and quality of services.

B.27. Describe the actions the local area board will take toward becoming or remaining a high-performing board, consistent with the factors developed by the state board.

The Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB) has established four criteria for high-performing workforce development boards:

1. Embrace and communicate the vision for workforce development.
2. Support and lead employer-led quality sector partnerships.
3. Prioritize solutions for racial and economic disparities in education and employment.

4. Achieve outcomes and results through alignment with system partners and leveraging of federal, state, and philanthropic resources.

Embrace and Communicate the Vision for Workforce Development

Our regional partnership and the Southwest Minnesota Workforce Development Board has adopted the State vision statement as our regional and local vision statement aligning with the state, region, and economic development. As a regional and local board, we have established three regional goals to drive the vision. Vision and goals are communicated with key stakeholders, especially through committee and partnership meetings. These committees/partnerships are charged with implementing action plans developed for each of our goals.

Build Support and Lead Employer-led High Quality Sector Partnerships

The Southwest Minnesota Workforce Development Board has convened employers in the Health Care, Manufacturing, and Transportation industries resulting in:

- A sector partnership that implemented a credit bearing Internship Course with a network of both employers and school districts participating.
- Minnesota West Community and Technical College implementing more classes in specialized health care credentials and more virtual training options.
- The transportation industry increased their participation at the annual Career Expos.

Input from employers not only leads our workforce development strategies for these specific sectors, but also informs the board in the development of our regional/local plan and goals/strategies. Key strategies identified by these industry sectors include developing a skilled workforce, developing connections with local high schools, and attracting talent pipeline to key industries in the region. These strategies have been incorporated into the strategies and goals for the region. The LWDB 6 and Regional Leadership Team assess our progress on these goals and continue to expand our partnerships with local employers.

Prioritize Solutions for Racial and Economic Disparities in Education & Employment

The Southwest Minnesota Workforce Development Board has prioritized increasing program outcomes for individuals experiencing employment disparities. Strategies include:

- Increasing diverse representation on boards, committees, and staff.
- Increase partnerships with organizations serving diverse populations.
- Targeted marketing to populations experiencing disparities.
- Conduct focus groups/discussions with ethnic communities.
- Identify and implement service strategies specific to unique needs of

targeted populations, utilizing career pathway programming for demand occupations.

- Create a welcoming environment and services at CareerForce locations.
- Develop a professional development plan and offer training on cultural competency for staff, board members and employers.
- Measure and evaluate service levels and outcomes for populations experiencing employment disparities.

Achieve Outcomes and Results through Alignment with System Partners and Leveraging of Federal, State and Philanthropic Resources

The Southwest Minnesota Workforce Development Board utilizes data to inform our strategic plan including labor market information on the local/regional area and real-time knowledge of employers and stakeholders. The plan and our service delivery structure align the expertise and resources of system/area partners. The LWDB 6 leverages additional resources as needed to implement and achieve our goals. This may include leveraging partner resources/alignment of existing resources and seeking grants that align with our goals. This is especially evidence through our one-stop delivery system and through our career pathway approach where the expertise and resources of multiple partners are aligned to meet the workforce development needs of job seekers and employers. Indicators of achievement are established for the partners; progress is monitored through our committee structure on a quarterly basis and annual results are reviewed by the board in order to establish continuous improvement strategies.

Local Workforce Board Governance

B.28. Briefly describe the local area board's policy and timetable for filling vacancies, replacing/reappointing individuals whose terms have come to an end. Include in your description any plans to fill the terms that will be expiring as of June 30, 2024.

LWDB #6 policy and timetable for filling vacancies, replacing/reappointing members whose terms have ended is as follows:

- Recruitment Process includes the identification of individuals who have major decision-making, ownership, or management authority within their business or organization, with an emphasis on individuals who represent regional targeted industries and occupations in demand.
- Geographic and diversity representation are taken into account during recruitment.
- Notice of vacancies are published on LWDB website, on monthly E-Newsletter, and recruitment letters sent to local Chamber of Commerce throughout the region, as well as other civic organizations with direct business networks such as regional development commissions and city and county economic development organizations.
- LWDB #6 Members, Chief Elected Official Board members, WDA management staff and other CareerForce Location staff also provide direct assistance with the recruitment

process.

- Nominations are reviewed by the Chief Elected Official Board. The CEOB Board appoints members based on the information provided by the nominee including qualifications, interests, and how the applicant feels they can contribute to the goals and strategies of the Council.
- Nomination forms and any accompanying documents assuring compliance with WIOA are maintained in the administrative office of the Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council.
- For terms ending at the end of June, members are polled to determine their level of interest in continuing to serve for another 2-year term. For members who expressed an interest in reappointment, their application will be reviewed and approved at the June CEOB meeting. For members indicating that they are not seeking reappointment, the standard recruitment process then begins.

B.29. Is your local area board currently in compliance with WIOA?

Yes X

No

If No, what steps will be taken to bring your local area board into compliance by June 30, 2024?

We are currently working to fill the board member openings.

B.16. Please include in Attachment B the composition of your board, including the sectors represented on the board, and to the extent practicable, the demographic makeup of your board.

SECTION C: PROGRAM AND SERVICE DELIVERY

Local Area Board Program and Service Delivery

C.1. Describe how the local area board, working with the entities carrying out core programs will expand access to employment opportunities for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment.

The local board and entities providing the core programs are all dedicated to expanding access to services and employment opportunities. Increasing program outcomes for individuals experiencing employment disparities or who have barriers to employment is a primary goal of WIOA services. Even though the current outreach system in LWDA 6 is extensive, it is recognized that there are opportunities to provide expanded focus on specific targeted populations and individuals facing structural barriers to education and employment. Standard outreach practices will continue to all populations with an enhanced effort to populations of people with barriers to employment based on language, culture, and individuals with disabilities.

To address this goal, LWDA staff individually identify and address barriers to access, including transportation, English skills, disabilities, and more. A review of current practices and resources in addressing the barriers will be done as well as working to implement new practices and resources where needed. Policies and procedures will also be reviewed. Other strategies to address access to services include engaging ethnic communities in the planning and implementation of services and training the board and staff in the cultures and traditions of participants. These strategies will also be used to address access for individuals with disabilities.

Along with DEED Vocational Rehabilitation Services and State Services for the Blind, LWDA 6 also offers Pre- Employment Transition Services services for individuals with disabilities. All program participants who are eligible are referred to these specialized services and resources.

To provide greater access to employment for all populations with barriers, LWDA provides customized job search assistance and facilitates on-the-job training and other work-based learning opportunities. These are proven practices that expand access to employment. Employer outreach and education on these opportunities is a focus area of staff. Staff meet regularly to coordinate employer outreach and relationship building resulting in more employment opportunities for program participants.

C.2. Describe how the local area board, working with the entities carrying out core programs, will expand access to supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment.

As stated in WIOA Section 680.900 – LWDB #6 requires that resources and service coordination occur in the local area. LWDA #6 will provide clients with information related to partner and community resources which may be able to assist in helping alleviate the individual's barriers. The LWDA designated counselor, or case manager, will make the appropriate referral to partner and community organizations when a need for support assistance is identified during the individualized employment plan development. This will ensure that all potential resources have been considered in addressing the needs of the client. The current referral process will be reviewed and updated, as necessary, to assure that the document/process is still a relevant, comprehensive, and usable tool. In addition, it will be reviewed to assure that it meets requirements to expand access to supportive services through other partnering agencies. Cross training, as well as presentations at joint and all-staff meetings assure all partner staff are familiar with resources throughout the LWDA. Partner staff regularly provide information to civic organizations, community-based organizations, and others to assure knowledge of resources is comprehensive throughout the region. WIOA Title I support service assistance to a customer is determined by the unmet need of a client. When the WIOA Title I provider cannot assist the customer with needed support services, appropriate referrals are made.

As outlined in TEGL WIOA 3-15, support services may include, but not be limited to: transportation, childcare/dependent care, Housing or rental assistance, counseling, emergency

financial assistance, emergency health insurance, tools, clothing, and more.

- C.3. Describe how the local area board will facilitate the development of career pathways, co-enrollments (as appropriate) and activities that lead to industry recognized post-secondary credentials that are portable and stackable.

The Southwest Minnesota Workforce Development Board has been a leader in the development of the career pathway system in LWDA 6 for more than ten years. Under WIOA, we have expanded career pathways to a regional approach working closely with the South Central LWDA in the continuation and expansion of our career pathway programming. Throughout the years, the system has been refined and adapted to meet the evolving needs of businesses and job seekers in the region, as well as incorporating best practices and lessons learned. The LWDB will continue its focus on the development of the pathway system, with an emphasis on those pathways that lead to high demand jobs that provide family-sustaining wages. We currently have developed career pathways for the agriculture, construction, health care, manufacturing, and transportation industries and are building pathways in education and IT with a Drive for Five grant.

The career pathway structure is the foundation of many of the training opportunities in the region that help individuals with challenges to develop the marketable skills and credentials they need to become self-sufficient. A key component of the career pathway system in the region is to include opportunities for college credit and/or industry-recognized credentials throughout the system. Activities are offered to all participants that lead to portable, stackable credentials that provide the framework for multiple on-ramps and off-ramps and for success on a career path over a lifetime.

The LWDB will expand partnerships with businesses to continue to get their input on the pathway systems within their industries and identify the various on and off ramps for individuals to connect to those pathways. Through the leadership and support of the LWDB, the career pathway system will continue to develop and grow in the region.

To meet the needs of the region, as well as to be sustainable, partners and systems collaborate. This collaboration includes not only working together but blending and braiding available resources. Individuals will be co-enrolled as appropriate in multiple funding sources, to best meet the needs of the individual, as well as to stretch limited resources. An example of this would be to co-enroll an individual that meets the criteria in WIOA Title I, Pathways to Prosperity, and SNAP Employment and Training. Each of the funding sources could provide different resources, all serving to help the individual attain their employment goals. In addition, the individuals are provided other needed supports through Adult Basic Education and other education and community-based organizations as they move along their career pathway.

Another example is the developing opportunities that combine youth and adults into a career pathway training setting – thereby providing multi-generational education settings for the learners and better ensuring the class size is large enough to be cost effective. Southwest has

worked with local secondary locations to provide these learning opportunities in Certified Nursing Assistant, welding, CDL and other trainings.

- C.4. Describe and assess the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local workforce development area.

The full complement of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities as required under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act are available to residents of all 14 counties and based out of the CareerForce locations in LWDA #6. Services available include:

Basic Career Services

Basic Career Services is provided by MN DEED –Job Service and the Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council (PIC). Job Service is uniquely positioned to provide these services as the Wagner Peyser provider and the PIC as the WIOA Title I provider. Basic Career Services are available to all individuals seeking services and includes:

- Eligibility determination.
- Outreach, intake, and orientation.
- Initial assessment of skill levels and supportive service needs.
- Labor exchange services including job search, job placement and provision of in- demand industry and occupation information and nontraditional employment opportunities.
 - Referrals to other programs and services.
 - Provision of workforce and labor market information.
 - Provision of performance and program cost information on eligible training providers.
 - Provision of information on how the local area is performing on local performance measures.
 - Provision of information on the availability of supportive services or assistance and appropriate referrals.
 - Assistance in establishing eligibility for programs of financial aid assistance for training and education programs not provided under WIOA; and
 - Provision of information and assistance regarding filing claims under UI programs.

Individualized Career Services

Individualized Career Services are provided by PIC for individuals receiving staff- assisted job search, work-based training, and classroom-training pathway.

Individualized Career Services include:

- Comprehensive and specialized assessment.

- Individualized employment plan.
- Group or individualized counseling.
- Career planning/case management.
- Short-term pre-vocational services.
- Internships and work experiences.
- Workforce preparation activities.
- Financial literacy services.
- Out-of-area job search.
- English language acquisition and integrated education/training programs; and
- Follow-up services.

The focus of career services is to provide individuals with the information they need to make informed career decisions, identify a career goal, assess their interests and aptitudes, and to develop a career plan that identifies the steps, resources, and services necessary to achieve their goal for meaningful employment in a demand occupation that pays a family-sustaining wage. With one-on-one career counseling services focused on career pathways, it is critical to provide career and case management/navigator services and support services. This is especially vital for individuals experiencing barriers to employment and employment disparities. An assessment of career services reveals that we have experienced providers that provide quality career services. However, our capacity to provide this level of intensive, one-on-one services is limited to funding available. It will be important to continue to support development of technology to provide these services for individuals that can self-serve so we can focus limited resources on individuals who require more intensive services. In addition, with our focus on serving populations experiencing employment disparities it will be important to engage other community resources to understand and address the unique needs of special populations.

Training Services:

Work-based learning and classroom training services are provided to align with their strong connection with area employers.

Training services include:

- Occupational skills training.
- On-the-job training.
- Incumbent worker training.
- Cooperative education programs.
- Private sector training.
- Skill upgrading and retraining.

- Entrepreneurial training.
- Transitional jobs (work experience).
- Job readiness training.
- Adult education and literacy; and
- Customized training.

The focus of training services is to provide individuals with the skills they need for a career pathway in high demand industries and occupations that lead to a family- sustaining wage. Training is provided through work-based and/or post-secondary training that results in industry recognized, stackable credentials that leads to meaningful employment.

An assessment of training services reveals that we have developed strong partnerships for the development of career pathways. The health care and manufacturing pathways are well-developed. We need to continue to expand career pathway opportunities, increase employer engagement for work-based learning opportunities, continue secondary and post-secondary education alignment, increase community engagement for targeted populations, and continue to develop outreach strategies. Although communities of color are served well above their incidence in the population and have comparable employment results, we do see that this target population has lower average wage rates. In order to increase wages, we need to provide comprehensive counseling to promote the benefits of skill training in order to compete for demand occupations that pay livable wages.

C.5. Describe and assess the type and availability of youth workforce investment activities in the local workforce development area, including youth with disabilities, which description and assessment shall include an identification of successful models of such youth workforce development activities.

LWDA #6 has a long-standing history of quality and comprehensive youth activities and services as described below. LWDA #6 Youth and Young Adult Programs and Services are provided by the Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council (PIC) and focus on an array of activities, including youth with disabilities, so individuals are able to develop skills necessary to be productive employees and be self-sufficient.

Youth workforce investment activities include:

- Objective assessment;
- Development of service strategies;
- Activities leading to a secondary school diploma;
- Preparation for post-secondary education and training;
- Linkages between academic instruction and occupational education that leads to a credential;
- Preparation for unsubsidized employment;

- Effective connections to employers in demand occupations:
- Program elements include: tutoring, alternative school services, paid and unpaid work experience, occupational skill training, education concurrently with workforce preparation activities, leadership development, supportive services, mentoring, comprehensive career guidance, follow-up services, financial literacy, entrepreneurial skill training, labor market information on demand occupations, and transition to post-secondary education and training.

The focus of youth workforce investment activities is to ensure that youth have the basic skills, work readiness skills and occupational skills necessary to be successful in post-secondary education and training, and ultimately to obtain meaningful employment in demand occupations that pay livable wages along a career pathway. Best practices are noted below.

Experiential Learning

The PIC Youth Program defines experiential learning as an opportunity for youth to “learn by doing” and then reflect on that experience. This can be accomplished through experiences in a classroom setting (i.e., small group discussion, role play, exercises, and simulations) or hands-on learning through structured activities. All young people are in need of developing career success skills before they are ready to succeed in unsubsidized employment. They may also lack the experience necessary to secure employment. PIC youth employment specialists address these barriers by continuing to provide experiential and work-based learning opportunities via paid internships/work experience opportunities. This experience provides participants the opportunity to gain the skills and experience necessary to find success in the workplace.

Youth are provided work-based learning (WBL) opportunities through placement in entry level paid work experiences which provide them with an opportunity to learn basic skills and competencies for success in employment. Work based learning (WBL):

- Provides an opportunity for youth to learn about and meet employer expectations while gaining transferable skills.
- Allows youth to try out different jobs to help determine what they like and dislike.
- Helps build work-readiness skills to prepare them for a future career.
- Provide youth exposure to work/careers that will improve their employment prospects.

A variety of work experience opportunities are available to PIC youth program participants. Youth who excel in an entry level work experience are provided with opportunities to participate in an advanced placement with increased responsibility, with the potential of being hired by the employer upon completion of placement. PIC youth programs are proactively working to establish an even greater number of work experience opportunities in the private sector, including those industries in our region which are high demand, high growth. To provide a variety of work experiences, a broad range of employment settings are utilized, not just those in high-demand occupations.

PIC has a strong network of businesses and organizations willing to host paid youth interns (work experience participants) at their sites. Supervisors and participants receive an orientation, from the PIC youth employment specialist. The orientation outlines the responsibilities and expectations of the youth intern, the worksite supervisor, and the employment specialist. Orientation also includes workplace safety, child labor restrictions (as appropriate), the Minnesota Right to Know Act, injury reporting, state and federal employment rules, confidentiality, and equal opportunity employment. A worksite evaluation measuring performance in the workplace is required to assess work readiness for the work readiness indicator. The most effective method of assessing work readiness is to have the worksite supervisor observe and evaluate performance on the worksite. The worksite supervisor is in the best position to assess the quality of a young person's work performance. The worksite supervisor evaluates/rates the youth on the following categories of:

- Attendance/Punctuality (Dependability)
- Positive Attitude/Behaviors
- Interpersonal Skills (Communication, Relations)
- Decision Making/Stability
- Communication Skills – Written & Verbal
- Appearance

The rating tool is on the students' timecards and is evaluated bi-weekly in accordance with the pay periods. The supervisors complete the evaluation using a Likert scale of one through four, 'one' signifying unacceptable to 'four' identifying exceeding requirements. The evaluation is included on the timecard to promote a conversation about positive developments and needed improvements. Short-term goals for skills improvement are set and monitored by the youth employment specialist when workplace deficiencies or areas for improvement are identified. The employment specialist regularly visits the worksite to observe the participant, discuss progress and areas for skills enhancement, and provide encouragement and support. The youth employment specialists work with the worksite supervisors to address any issues that arise with the youth worker.

Additionally, PIC can provide youth experiential learning opportunities or WBL through a structured job shadowing approach. Youth gain insight through real and relevant learning as they identify career paths, connect with local employers, and learn about labor market information. This project has been a successful local initiative with proven outcomes, developed through a solid partnership between workforce development systems and industry partners in Southwest Minnesota. Job shadowing is a great opportunity for our future workforce to gain valuable insight through real and relevant learning as they begin to determine the paths, they will take post high school. The goal is for students to come away with a better understanding of their field of interest and the skills needed to be successful.

Students are provided a range of career development opportunities through partnerships with employers, education, and workforce development agencies. Career Awareness, Career Exploration and Career Preparation support the development of both industry- specific technical skills and professional skills, such as communications, teamwork, and problem solving, valued by nearly all employers. The paradigms used in southwest Minnesota encompasses a wide array of learning experiences, such as job shadowing and workplace tours to internships and on-the-job training; provides meaningful job tasks in a work environment that develops a student for the knowledge and skills that support entry level or advancement in a particular career; expands professional networks; and supports further training, persistence and completion through comprehensive supports such as advising or coaching that prepare students with the information they need to make informed choices about their careers.

The Employer Partnerships we have in southwest Minnesota are very influential in providing solid work-based learning experiences. PIC facilitates these WBL opportunities alongside our employer partners working towards the end goal of providing comprehensive skill development to student learners including activities designed to promote awareness of careers, workplace norms and employer expectations. These activities incorporate the technical skills components which are industry specific.

In the workplace, Career Exploration includes Informational Interviews, Job Shadowing and Workplace Tours. Career Preparation & Training Career Preparation activities give an in-depth discovery of a particular career and the development of the skills and understanding of the education needed in a particular industry or occupation and activities include work-based skills training, internships, paid work experience and apprenticeships. The student is held to the same expectations as all employees and is evaluated by the workplace supervisor. Traditional classroom-based education and job training programs do not always reflect workplace needs, and employers find that many job candidates lack valuable employability skills. The role of the Career Pathway Navigator is instrumental in helping employers develop meaningful work-based learning experience for students and preparing students for “real-life” workplaces and gaining essential workplace skills. Employers can share their great jobs and promote their businesses to future workers as well as are involved in the curriculum development. Engaging employers on the design of an initiative has helped ensure CTE and Career Pathway related instruction aligns with business needs. As a school-to-career intermediary organization, the PIC can serve as a single point of contact for employers to work with the region’s schools and colleges.

Career Pathways

The intent of the Career Pathways program is to create a pathway in high growth, in- demand occupations for the young adults in the identified target populations, to enhance basic academic abilities, complete the career pathway, participate in job training, and earn industry recognized credentials and post-secondary education credits. The initial step is to create opportunities that might not otherwise be affordable or accessible to some of the region’s residents. A benefit to out of school youth is accessible training that will allow them to become more employable where they learn additional academic skills. The Bridge programming provides preparatory skills needed to enter the integrated training. The skills offered in the

bridge portion include but are not limited to basic employment skills, job search skills, and an introduction to the industry in that the participant is pursuing.

The fundamental career and technical skills training concentrates on high demand/high pay industry in southwest Minnesota. According to DEEDs Occupations In Demand (OID) Tool, Agriculture, Education, Manufacturing, Healthcare, Transportation, Information Technology, and Construction industries are identified as “well above average” demand and growth in southwest Minnesota. The expressed need throughout each industry is the increasing demand for skills with the ability to advance along the employer or industry career pathway for rewarding successful career opportunities. To assure increased participant completion and skills mastery, career pathway training, work experience, post-secondary credit, and support services will be provided through the project partnership. Additional instruction will enhance participants’ Basic English and Math comprehension, computer/technology literacy, work readiness, soft skills, and employability skills. The intended outcomes are higher skill attainment and successful completion of industry recognized credentials, college credits, job placement, job retention, enrollment in higher education career pathway/degree programs, enhanced awareness of resources and opportunities for career advancement. All the information is packaged into a portfolio for the participants’ future access and reference.

Ongoing support is a vital component for participants. Many young people are entering the workforce for the first time, some have had unsuccessful attempts at jobs, others may be reaching beyond what they have ever considered possible for themselves before. For this reason, PIC youth employment specialists are available on an ongoing basis to provide a connection, encouragement, and/or to serve as a general resource. As participants progress along their career path, PIC youth employment specialists provide a post-secondary orientation session, to help youth identify post-training career options. Staff assist in navigating the postsecondary system and provide career counseling to enhance the participants’ opportunity for successful transition into the post- secondary environment. College is defined as any post-high school training opportunity resulting in an earned credential, from a certificate to a bachelor’s degree and beyond. Ultimately, the goal of the program is to create career pathways for participants while creating systems change in strengthening partnerships to better support individuals to increase employability and provide employers with skilled workers.

The PIC has well established partnerships and collaboratives to meet the needs of residents and the workforce. The partners are passionate about making a positive impact for all individuals in our region, which will also impact on their families, and ultimately result in a stronger workforce for our employers. This group of organizations and a core group of leaders have worked together for over a decade providing innovative programming. It is a proven collaborative where each partner executes its expertise, avoids duplication of services, and works to ensure each partner’s success. The collaborative group has received state and national recognition on multiple occasions over the years. The strength of the partnership is collaboration and understanding of each agency’s missions, strengths and utilizing that to navigate for the success of the student.

- C.6. Describe how training services under chapter 3 of subtitle B of WIOA will be provided in accordance with section 134(c)(3)(G) of WIOA, including, if contracts for training services will be used, how the use of such contracts will be coordinated with the use of individual training accounts under that chapter and how the local area board will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs, regardless of how the training services are to be provided.

Training services in LWDA 6 are viewed as a critical service for many of the adult and dislocated workers to achieve successful outcomes. Following an initial interview, evaluation, assessment and career planning with a customer, the career development staff may determine a need for training based on the fact that the individual:

- Is unlikely or unable to obtain or retain employment, that leads to economic self-sufficiency or wages comparable to or higher than wages from previous employment through career services alone.
- Is in need of training services to obtain or retain employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency or wages comparable to or higher than wages from previous employment, through career service alone; and
- Has the skills and qualifications to successfully participate in the selected program of training services.

When it is determined that training services will be provided, LWDA 6 uses the Individual Training Accounts (ITA) method to communicate with the education provider the level of assistance that will be provided on behalf of the customer through WIOA resources. All training services are linked to in-demand employment opportunities in the LWDA 6 or within WIOA MN Planning Region 5 or within a geographic area in which the adult or dislocated worker is willing to commute or relocate.

The final selection and approval of training assistance assures that customer choice is taken into consideration; is linked to in-demand occupations; is informed by performance of training providers; and is coordinated to extent possible with other sources of assistance. The details of the training agreement are documented and retained in the customer's file.

- C.7. Describe the plans and strategies for, and assurances concerning, maximizing coordination of service provided by the state employment service under Wagner-Peyser Act, and services provided in the local workforce development area through the one-stop delivery system, to improve service delivery and avoid duplication of services.

Wagner-Peyser provides labor exchange services to both business and job seekers. Services including job search assistance, job referral and placement assistance to job seekers, re-employment services to UI claimants, recruitment assistance to businesses, job postings through Minnesota Works website, Creative Job Search Workshops, and others.

Strategies to coordinate services through the one-stop delivery system, improve service delivery and avoid duplication of services include:

- Wagner Peyser is a required core partner under WIOA and is co-located at all three CareerForce locations in the local workforce development area and participates in the coordination of services, the Memorandum of Understanding and Infrastructure Funding Agreements.
- Wagner Peyser staff coordinates closely with CareerForce co-located partners to provide basic career services to universal customers. When appropriate referrals are made to eligibility-based programs/services of co-located partners (i.e. WIOA Adult, DW, Vocational Rehabilitation services, Veterans Services, etc.).
- Wagner Peyser staff work closely with REA staff to provide reemployment services and REA sessions. REA sessions are typically offered to UI program applicants that are at risk of exhausting their UI benefits. Wagner Peyser staff provide an overview of CareerForce services, how to register on MinnesotaWorks and referrals to other program services including Dislocated Worker services.
- Wagner Peyser staff assist the REA customer with creating an initial registration and enrolling in the Creative Job Search workshop. Creative Job Search is typically the first job finding/job placement service that is offered to UI applicants. The workshop consists of training on how to find a job that includes career planning, preparing for the job hunt, skills identification, resumes and cover letters, applications and references, social media, interviewing skills, and more. Services and workshops are also provided online or remotely.
- Wagner Peyser staff will follow up with REA participants who are not enrolled in a program to ensure that they have a complete registration and resume in MinnesotaWorks, and that they are taking advantage of job placement services.
- Wagner Peyser staff are frequently the staff who connect with local employers to list job opportunities on MinnesotaWorks. Wagner Peyser staff keep CareerForce partner staff informed of job opportunities in the area.
- Wagner Peyser staff participate in CareerForce staff meetings to communicate and coordinate across programs.
- Wagner Peyser managers are members on our workforce boards and part of the One-Stop Operator consortium to participate in the coordination of services at CareerForce locations.

Interagency Coordination

C.8. Describe how the local workforce development system will work with entities carrying out core programs to align and support services with programs of study authorized under Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act.

LWDA 6 has an effective and professional relationship with the Carl D. Perkins Career and

Technical Education secondary and post-secondary providers. Our partnership and programs have been highlighted as a best practice at statewide CTE conferences. The LWDB Youth Standing Committee aligns multiple agencies and partners with the following identified common goal: “To work in partnership to ensure youth have access to the services they need to become self-sufficient and successful.” The Carl Perkins staff are members of the Southwest Minnesota Youth Standing Committee, which provides for continued and expanded alignment and leveraged funds between the workforce development system and the Carl Perkins Career and Technical Education programming. As the workforce partner, we contribute labor market information to help inform on key industries and demand occupations in the region as well as align our workforce goals with Carl Perkins priorities and goals. We also fill the role of the intermediary between school and employer, coordinating exploration activities, work-based learning opportunities and working to better align curriculum with the needs of employers.

The local youth staff work directly with the local school districts and Career and Technical Education partners with the goal for student’s to increase: 1) knowledge and understanding of career and educational opportunities; 2) marketable experiences and technical skills through career pathways training and work-based learning opportunities such as job shadows and internships; and 3) social capital with employers and mentors leading to higher wages and lower student debt while developing an essential talent pipeline for local employers.

The partners of the Youth Standing Committee and others hold annual collaborative events and activities in LWDA 6. An examples of annual collaborative event between LWDB, Carl Perkins and other entities to align with programs of study is the ***Southwest Minnesota Workforce Development Board Career Expo*** that is held annually in the fall at the college campuses of Southwest Minnesota State University–Marshall and Minnesota West-Worthington. The event provides valuable career and education information to high school students, plus highlights businesses and occupations in our communities. The expo serves around 2000 students and 36+ schools annually. Nearly 300 volunteers and 50+ businesses along with the following partners make the event a great success every year. Annually, exhibitors, teachers, and students evaluated the event as a valuable opportunity to expose students to career opportunities in Southwest Minnesota.

- Minnesota West Carl Perkins Consortium
- Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council
- Minnesota West Community and Technical College
- Southwest Minnesota State University
- SW/WC Service Cooperative
- DEED Business Services
- Worthington Area Chamber of Commerce
- Marshall Area Chambers of Commerce
- Marshall, Montevideo, and Worthington CareerForce locations
- Department of Employment and Economic Development
- Regional businesses and service agencies

Additional information on the Career Expo event is available at:

<http://www.swsc.org/Page/274>

- C.9. Describe how the local area board will coordinate education and workforce investment activities carried out under this title with relevant secondary and post-secondary education programs and activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services.

Our primary strategy to coordinate education and workforce investment activities in order to align strategies, enhance services and avoid duplication is through the activities of our Rural Career Counseling Coordinator. Our Regional Workforce Development Area has been awarded funding for a Rural Career Counseling Coordinator position. This position is responsible for strengthening connections between workforce, education, area businesses, job seekers, and other stakeholders; aligning regional resources; implementing sector strategies; and promoting career pathway opportunities within the region. Building on current initiatives (including career pathways, career education, and out-reach to schools), one of the key responsibilities will be to enhance alignment and assure non-duplication of services. This was achieved by conducting an asset map and analysis of existing services and identifying where gaps exist. Upon completion of the asset mapping process, the results were shared with the Regional Leadership Board and the local workforce development boards. Based on the results, the boards and staff developed recommendations and strategies for future steps to align resources, fill gaps and implement identified strategies. The Rural Career Counseling Coordinator role will work closely with stakeholders throughout the region to ensure overall coordination, as well as share best practices and bring them to scale.

Another important strategy is working in coordination with education to prepare youth for the workforce with relevant skills and industry knowledge for informed future career choices. Hands-on opportunities are provided which allow students to apply skills they learn in the classroom, including:

- Career Assessment.
- Work-Based Learning.
- Leadership Skill Development.
- Introduction to Career Pathways.
- Employer Engagement.
- Credential Achievement; and
- Portfolio Development.

Additional examples of existing collaborative education and workforce investment activities include providing career exploration events for key industries. These events provide broad exposure for thousands of students in the region. Events include:

Breaking Traditions

Breaking Traditions is an annual event sponsored by Minnesota West Community and Technical College and Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council. The event is designed to encourage high school students to consider a variety of career pathways.

Breaking Traditions is in its 29th year, and each year the program expands to give participants more opportunities to explore careers through hands-on activities; tours of Minnesota West Community and Technical College campus programs; and tours of local businesses associated with the campus programs. While on campus, the students learned about the college admission process, financial aid, and are able to do hands-on activities in majority of the programs – from Healthcare to Auto Mechanics, Cosmetology to Power Sports, Fluid Power to Computers, and Pharmacy Assistant.

Life-Skills Day

For the past 13 years, the LWDA Youth Programs conduct a one-day LifeSkills workshop on the Southwest Minnesota State University campus in Marshall. The event includes the following topics: budgeting, post-secondary education, personal finances, and topics focused on independent living skills. The LWDB is focused on providing services to youth and young adults which will impact and improve the way they view their future opportunities. Services are designed to work in partnership with education partners to ensure all youth have access to employment and training services they need to be self-sufficient and successful. Staff work with students in area school districts to assist them with education and career planning, including college planning; assistance with applications; financial aid information and scheduling campus visits; job search; resume preparation; industry tours, career fairs; career and college readiness days; and Career Pathway training.

Outreach to Schools

Youth Services staff are available to provide a variety of services throughout the LWDA school districts with a focus on career assessments; postsecondary planning; career and job fairs; job search strategies; industry connections; labor market information, financial literacy; interviewing skills training, employer speakers in the classroom, business tours, and job shadows. The services allow the districts to select programming that feeds into the needs of their students, scheduling, and curriculum.

- C.10. Describe how the local area board will coordinate education and workforce investment activities carried out under this title with public transportation and other appropriate supportive services.

Coordinating education and support services with public transportation, childcare, and other appropriate support services, has been and will continue to be a critical aspect of the services provided by core partners in LWDA 6. Programs offered through the local workforce system, offer support services based on need of customer and available financial resources. In addition, other financial community assistance is leveraged as appropriate to stretch resources and assure the customer has access to resources to achieve their identified goals including education and workforce investment activities. Through the course of the Region 5 WIOA Regional Planning meetings, the issue of childcare surfaced as a major barrier facing job seekers and businesses. The issues related to childcare revolve around lack of childcare providers – overall and particularly for infants; childcare hours do not match with shift work; and accessible childcare for children with special needs. The Childcare Resource and Referral Agency is the

main community agency/resource to assist with licensing, training, and maintaining available childcare lists. Organizations like the Southwest Initiative Foundation and First Children's Finance are leading the efforts to increase childcare slots in the region.

Transportation continues to be one of the critical barriers facing job seekers in LWDA #6. The local area lacks a comprehensive public transportation system that covers the entire LWDA. Local county and city transit systems are in place, but are limited based on available service hours, which conflicts with the need of job seekers and business when work hours are outside of the established transit parameters. The Southwest Workforce Development Board will continue to inform and support local and regional efforts to address transportation and childcare needs.

C.11. Describe how the local area board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out under this title in the local workforce development area with the provision of adult education and literacy activities under title II, including a description of how the local area board will carry out, consistent with subparagraphs (A) and (B)(i) of section 107(d)(11) and section 232 of WIOA, and the review of local applications submitted under title II of WIOA.

Southwest Minnesota Adult Basic Education (ABE)'s program is an active partner in the local and regional workforce system. There are three Adult Basic Education consortia in our local area including: Marshall, Montevideo, and Worthington. Adult Basic Education is a key partner in our local workforce development area. Examples of coordination between workforce investment activities and Adult Basic Education include:

- The development of career pathways for agriculture, construction, education, health care, manufacturing, and transportation pathways. Through career pathways we align the resources and expertise of local partners to develop sector-based pathways for key industries. Adult Basic Education administers the skills assessment (CASAS) and provides concurrent basic skills instruction and instructional support for adult learners with low basic skills. This is aligned with career navigation services, aligning titles under WIOA to provide tuition assistance and support services, as well as career and technical education.
- Referrals are made between WIOA and other employment and training programs and Adult Basic Education for adult literacy instruction, GED/high school diploma, and English Language Learner instruction.
- CareerForce partners utilize Adult Basic Education for individuals with limited digital literacy skills to participate in North Star Digital Literacy assessment and classes.
- Referral forms and data-sharing agreement forms have been developed to better serve common customers.
- Adult Basic Education has a representative on the Southwest Minnesota Workforce Development Board and staff also participate on the Career Pathway Partnership and Youth Council as well as other task forces for special initiatives and events.

- Adult Basic Education is included in our current Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) of core partners. Adult Basic Education also participates in our Infrastructure Funding Agreements to identify their contribution to our CareerForce locations.

Every Adult Basic Education consortium in the state provides a program narrative to the MN Department of Education every five years for approval of their service model and programming. The narrative includes provisions for local ABE programs to provide evidence that programming aligns with the local and regional WIOA plan, including evidence of common referral, co-location, program collaboration, alignment of assessment processes, and helping select and design key occupational pathways. In compliance with WIOA legislation, these applications/narratives are submitted by Adult Basic Education to the local workforce development board for review and approval.

Employer & Economic Development Engagement

C.12. Describe how the local area board will ensure that eligible providers meet the employment needs of local employers, workers, and job seekers.

Through its relationships with local employers, the LWDB identifies industry needs for workers with specific skills, education, and credentials. The board works with eligible training providers to ensure that educational and training opportunities are available to help individuals gain those skills and meet employer needs. Career Pathways training options will continue to be developed with the involvement of business to better define need and design programming and curriculum to better meet the local employer needs.

The board acts as a convener, bringing together the stakeholders and facilitating the process of ensuring that the employment needs of employers, workers, and job seekers are met. Marketing to businesses will focus on opportunities, including, but not limited to on-the-job-training, incumbent worker training, customized training, apprenticeships, transitional jobs, and career pathway opportunities. Staff will continue to promote the state job bank (www.minnesotaworks.net) with business and job seekers. Workers need career advancement/career laddering opportunities. They need opportunities to increase their skills so they can not only maintain employment but move up the career ladder and obtain higher skilled/higher wage jobs. Workforce strategies that address worker needs include incumbent worker training, customized training opportunities, evening and online training, and worker/employer professional development opportunities.

“Employability skills” development and/or lack of on the part of job seekers continue to be an area of concern expressed by business. An assessment of job seeker’s employability/essential job skills is conducted and if needed, job seekers are able to learn the essential job skills employers are looking for through a new versatile curriculum we are implementing. Training options include in-person, virtual or a hybrid of training opportunities. Many job seekers - whether it be the first-time job seeker, the dislocated worker who had not looked for work in years, or someone who needs help overcoming a barrier to employment - needs basic job

search assistance. Creative Job Search and Resume Writing classes are provided at each CareerForce location and online. In our career labs, job seekers have access to computers, telephones, copiers to conduct their job search. One-on-one assistance is also available in our career labs for individuals who need additional assistance with researching job opportunities, posting resumes, and completing on-line applications. In addition, job clubs and other 'job seeker' groups for special populations (such as MFIP; SNAP; etc.) are held throughout the LWDA to provide direction in this area.

Adult Basic Education/English Language Service providers are also critical partners in assuring that the employment needs of local employers, workers, and job seekers. ABE provides basic skills and digital literacy training and is actively involved in the Southwest Minnesota Career Pathways Partnership.

C.13. Describe how the local area board will facilitate engagement of employers, including small employers, and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations, in workforce development programs.

Engagement of employers is critical to the success of the WIOA system in LWDA 6. Methods of engagement will include, but not be limited to:

- Private sector members make up over 50% of the LWDB. The members represent key industries in the local and regional area including manufacturing, healthcare, agriculture, financial services, and others.
- Employers participate in our regional planning sessions providing input on workforce issues and opportunities and identifying workforce priorities for the region.
- Employers are actively involved in the career pathway planning process by assisting with identifying training needs and curriculum development. In addition, employers are engaged in the training, provide a training site, and offer work-based learning opportunities for youth and adults.
- Employers serve on advisory boards with the post-secondary partners in the region and provide input on workforce development and training needs.
- Our Workforce Strategy Consultant, Rehabilitation Services Employment Specialists, Wagner Peyser and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives provide outreach to employers and assist with their hiring and retention needs.
- Employers/Chambers have been very engaged in the annual Southwest Minnesota Career Expo events held in Marshall & Worthington and other career exploration events throughout the region, both in planning and participation at the events. In addition, Chambers provide opportunities in their communities for youth job shadow experiences, tours, and internships for high school credit.
- Employers provide work-based training for adults and dislocated workers through on-the-job training, internships, apprenticeships, and transitional jobs (work experience). In addition, employers provide job shadows, work experience and

internships for youth.

- Employers participate in a number of job fairs held throughout the year that provides employment opportunities for job seekers.
- Providers also engage with employers through local Chambers of Commerce and other trainings, workshops or events designed for local employers.

With the skilled labor shortage, employers are very interested in attracting new employees and retaining current residents. Employers are currently motivated to be engaged with workforce development. Staff report great interest from employers in learning about Labor Market Information and competitive wages for the positions locally and across the state/nation.

C.14. Describe how the local area board will support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local workforce development area.
102(b)(4)(ii).

LWDB 6 is key to planning workforce development strategies for the region. The board identifies economic and business trends, develops community linkages and partnerships, and provides a focus on system outcomes. Through a sector-driven, data-informed approach, the local board focuses on the key industries in the region, working with businesses to identify needs and challenges within those industries. The local area board develops strategies and provides leadership to increase business awareness of the workforce development system's role and resources for the region.

Strategies include providing salary survey and labor market information, state, and federal resources available for hiring and training staff, educational workshops and events, input on career pathways occupational training, and opportunities to engage with youth through career exploration events, classroom instruction, job shadows, and internships. The three regional goals identified will not only help the job seeker but also help develop a pipeline of needed skilled workers for employers.

C.15. Describe how the local area board will better coordinate programs and services with local and regional economic development providers.

Coordination of programs and services with local and regional economic development providers is currently happening through:

- Economic Development Representatives serve on the Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDB).
- Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) staff serve on Regional Economic Development Boards and local EDA's.
- Staff are members of the Southwest Minnesota Economic Development Professionals Collaborative.

- LWDA staff regularly inform DEED economic development representative of economic development opportunities and/or concerns in the region.
- DEED economic development representative reaches out to LWDA staff for input and assistance as needed.
- LWDA staff provide input into the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).
- Regional Economic Development Boards and local EDA's provide input into the Regional and Local Workforce Development Plans.
- Economic development representatives' partner with LWDB on regional and local workforce development and career exploration events.

The LWDB board continually works to expand and strengthen existing relationships and partnerships.

- C.16. Describe how the local area board will strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs by offering services to laid-off workers and possible lay-off preventative services for businesses, such as incumbent worker training that up-skills the workers and meets the needs of employers (can include but not be limited to, on-the-job training, apprenticeships, etc.).

LWDA 6 has a Re-Employment Services and Eligibility Assistance (REA) representative based in the area. The REA representative contacts individuals receiving Unemployment Insurance (UI) and are provided information on the various programs/services available through location partners as well as other community services. When information regarding large layoffs becomes available, whether through the local staff (Dislocated Worker staff or through DEED Rapid Response) that information is shared immediately with all key staff within the LWDA, so immediate procedural steps can be employed. Incumbent worker training and on-the-job training are actively promoted to area employers.

- C.17. Describe how the local area board will coordinate workforce investment activities with economic development activities, including the promotion of entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services.

Our local CareerForce locations provide services for individuals interested in entrepreneurship through our continued partnership with local agencies providing entrepreneurial services. Individuals interested in entrepreneurship are referred to local partners for services depending on their need and location. CLIMB (Converting Layoffs Into Minnesota Businesses), allows dislocated worker providers to offer entrepreneurial training, business consulting, and technical assistance to dislocated workers who wish to start their own business without impacting performance results. The Small Business Association located at the Southwest Minnesota State University and the Southwest Initiative Foundation are also great resources. Workforce partners provide the full-compliment of program services as appropriate in

collaboration with entrepreneurial services including supporting training plans and support services.

Dislocated Worker Supports

C.18. How does the local workforce development area ensure staff comply with the policies and procedures for Rapid Response as communicated on DEED's website?

LWDA 6 staff communicate directly with DEED Rapid Response staff and comply with policy and procedures for Rapid Response as outlined in the DEED Rapid Response Policy that is found on DEED website. LWDA 6 staff abide by the policy immediately upon notice of a dislocation event occurring in LWDA 6. LWDA 6 staff are trained and knowledgeable of all requirements related to the policies and procedures for Rapid Response. Based on policy, when the LWDA 6 personnel hear about dislocation events before the State Rapid Response team is notified, the LWDA personnel will notify the State Rapid Response Team within 24 hours of learning about a dislocation event. Communication to DEED Rapid Response regarding the dislocation will occur either by email and/or phone.

Based on the current operations structure in LWDA 6, the Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council has been identified as the primary respondent to dislocation events. When the dislocation results in a competitive process for services, the Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council staff will remove themselves from contact with all workers from the dislocation event, until the competitive process is complete. In these rare circumstances the CareerForce Location reception staff will refer questions regarding the event to the DEED designated Rapid Response staff.

- a. How does the local workforce development area inform the state Rapid Response team within 24 hours about an actual or potential dislocation event when there is possibility of a mass layoff (50 or more dislocations)?

The LWDB has appointed Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council as point of contact for the Dislocated Worker Programs and primary contact to the DEED Rapid Response office. When Workforce Location Partner staff becomes aware of a potential dislocation event, in the LWDA 6, staff provide the dislocation information to the Adult/DW Program Manager. It is then the responsibility of the Program Manager to provide the information (within 24 hours) to the DEED Rapid Response representative. The initial details of the dislocation are normally communicated by phone and may be followed up with additional information via email and/or other methods such as regular mail. In addition, supporting information such as press releases; newspaper articles, etc. will be provided to DEED Rapid Response Team. The LWDA 6 staff will fully cooperate and provide assistance to with a dislocation as Requested by DEED Rapid Response Team.

- b. Describe how the local area board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the local workforce development area with statewide rapid response activities.

LWDB 6 has designated the Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council Adult/Dislocated Worker Program Manager as the lead rapid response liaison for LWDA #6. Local communications regarding layoffs will be communicated to and coordinated with the LWDA #6 rapid response liaison. It is the role and responsibility of the LWDA 6 liaison to coordinate the dislocated worker activities and services within the local area to effectively serve workers affected by layoffs. The liaison is required to assure that communication is broadly shared with all appropriate partners and a comprehensive approach to align all potential services needed to benefit the workers is developed.

- C.19. How does the local workforce development area inform the state Trade Act staff of companies that are potentially TAA certifiable?

LWDA #6 Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council TAA designated lead staff is responsible for notifying the State Trade Act staff by phone or email when the LWDA becomes aware of companies that may be TAA certifiable. The TAA lead staff provide all current information that is available and will assist in obtaining additional information required for the State Trade Act staff to being an investigation.

- a. How does the local workforce development area cooperate with the state Trade Act staff where the layoff involves a company that the DOL trade-certified?

All LWDA #6 Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council Dislocated Worker staff have participated in DEED sponsored TAA training and understand their role and responsibility in the process. It is the responsibility of the designated local lead liaison to assure that there is open communication between all parties; assist with initial information meetings; assure that customers are provided needed assistance in completing the TAA application; serve as liaison between customer and TAA staff when there are customer concerns; communicate TAA concerns to customers; and participate in DEED sponsored TAA trainings.

TAA eligible individuals are co-enrolled with the Dislocated Worker (DW) programs and training plans are approved through the local dislocated worker program. Eligible dislocated workers participate in an individual assessment and develop an employment plan in coordination with the LWDA DW Counselor. All approved training plans are then submitted to the State TAA unit for final TAA funding approval. Based on established follow-up policies, all TAA clients are followed up with by the DW staff every 30 days at a minimum.

- b. Is the local workforce development area willing to participate in TAA Counselor Training and TAA Participant Training when a trade-certification occurs?

Yes X

- C.20. The local workforce development area has developed and implemented local Supportive Service policies that are consistently applied for all participants.

Yes X

Describe the steps taken to ensure consistent compliance with the policy.

LWDA Staff are provided with copies of both the DEED and local support service policies and trained in the local process and policies to stay compliant with policy. The local policy has defined categories, limits and amount of services for each program. The process for staffing and approval of customer education and employability plans is also outlined in the policy.

Assigned staff review the client barriers and determine the support service need during individual assessment with each eligible client. Based on unmet need and availability of support service funds, the staff follows the outlined process for approval as outlined in policy. The identified, staffed, and approved support services are entered on the participants Individual Employment Plan, while also confirming that the need is warranted based on budget analysis and confirmation that support resources are not available through other programs or partner agencies.

Support services are approved through the standard fiscal approval process as outlined in the fiscal policies manual and the support service policy. Signatory requirements are internally in place and monitored through the fiscal controls system.

Services to Military Service Members and Spouses

- C.21. Are all WIOA-funded partners complying with the guidance provided in [TEGL 10-09](#) regarding Priority of Service for Veterans and Eligible Spouses?

Yes X

- C.22. How do you identify current or former Military Service Members coming into your CareerForce Center?

Staff at the CareerForce reception desk and in the CareerLab are trained to ask questions and have customer service skills to determine how we can help the individual obtain their goals. They refer to onsite signage and the veteran's questionnaire to draw out information regarding military service. That in addition to signage posted in visible places throughout our public spaces help us to determine their military status.

- C.23. How do you inform current or former Military Service Members coming into your CareerForce Center about “Veteran Priority of Service?”

We make it publicly known through posting priority of service information on our websites and by verbally telling customers in workshops and during introductions to our services that Veterans and their spouses have priority of service in every CareerForce office. Signage is visible at points throughout our public spaces. We thank them for their service and tell them verbally that Veterans and their spouses have priority of service. We coach them to register on Minnesotaworks.net and check the box that indicates they are a veteran. This simple detail assigns them special status on Minnesotaworks.net. When they enter their resume on Minnesotaworks.net and to make it viewable to employers, their resume will come up first when an employer searches for skills that match their resume and will be flanked by an American Flag symbol indicating to the employer that they served our country and are a priority for hire.

- C.24. If your CareerForce Center has a presence on the Internet (outside of your local DEED CareerForce Center site) how do you promote Public Law 107-288, “Veterans Priority of Service” to veterans on that website?

All websites associated with the CareerForce locations provide information on and notice of Veterans Priority of Service.

- C.25. How do you identify current or former Military Service Members with “significant barriers to employment?”

We request that they answer the Veterans Service questionnaire to be reviewed by staff to see who can best serve them to meet their needs. We rely on self-disclosure for them to answer the questions honestly but recognize that until we have built rapport, they may not feel comfortable doing so. We build relationships through customer service and eventually, they may disclose things that were not mentioned initially.

- C.26. When a current or former Military Service Member with a significant barrier to employment is identified, how do you refer them to an appropriate intensive service provider when there is no Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist in your CareerForce Centers?

If they qualify for services with the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist, we immediately give or scan the questionnaire to the DVOP who contacts the Veteran for services. DVOPS do outreach services and every office has a DVOP assigned. We also make sure to meet any immediate needs through one of our CareerForce staff. We are all able to guide them with information, services, and resources to reach their employment goals, and immediate assistance is always a priority.

C.27. How are DVOP and/or Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER) staff integrated into the overall service delivery strategy in your CareerForce Centers?

Local DVOP and/or LVER staff attends staff and partner meetings and orientations, participate on CareerForce location work teams, collaborate with CareerForce Partners on various events and LVER staff provide training to partner staff and management regarding the JVSG program.

C.28. What is your strategy to ensure that job-ready job seekers enrolled in your programs (including non-program universal customers) are registering in MinnesotaWorks.net and are making their resumes viewable to employers?

Our strategy to ensure that job ready job seekers are registering on Minnesotaworks.net and making their resumes viewable is to demonstrate the benefits of the system and encourage them to use this tool to maximize their job search success. CareerForce customers utilizing the CareerLab and all workshop attendees are given a brief orientation which includes information about our states premier labor exchange system that is free for both employers and job seekers. We encourage job seekers to create a complete profile with up to 5 targeted resumes and to make them viewable for employers. All unemployment insurance recipients are required to create their account and create a viewable resume as a condition of continued unemployment insurance benefits. Wagner-Peyser staff do outreach to follow up with unemployment recipients and help them with this task if it is not completed. We also encourage employers to post their job openings and to create their account on Minnesotaworks.net to be able to search the database for job seekers who have the targeted skills they need. Employers can reach out to the job seekers directly for recruitment purposes.

C.29. Are all WIOA-funded partners complying with the guidance provided in [TEGL 11-11, Change 1](#) and [TEGL 11-11, Change 2](#) regarding Selective Service?

Yes _____ X _____

SECTION D: ASSURANCES AND CERTIFICATIONS

Training and Employment Guidance and State Law Compliance

Conflict of Interest and Integrity: Local area boards must make decisions in keeping with several laws and regulations. Indicate below that your local area board is aware and that the local workforce development area's conflict of interest policies are in compliance with DOL Training and Employment Guidance Letter ([TEGL 35-10](#)) and [Minnesota OGM 08-01](#) and its relevant federal laws and regulations, including being aware of the:

- A) referenced statute on Government Records
- B) requirement to retain documentation for six years.

Yes _____ X _____

Handling and Protection of Personally Identifiable Information: The local workforce development area is complying with the guidance provided in [TEGL 39-11](#).

Yes
_____ X _____

Human Trafficking: The local workforce development area is aware of [TEGL 09-12](#) and will follow the procedures for working with trafficked persons.

Yes _____ X _____

Gender Identification: The local workforce development area is aware of [TEGL 37-14](#) (and associated Attachments [1](#) and [2](#)) and will follow the procedures for developing a similar policy including key terminology and have in place regarding working with customers who may be lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. Local workforce development areas will also participate in any related training.

Yes _____ X _____

Uniform Guidance: The local workforce development area is aware of [TEGL 15-14](#) regarding Uniform Guidance.

Yes _____ X _____

Assurances

By signing and submitting this plan, the local area board is assuring on behalf of itself and the subgrantee, where applicable:

As a condition to the award of financial assistance from the Department of Labor under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and any other DEED/Workforce Development Employment and Training funds, the grant applicant assures that it will comply fully with the nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions and other assurances of the following laws:

- **Accessibility** - [Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended](#) - Requires that federally funded program providers make their electronic information and technology accessible to people with disabilities;
- **ACORN** – [Funds may not be provided](#) to the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, or any of its affiliates, subsidiaries, allied organizations or successors;
- **Audits** – [2 CFR 200.501](#) and [Single Audit Act Amendments of 1996](#) - organization-wide or program-specific audits shall be performed;
- **Buy American**- Buy American Act – award may not be expended unless the funds comply with [USC 41, Section 8301-8303](#);
- **Data Sharing** – [MN Access to Government Data](#), [MN Duties of Responsible Authority](#); [MN Access to Information](#); [MN Administrative Rules Data Practices](#); [DEED Policy – Data Practices](#);
- **Disability** - that there will be compliance with the [Architectural Barriers Act of 1968](#), [Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#), as amended, and the [Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990](#);
- **Drug-Free Workplace** – [Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988](#) – requires all organizations to maintain a drug-free workplace;
- **Equipment** – [2 CFR 200. 313](#), [200.439](#) – must receive prior approval for the purchase of any equipment with a per unit acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more, and a useful life of more than one year;
- **Fire Safety** – [15 USC 2225a](#) – ensure that all space for conferences, meetings, conventions or training seminars funded in whole or in part complies with the protection and control guidelines of the Hotel and Motel Fired Safety Act ([Public Law 101-391](#));
- **Fraud/Abuse** - that the provider has policies on fraud and abuse and will contact DEED for potential fraud and abuse issues; [20 CFR 667.630](#); [DEED Policy – Fraud Prevention and Abuse](#);
- **Health Benefits** – [Public Law 113-235, Division G, Sections 506 and 507](#) – ensure use of funds for health benefits coverage complies with the [Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015](#);
- **Insurance** - that insurance coverage be provided for injuries suffered by participants in work-related activities where Minnesota's workers' compensation law is not applicable as required under Regulations [20 CFR 667.274](#);
- **Insurance** – [Flood Disaster Protection Act of 1973](#) – provides that no Federal financial assistance to acquire, modernize or construct property may be provided in identified flood-prone communities in the United States, unless the community participates in the National Flood Insurance Program and flood insurance is purchased within 1 year of the identification;
- **Limited English** - [Executive Order 13166](#) - Improving access to services for persons with limited English proficiency;
- **Nondiscrimination** - [Section 188 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](#) (WIOA) - Requires applying nondiscrimination provisions in the administration of

programs and activities for all eligible individuals, including individuals with disabilities;

- **Nondiscrimination** - [Section 188 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998](#) (WIA) - Requires applying nondiscrimination provisions in the administration of programs and activities for all eligible individuals, including individuals with disabilities;
- **Nondiscrimination** - [Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended](#) – Prohibits discrimination on the bases of race, color, and national origin under any program receiving federal financial assistance;
- **Nondiscrimination** - [Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended](#) - Prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin in employment;
- **Nondiscrimination** - [Title II of the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008](#) - Prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of genetic information;
- **Nondiscrimination** - [Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965](#) - Prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national original, age disability or political affiliation or beliefs in any program funded in part with Senior Community Services Employment Program funds;
- **Nondiscrimination** - [Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended](#) - Requires applying nondiscrimination provisions, based on sex, in educational programs;
- **Nondiscrimination** - [Title I \(Employment\) Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) - Prohibits state and local governments, from discriminating against qualified individuals with disabilities in job application procedures, hiring, firing, advancement, compensation, job training, and other terms, conditions, and privileges of employment;
- **Nondiscrimination** - [Title II \(State and Local Governments\) Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) - Prohibits qualified individuals with disabilities from discrimination in services, programs, and activities;
- **Nondiscrimination** - [Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended](#) - Prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities;
- **Nondiscrimination** - [Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended](#) - Prohibits discrimination on the basis of age;
- **Nondiscrimination** - [Title 29 CFR Part 31](#) Nondiscrimination in federally-assisted programs of the Department of Labor, effectuation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964;
- **Nondiscrimination** - [Title 29 CFR Part 32](#) Nondiscrimination on the basis of disability in programs and activities receiving or benefiting from federal assistance;
- **Nondiscrimination** - [Title 29 CFR Part 33](#) Enforcement of nondiscrimination on the basis of disability in programs or activities conducted by the Department of Labor;
- **Nondiscrimination** - [Title 29 CFR Part 35](#) Nondiscrimination on the basis of age in programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance from the Department of Labor;
- **Nondiscrimination** - [Title 29 CFR Part 37](#) Implementation of the Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity provisions of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998;

- **Nondiscrimination** - [Title 29 CFR Part 38](#) Implementation of the Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act;
- **Nondiscrimination** - [Executive Order 13160](#) Nondiscrimination on the basis of race, sex, color, national origin, disability, religion, age, sexual orientation, and status as a parent in federally conducted education and training Programs;
- **Nondiscrimination** - [Executive Order 13279](#) - Nondiscrimination against grant seeking organizations on the basis of religion in the administration or distribution of federal financial assistance under social service programs, including grants, contracts, and loans;
- **Nondiscrimination** - [The Minnesota Human Rights Act of 1973, Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 363A](#) - Prohibits discrimination in employment and providing public services on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, natural origin, sex, marital status (employment only), disability, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, familial status (employment only), citizenship, or age (employment only), and local human rights commission activity (employment only);
- **Nondiscrimination** - that collection and maintenance of data necessary to show compliance with the nondiscrimination provisions of WIA and [WIOA Section 188](#), as provided in the regulations implementing that section, will be completed;
- **Opportunity** – [Executive Order 12928](#) – encouraged to provide subcontracting/subgranting opportunities to Historically Black Colleges and Universities and other Minority Institutions and to Small Businesses Owned and Controlled by Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Individuals;
- **Personally Identifiable Information (PII)** – [Training and Guidance Letter 39-11](#) – must recognize and safeguard PII except where disclosure is allowed by prior written approval of the Grant Officer or by court order;
- **Procurement** – Uniform Administrative Requirements – [2 CFR 200-317-36](#) – all procurement transactions to be conducted in a manner to provide, to the maximum extent practical, open and free competition;
- **Publicity** – no funds shall be used for publicity or propaganda purposes, preparation or distribution or use of any kit, pamphlet, booklet, publication, radio, television or film presentation designed to support or defeat legislation pending before the Congress or any state/local legislature or legislative body, except in presentation to the Congress or any state/local legislature itself, or designed to support or defeat any proposed or pending regulation, administrative action, or order issued by the executive branch of any state or local government. Nor shall grant funds be used to pay the salary or expenses of any recipient or agent acting for such recipient, related to any activity designed to influence the enactment of legislation, appropriations regulation, administrative action, or Executive Order proposed or pending before the Congress, or any state government, state legislature or local legislature body other than for normal and recognized executive-legislative relationships or participation by an agency or officer of a state, local or tribal government in policymaking and administrative processes within the executive branch of that government;

- **Salary/Bonus** – [Public Law 113-235, Division G, Title I, Section 105](#) – none of the funds appropriated under the heading “Employment and Training” shall be used by a recipient or sub-recipient of such funds to pay the salary and bonuses of an individual, either as direct costs or indirect costs, at a rate in excess of [Executive Level II](#). Further clarification can be found in [TEGL 5-06](#);
- **Seat Belts** - [Executive Order 13043](#) – Increasing Seat Belt Use in the United States;
- **Text Messaging** – [Executive Order 13513](#) – encouraged to adopt and enforce policies that ban text messaging while driving company-owned or –rented vehicles or GOV or while driving POV when on official Government business or when performing any work for or on behalf of the Government;
- **Trafficking of Persons** – [2 CFR 180](#) – OMB Guidelines to Agencies on Government wide Debarment and Suspension – may not engage in severe forms of trafficking, procure a commercial sex act or use forced labor in the performance;
- **Veteran Priority of Service** - [Public Law 107-288: Jobs for Veterans Act](#) - Priority of service for veterans (including veterans, eligible spouses, widows and widowers of service members) in qualified job training programs;
- **Veterans** - [Public Law 112-56: Vow to Hire Heroes Act of 2011](#) - Establishes guidelines for service providers who are providing employment, training, academic or rehabilitation services for military veterans;
- **Veterans** - that veterans will be afforded employment and training activities authorized in WIA and WIOA Section 134, and the activities authorized in Chapters 41 and 42 of Title 38 US code, and in compliance with the veterans' priority established in the Jobs for Veterans Act. ([38 USC 4215](#)), U.S. Department of Labor, [Training and Employment Guidance Letter 5-03](#) and Minnesota's Executive Order 06-02;
- **Voter Registration** - that the required voter registration procedures described in [Minnesota Statutes 201.162](#) are enacted without the use of federal funds;
- **Voter Registration** – [52 USC 20501 – 20511](#) – National Voter Registration Act of 1993.

Certifications

By signing and submitting this plan, the local area board is certifying on behalf of itself and the subgrantee, where applicable:

- A. That this **Regional and Local Workforce Development Area Plan** was prepared and is in accordance with all applicable titles of the WIOA Act of 2014, Title V of the Older Americans Act, applicable Minnesota state statutes and that it is consistent with Minnesota’s current and future state plans;
- B. that it has provided at least a thirty day period for public comment and input into the development of plan by members of the local area board and the public (including persons with disabilities) and has provided information regarding the plan and the planning process, including the plan and supporting documentation, in alternative formats when requested and that any comments representing disagreement with the plan are included with the local plan forwarded to DEED (as the Governor's representative) Section 118(c); Section 108 (d)

- C. that the public (including individuals with disabilities) have access to all of the local area boards and its components' meetings and information regarding the local area board's and its components' activities;
- D. that fiscal control and fund accounting procedures necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds paid through the allotments funded through the contract/master agreement issued by DEED have been established;
- E. that it is, and will maintain a certifiable local area board;
- F. that it will comply with the confidentiality requirements of WIA Section 136 (f)(3) and WIOA Section 116 (i)(3)
- G. that the respective contract/master agreement and all assurances will be followed;
- H. that it will ensure that no funds covered under the contract/master agreement are used to assist, promote, or deter union organizing;
- I. that this plan was developed in consultation with the local area board;
- J. that it acknowledges the specific performance standards for each of its programs and will strive to meet them;
- K. that the local area board members will not act in a manner that would create a conflict of interest as identified in 20 CFR 667.200(a)(4), including voting on any matter regarding the provision of service by that member or the entity that s/he represents and any matter that would provide a financial benefit to that member or to his or her immediate family;
- L. that local area board and staff are aware of local WorkForce Center services, and are working with and referring to the WorkForce Center services as appropriate;
- M. that all staff are provided the opportunity to participate in appropriate staff training;
- N. that, if applicable, the local area board must maintain the currency of its information in the System Award Management until submission of the final financial report or receive the final payment, whichever is later;
- O. that sponsored (in whole or in part) conferences are charged to the grantee as appropriate and allowable; and
- P. that funds are not used for the purpose of defraying costs of a conference unless it is directly and programmatically related to the purpose of the award.
- Q. that the local area board and its sub-grantees must also adhere to the same certifications and assurances that DEED must assure.

WIOA Guidance

This list of guidance is non-exhaustive and applies only to ETA programs. ETA has published a number of documents to guide the operationalization of WIOA, with the most recent and popular listed below. Find the full library of guidance [here](#).

- [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) 04-23](#)
Conveys to states the Administration's priorities, State Plan requirements, submission process, and deadline for WIOA Unified and Combined State Plans (State Plans) for PY 2024 through 2027, consistent with WIOA Sections 102 and 103.
- [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) 05-23](#)
Provides information to the public workforce system and other entities that receive federal financial assistance under Title I of WIOA, as well as education and training programs or activities receiving DOL financial assistance, regarding the prohibition on discrimination based on actual or perceived religion, shared ancestry, or ethnic characteristics.
- [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) 09-22](#)
Guidance and planning information to states, local workforce areas, and other recipients of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I youth formula funds on the activities associated with the implementation of WIOA.
- [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) 07-22](#)
Increasing Employer and Workforce System Customer Access to Good Jobs.
- [Training and Employment Notice \(TEN\) 16-22](#)
The Employment and Training Administration is Implementing Grant Solutions for Grant Award Processing and the Payment Management System for Financial Reporting.
- [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) 22-20](#)
Program Year (PY) 2021 Funding Allotments and Instructions for the Indian and Native American (INA) Programs.
- [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) 23-20](#)
Program Year (PY) 2021 Planning Guidance for National Farmworker Jobs Program Career Services and Training Grantees and Housing Grantees.
- [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) 07-20](#)
Effective Implementation of Priority of Service Provisions for Most in Need Individuals in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Adult Program.
- [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) 08-19](#)
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I Training Provider Eligibility and State List of Eligible Training Providers (ETPs) and Programs.
- [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) 19-16](#)
Guidance on Services provided through the Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service (ES), as amended by title III of WIOA, and for Implementation of the WIOA Final Rules.
- [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) 21-16](#)
Third Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I Youth Formula Program Guidance.

SIGNATURE PAGE

Local Workforce Development Area Name Southwest Minnesota Workforce Development Board
 LWDA #6

Local Area Board Name Southwest Minnesota Workforce Development Board

Name and Contact Information for the Local Area Board Chair:


Name Carla Goedtke
 Title Owner/Consultant
 Organization Investors Choice Financial Services Inc.
 Address 1 1403 E College Drive
 Address 2 _____
 City, State, ZIP Code Marshall, MN 56258
 Phone 507-920-8717
 E-mail cgoedtke@outlook.com

Name and Contact Information for the Local Elected Official(s):


Name David Lieser
 Title County Commissioner
 Organization Chippewa County Board of Commissioners
 Address 1 629 North 11th Street
 Address 2 _____
 City, State, ZIP Code Montevideo, MN 56265
 Phone 320-269-6619
 E-mail dliester@co.chippewa.mn.us

We, the undersigned, attest that this submittal is the Local Plan for our Workforce Development Board and Local Workforce Development Area and hereby certify that this Local Plan has been prepared as required and is in accordance with all applicable state and federal laws, rules and regulations.

Local Area Board Chair

Name Carla Goedtke
 Title Local Area Board Chair
 Signature 
 Date 4/4/2024

Local Elected Official

Name David Lieser
 Title Board Chair
 Signature 
 Date 4/05/2024



**Attachment A
REGIONAL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**

**Regional Workforce
Development Area
Local Workforce Development
Areas**

WIOA Region 5 – Southwest and South Central Minnesota
Local Workforce Development Areas #6 and #7 –
Southwest Minnesota and South Central Minnesota

MEMBER (Name, Title)	ORGANIZATION	LWDA	COMMITTEE ROLE
Carla Goedtke , Southwest Minnesota Workforce Development Board Chair	Investors Choice Financial Services Inc.	#6	Joint Chair
Andy Easley , Southwest Minnesota Workforce Development Board Vice Chair	Ralco/The tru Shrimp Company	#6	Joint Vice Chair
Valerie Bentsdahl , South Central WorkForce Council Board Chair	Human Resources Manager Jones Metal	#7	Joint Chair
Brent Christopherson , South Central WorkForce Council Board Vice Chair	Talent Acquisition Manager Taylor Corporation	#7	Joint Vice Chair
David Lieser , Southwest Minnesota Chief Elected Official Board Chair	County Commissioner, Chippewa County Board of Commissioners	#6	Member
DeRon Brehmer , Southwest Minnesota Chief Elected Official Board Vice-Chair	County Commissioner, Lac que Parle County Board of Commissioners	#6	Member
John Roper , County Commissioner Joint Powers Board Chair	Faribault County Board of Commissioners	#7	Member
De Malterer , County Commissioner Joint Powers Board Vice Chair	Waseca County Board of Commissioners	#7	Member

Attachment B
LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREA CONTACTS

ROLE	Contact Name	Phone	Email	Reports to (name only)
Rapid Response Liaison for Mass Layoffs	Mee Yang	651-259-7548	Mee.yang@state.mn.us	Jason Wadell
Equal Opportunity Officer	Carrie Bendix	507-476-4040	Cbendix@swmnpic.org	Board of Directors
Program Complaint Officer	Carrie Bendix	507-476-4040	Cbendix@swmnpic.org	Board of Directors
Records Management/Records Retention Coordinator	Carrie Bendix	507-476-4040	Cbendix@swmnpic.org	Board of Directors
ADA Coordinator	Carrie Bendix	507-476-4040	Cbendix@swmnpic.org	Board of Directors
Data Practices Coordinator	Carrie Bendix	507-476-4040	Cbendix@swmnpic.org	Board of Directors
Language Access Coordinator	Carrie Bendix	507-476-4040	Cbendix@swmnpic.org	Board of Directors

CareerForce Center in Marshall, MN

ROLE	Contact Name	Phone	Email	Reports to (name only)
Site Representative	Jacq Williams	507.476.4042	Jacq.williams@state.mn.us	LeRoy Kiecker
Job Service Manager	LeRoy Kiecker	507-344-2611	Leroy.kiecker@state.mn.us	Art Larsen
Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manager	Mimi Schafer	612-437-2718	mimi.schafer@state.mn.us	Jay Hancock
State Services for the Blind Manager	Jenny Evenson	507-514-1492	jenny.evenson@state.mn.us	Edward Lecher
Local Workforce Development Area Director	Carrie Bendix	507-476-4040	cbendix@swmnpic.org	Board of Directors

Adult Basic Education (ABE)	See Moua-Leske	507-537-7046	See.Moua-Leske@marshall.k12.mn.us	Jeremy Williams
Carl Perkins Post-Secondary Manager	Jen Thovson	507-223-1313	Jennifer.thovson@mnw.est.edu	Dr. Craig Peters
Adult	Tim Jones	507-476-4054	tjones@swmnpic.org	Carrie Bendix
Dislocated Worker	Tim Jones	507-476-4054	tjones@swmnpic.org	Carrie Bendix
Youth	Maria Peters	507-829-8168	mpeters@swmnpic.org	Carrie Bendix

CareerForce Center in Montevideo, MN

ROLE	Contact Name	Phone	Email	Reports to (name only)
Site Representative	Jacq Williams	507.476.4042	Jacq.williams@state.mn.us	LeRoy Kiecker
Job Service Manager	LeRoy Kiecker	507-344-2611	Leroy.kiecker@state.mn.us	Art Larsen
Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manager	Mimi Schafer	612-437-2718	mimi.schafer@state.mn.us	Jay Hancock
State Services for the Blind Manager	Jenny Evenson	507-514-1492	jenny.evenson@state.mn.us	Edward Lecher
Local Workforce Development Area Director	Carrie Bendix	507-476-4040	cbendix@swmnpic.org	Board of Directors
Adult Basic Education (ABE)	Deanna Johnson	(320)269-9297	djohnson@montevideoschools.org	Kelly Snell
Carl Perkins Post-Secondary Manager	Jen Thovson	507-223-1313	Jennifer.thovson@mnw.est.edu	Dr. Craig Peters
Adult	Tim Jones	507-476-4054	tjones@swmnpic.org	Carrie Bendix
Dislocated Worker	Tim Jones	507-476-4054	tjones@swmnpic.org	Carrie Bendix
Youth	Maria Peters	507-829-8168	mpeters@swmnpic.org	Carrie Bendix

CareerForce Center in Worthington, MN

ROLE	Contact Name	Phone	Email	Reports to (name only)
Site Representative	Nancy Landeros	507.295-5035	Nancy.landeros@state.mn.us	LeRoy Kiecker
Job Service Manager	LeRoy Kiecker	507-344-2611	Leroy.kiecker@state.mn.us	Art Larsen
Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manager	Christine Olson	507-995-1977	christine.olson@state.mn.us	Jay Hancock
State Services for the Blind Manager	Jenny Evenson	507-514-1492	jenny.evenson@state.mn.us	Edward Lecher
Local Workforce Development Area Director	Carrie Bendix	507-476-4040	cbendix@swmnpic.org	Board of Directors
Adult Basic Education (ABE)	Stacy Everding	507-376-6105	Stacy.Everding@isd518.net	Sharon Johnson
Carl Perkins Post-Secondary Manager	Jen Thovson	507-223-1313	Jennifer.thovson@mnwest.edu	Dr. Craig Peters
Adult	Tim Jones	507-476-4054	tjones@swmnpic.org	Carrie Bendix
Dislocated Worker	Tim Jones	507-476-4054	tjones@swmnpic.org	Carrie Bendix
Youth	Maria Peters	507-829-8168	mpeters@swmnpic.org	Carrie Bendix

Attachment C

LOCAL AREA BOARD MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

Please Click on the link below to access Attachment C:

The board members represent agricultural, education, finance, healthcare, hospitality, manufacturing, and social services industries are represented. The board members are 13% BIPOC. With committee members and staff, BIPOC representation increases to 22% with a goal to reach 30% within three years.



WDA #6 Workforce
Development Board N

**Attachment D
LOCAL AREA BOARD SUBCOMMITTEE LIST**

Regional Workforce Development Area	WIOA WDA Region #5 – Southwest Minnesota
Local Workforce Development Area	Local Workforce Development Area #6 – Southwest Minnesota

Committee Name	Objective/Purpose
Executive Committee	Serves as the network of committee Chairs and Board Officers responsible for maintaining overall direction of Board and develop recommendations for the LWDB regarding organization, federal, state and local issues. Oversee the overall operation of the Board. Serves as the liaison to the Chief Elected Official Board.
Youth Committee	Serves as the standing committee which addresses local workforce development area youth services and partnerships to insure youth have access to the services they need to become self-sufficient and successful. The mission of the committee is to guide the coordination of services that fully develop the employment potential of youth in southwest Minnesota.
Inclusive Workforce Committee	The Committee will focus on identifying and addressing strategies to address diversity and equity issues within the Local Workforce Development area. This includes implementing inclusivity employer training in the region.
One-Stop Operator Management Team	The consortium of One-Stop Operator partners (SW MN PIC; Job Service: Rehabilitation) is responsible for on-going program review; continuous improvement; and day-to-day operations of the CareerForce locations. The committee is responsible for the development of the cost allocation plans (CAP) for the locations as well as the Memorandum of Understanding between the partners. The CAP's and MOU's are reviewed and approved by the LWDB.
Employer-Led Industry Sector Partnerships At-Hoc Committee – Healthcare	Comprised of local board representatives, business, education, and other key stakeholders. The purpose of the partnership is to identify and address the workforce challenges of healthcare providers to close the skills gap, strengthen regional economies

	and align education and training systems with the needs of industry.
Employer-Led Industry Sector Partnerships At-Hoc Committee – Manufacturing	Comprised of local board representatives, business, education, and other key stakeholders. The purpose of the partnership is to identify and address the workforce challenges of manufacturers to close the skills gap, strengthen regional economies and align education and training systems with the needs of industry.

Attachment E
LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREA SUB-GRANTEE LIST

Regional Workforce Development Area	WIOA WDA Region #5 – Southwest Minnesota
Local Workforce Development Area	Local Workforce Development Area #6 – Southwest Minnesota

Name of Sub-Grantee	Services Provided	Funding Source	Sub-Grantee located in which CFC?	If not in CFC, provide Address, City, State, ZIP Code
South Central WorkForce Council/MVAC	Pathways to Prosperity, Youth Support Services, Drive for Five	State	N/A	706 North Victory Drive, Mankato, MN 56001
Lower Sioux Indian Community	Drive for Five	State	N/A	39527 Reservation Hwy 1, Morton, MN 56270
Southwest West Central Service Cooperative	Robotics and STEM Internships Grant	State	N/A	1420 East College Drive, Marshall MN 56258
Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services	Robotics and STEM Internships Grant	State	N/A	406 7th St. E., P.O. Box 720 Monticello, MN 55362

Attachment F
LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREA NON-CFC PROGRAM SERVICE DELIVERY LOCATION LIST

Regional Workforce Development Area	WIOA WDA Region #5 – Southwest Minnesota
Local Workforce Development Area	Local Workforce Development Area #6 – Southwest Minnesota

Name and Location (City)	Program Service Delivered
Minnesota West Community and Technical College – Canby	WIOA Adult, WIOA DW, State DW, WIOA Youth, MYP, MFIP/DWP, SNAP E&T
Minnesota West Community and Technical College – Granite Falls	WIOA Adult, WIOA DW, State DW, WIOA Youth, MYP, MFIP/DWP, SNAP E&T
Minnesota West Community and Technical College – Jackson	WIOA Adult, WIOA DW, State DW, WIOA Youth, MYP, MFIP/DWP, SNAP E&T
Minnesota West Community and Technical College – Luverne	WIOA Adult, WIOA DW, State DW, WIOA Youth, MYP, MFIP/DWP, SNAP E&T
Minnesota West Community and Technical College – Marshall	WIOA Adult, WIOA DW, State DW, WIOA Youth, MYP, MFIP/DWP, SNAP E&T
Minnesota West Community and Technical College – Pipestone	WIOA Adult, WIOA DW, State DW, WIOA Youth, MYP, MFIP/DWP, SNAP E&T
Minnesota West Community and Technical College – Worthington	WIOA Adult, WIOA DW, State DW, WIOA Youth, MYP, MFIP/DWP, SNAP E&T
ABE - Marshall	WIOA Adult, WIOA DW, State DW, MFIP/DWP, SNAP E & T
ABE - Montevideo	WIOA Adult, WIOA DW, State DW, MFIP/DWP, SNAP E & T
ABE - Worthington	WIOA Adult, WIOA DW, State DW, MFIP/DWP, SNAP E & T
Big Stone County Health and Human Services – Ortonville	MFIP/DWP, SNAP E&T
Chippewa County Health and Human Services – Montevideo	MFIP/DWP, SNAP E&T
Des Moines Valley Health and Human Services – Jackson and Windom	MFIP/DWP, SNAP E&T
Lac que Parle County Health and Human Services – Dawson	MFIP/DWP, SNAP E&T
Nobles County Health and Human Services – Worthington	MFIP/DWP, SNAP E&T

Southwest Health and Human Services – Luverne, Marshall, Pipestone, Redwood Falls, Slayton	MFIP/DWP, SNAP E&T
Swift County Health and Human Services – Benson	MFIP/DWP, SNAP E&T
Yellow Medicine County Health and Human Services – Granite Falls	MFIP/DWP, SNAP E&T

Attachment G

LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREA KEY INDUSTRIES IN REGIONAL ECONOMY

Based on your most recent analysis of regional economies, provide a list of the key industries in your regional economy.

RWDA #5 will focus on key industry sectors:

- **Agriculture**
- **Construction**
- **Education**
- **Health Care and Social Assistance**
- **Manufacturing**
- **Transportation and Warehousing**