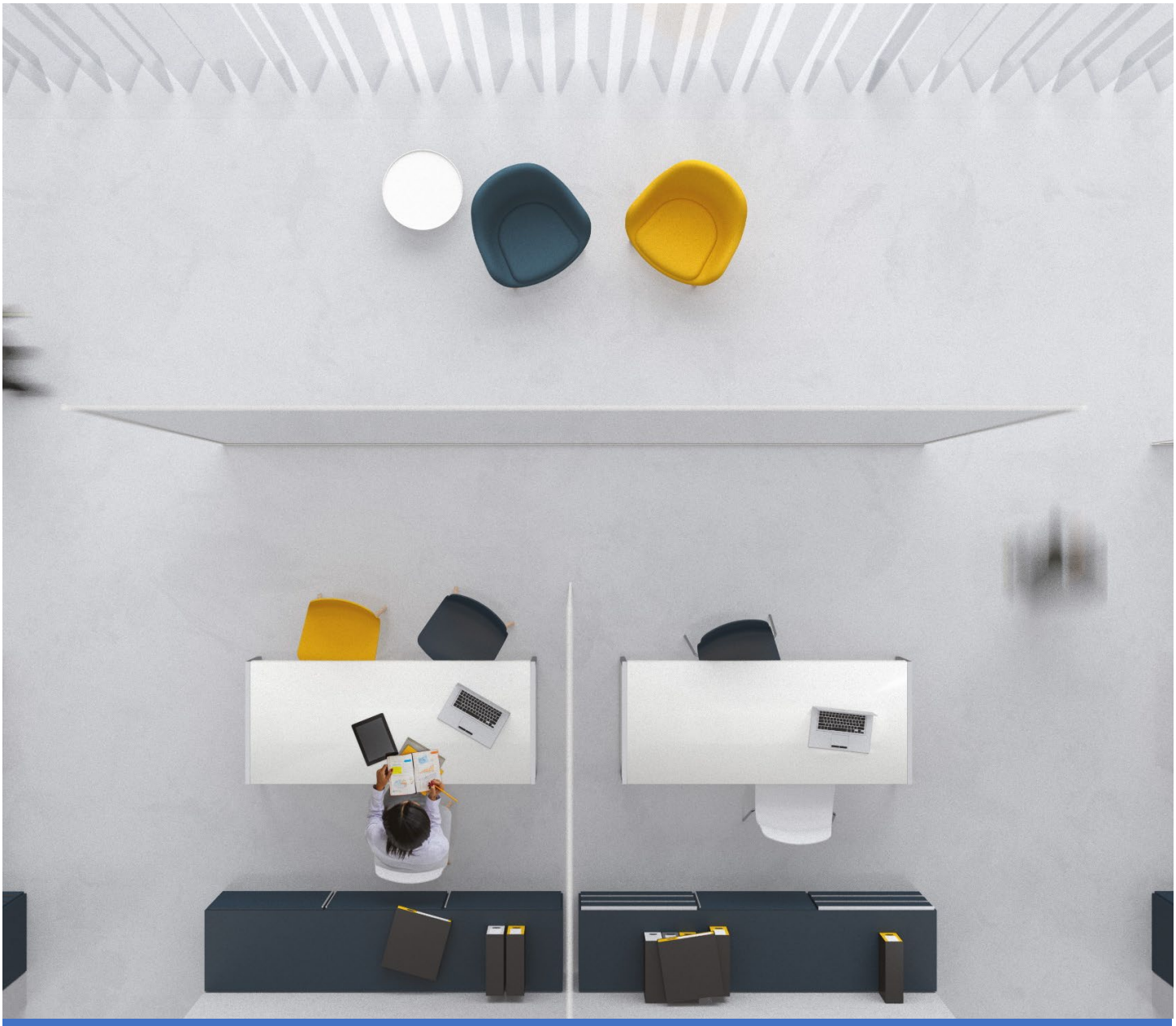

Central Jersey Partners WIOA Regional Plan Modifications

2026

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Vision, Goals, Themes

Executive Summary

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), requires Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDB)s and chief elected officials (CEO)s within each of New Jersey's three WIOA workforce planning regions to participate in a regional planning process resulting in a comprehensive four-year plan which shall be modified every two years. This plan incorporates input and coordination from each of the local areas within the workforce planning region. This Regional Plans complies with the requirements outlined in WIOA and aligns with and supports the strategies described in the New Jersey Combined WIOA State Plan (State Plan). This regional plan will be effective through 2026, modified after two years, in accordance with WIOA (Sec.108) and Title 20 CFR 679.500.

The Central Jersey Partners Regional Plan consists of the following:

- An overview of the region, including a list of local areas and counties that comprise the region.
- The collection and analysis of regional labor market data (in conjunction with the State) including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors, information on demographics and target populations, and labor market trends.
- Establishment of strategic priorities for Career Seekers and Business partners
- The establishment of regional service strategies, including use of cooperative service delivery agreements.
- The description of Local WDB Structure & Functions including procurement of Operator & Career Services, Oversight & Monitoring, Performance Measures & Accountability, and Training & Development
- The development and implementation of sector initiatives for in-demand industry sectors or occupations for the planning region.
- The establishment of administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate.
- The coordination of transportation and other supportive services as appropriate, for the region.
- The coordination of services with regional economic development services and providers.
- The establishment of an agreement concerning how the planning region will collectively negotiate and reach agreement with the Governor on local levels of performance for, and report on, the performance accountability measures described in WIOA sec. 116(c) for local areas or the planning region; and
- The establishment of a process to review and modify the plan every two years.
- The development of an Annual Regional Planning Calendar that establishes a structured approach to regional coordination, strategic planning, sharing of best practices, and program execution.

This Regional Plan demonstrates the workforce and human resources needs for the region's future and establishes a strategic framework for using the existing workforce system and resources to meet those needs. This plan shows where regional workforce development efforts should be focused and highlights the jobs and occupations that are likely to play a key role in the success of the region's major industries and employers. This information is critical to educators, communities, and businesses because it illustrates where strategic growth is needed and where modifications are expected to arise based on shifting economic demands. Collective efforts must anticipate, plan for, and address the many variables intrinsically related to preparing the workforce of tomorrow.

This plan will demonstrate Central Jersey Regional Partnership's strategic blueprint for achieving two primary objectives:

1. To ensure all career seeking residents have the education and training necessary to access high-quality employment.
2. To ensure businesses and employers that are offering high-quality employment in the Central New Jersey Region can quickly and efficiently fill their talent needs.

This plan has been developed in cooperation with local community stakeholders including elected officials, area employers, education and training partners, community-based organizations, and individuals who are the recipients of services provided by the four local workforce development boards that are in the Central New Jersey WDB Planning Region.

Central Jersey Partners is committed to delivering programs and services through a regional approach, wherever appropriate and feasible. This includes services for job seekers, businesses, priority populations, and all constituents served in respective local areas.

Regional Overview

The Central New Jersey Workforce Development Board Planning Region (Central Jersey Partners) is made up of four counties, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, and Ocean. The region spans across the state from coastal communities on the state's east coast, to the west, boarding the state of Pennsylvania.

According to the 2020 US Census, the population in the region is 2,430,500 residents. The regional population grew over the last five years by 23,000 (1.2%) and with a projected increase of 18,440 over the next five years (0.8%). There are 1,198,953 jobs in the region, with an anticipated growth of another 35,000 jobs by 2027. As the number of jobs increased, the labor force participation rate decreased from 63.9% to 63.8% between 2016 and 2021. Concerning educational attainment, 25.1% of the selected regions' residents possess a bachelor's degree (4.8% above the national average), and 7.0% hold an associate degree (1.7% below the national average). The ratio of unemployment by gender shows that 20,822 (50.79%) women were unemployed, while 20,174 (49.21%) men were out of work during the same time.

Source: Lightcast (EMSI/Burning Glass)

Integration of One Stop Partners and Services

New Jersey Department of Labor & Workforce Development issued Workforce Innovation Notice 13-16(A) (WIN) on December 15, 2016, that provides guidance related to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provisions regarding the required one-stop partners, including their roles and responsibilities within the one-stop system. This guidance includes the list of career services that the one-stop system partners are required to provide.

Central Jersey Partners uses this WIN as the basis for the organization of the One Stop systems in each of its local areas. Each LWDB includes each required partner in their One Stop System as delineated by WIOA. However, additional non-mandated partners may vary, due to the unique needs of each LWDB. Those differences will be demonstrated in each LWDB's Local Plan.

Each One-Stop Partner has specific duties and functions that are consistent among the workforce boards in of the region:

The required One-Stop Partners must:

1) Provide access to its programs or activities through the one-stop delivery system, in addition to any other appropriate locations.
2) Use a portion of funds made available to the partner's program, to the extent consistent with the Federal law authorizing the partner's program and with Federal cost principles in 2 CFR parts 200 and 3474 (requiring, among other things, that costs are allowable, reasonable, necessary, and allocable), to:
    a. Provide applicable career services; and
    b. Work collaboratively with the State and Local Boards to establish and maintain the one-stop delivery system. This includes jointly funding the one-stop infrastructure through partner contributions that are based upon: (i) A reasonable cost allocation methodology by which infrastructure costs are charged to each partner in proportion to the relative benefits; (ii) Federal cost principles; and (iii) Any local administrative cost requirements in the Federal law authorizing the partner's program. (This is further described in 20 CFR 361.700).
3) Enter into an MOU with the Local Board relating to the operation of the one-stop system that meets the requirements of 20 CFR 361.500(b);
4) Participate in the operation of the one-stop system consistent with the terms of the MOU, requirements of authorizing laws, the Federal cost principles, and all other applicable legal requirements; and

5) Provide representation of the State and Local Workforce Development Boards as required and participate in Board committees as needed. (20 CFR 361.420)

Each LWDB in the region is in the process of updating their respective One-Stop Partner Memoranda of Understanding and Infrastructure Funding Agreements. The revised MOUs and IFAs will be in place by January 1, 2024, as requested by the NJDOLWD.

Customization of Services for Employers and Jobseekers

Central Jersey Partners are building a service delivery strategy for employers and job seekers that will be utilized in each local area.

First a range of services will be provided to job seekers, that is designed to meet their unique needs related to skill attainment and job placement:

- Assessment
- Plan Development
- Individualized Career Services
- Training Services
- Supportive Services
- Follow-Up Services

This strategy enables CJP's American Job Centers to provide customized services, while encouraging job seekers to remain engaged with the local system beyond credential attainment and job placement. We view this continuum of service model as an innovative service delivery approach that keeps customers engaged, both short and long term.

The strategies listed above not only provide job seekers with accessible services, but they enhance the services available to employers. A consistent regional approach to serving job seekers must be built upon a commitment to better business services. This includes addressing the current and future training needs of employers through various engagement strategies including training, work-based learning opportunities, outreach, and support.

The region's approach to collecting and analyzing Labor Market Information further enhances the partnerships within the business community. We are cognizant that the workforce and economic conditions change constantly. This comprehensive approach will enable the local areas to pivot when necessary.

Strengthening Local Governance

Central Jersey Partners is committed to continuing its work in building workforce systems that are locally driven. This is being accomplished in various ways:

- Revised procurement policies that encourage more competition in local areas for the provision of key One-Stop components including the One-Stop Operation, Career Services, and Youth programs.
- Empower LWDBs to lead Local Governance through oversight and monitoring of the One-Stop System. This includes certification of the American Job Centers and monitoring procured vendors. The LWDBs will provide Technical Assistance to these entities when appropriate.

- Establishing and implementing polices according to Federal and State guidelines, while updating existing policies that may need to be revised.

CJP abide by the local governance policies established by NJ DOLWD as indicated in WIN WD-PY-21-6. The WIN offers an overview of the various entities that contribute to governance and operations in New Jersey's Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) and the nature of the relationships, roles, and responsibilities that must be developed in each LWDA. This policy provides specific details related to the roles and responsibilities of:

- Chief Elected Officials (CEOs)
- Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs)
- Fiscal Agents
- Designated and Hired Staff of LWDBs
- Committees of LWDBs
- One Stop Operators
- One Stop Career Service providers, including youth service providers.

These entities all play an important role in the development and maintenance of the local workforce system and, collectively, must support the full functions expected of LWDBs and local American Job Centers operating in each LWDA.

This regional plan will be reviewed on a regular basis and updated accordingly. Central Jersey Partners views this plan as the main catalyst for setting goals and objectives, that will foster an agile workforce system that effectively serves job seekers and businesses alike.

Vision: To ensure compliance and service excellence through a rigorous collaboration of strategic and operational partners in the region.

Goals:

- To establish and meet regional performance measures (for both job seekers and businesses)
- To convene regional meetings of WDB Chairpersons/Leaders, WDB Committees, and Business Service Teams (according to the established calendar)
- To launch a continuous improvement initiative by conducting regional surveys and focus groups with all workforce system stakeholders: job seekers, businesses, partners, and staff.
- Share resources where appropriate to enhance service delivery and increase efficiency through a potential reduction in administration costs.

Section 1 – Regional and Local Workforce Strategies

Section 1:A – Analysis of Labor Market Information

Please provide a description of your regional labor market and share specific labor market information (LMI) data from your region.

While the Central Jersey Partners are deeply invested in all segments of the workforce and will continue to allocate funds as appropriate to needs, the highest priority populations across the region will include marginalized, underserved, and historically hard-to-serve groups such as recipients of public assistance (such as SNAP, TANF, and more), the re-entry population, and at-risk youth, as well as veterans and the

undereducated and underemployed. Incumbent Workers and Adult Dislocated Workers will also continue to be a focal delivery point for services. Efforts will be made to expand programs targeting TANF and WFNJ recipients to expand co-enrollment in WIOA programs, especially occupational and skills training alongside established Community Work Experience Programs. The region will attempt to enhance outreach efforts to these groups with the goal of increased accessibility to programs and services.

The CP is committed to developing policies that will ensure Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) across the larger area, through the implementation of policies aimed at enhancing & expanding DEI within each of the local areas. While we have always been committed to serving a diverse cross section of communities, we believe that DEI policies and strategies must be memorialized to ensure continuity throughout the region. Central Jersey Partners plans to engage DEI subject matter experts to provide guidance on instituting relevant DEI policies.

Please use these data to identify specific target populations and target sectors and occupations for your plan.

The top five industries in terms of net regional employment comprise 53% of the total civilian employed population age 16 and older in the Central Jersey region.

Industry Sector	# of Job Postings	Net regional employment %
Health Care and Social Assistance	16,478	23%
Retail Trade	6,498	9%
Manufacturing	5,200	7%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	5,164	7%
Educational Services	4,924	7%

The Central Jersey region's existing specialty industry sectors, i.e., categories where the region's performance outpaces that of the correlating national industry sectors, include Transportation and Warehousing, Educational Services, and Science Technology. Within these industries, material moving is the top occupation by location quotient in the transportation sector, while the science industry is dominated by life, physical, and social science occupations.

Central NJ Region Emerging Industry & Occupation Top 5's			
Rank	Industries by Job Growth	Industry Sector Occupations by Job Growth	In-DEMAND Occupations by Job Postings
1	Transportation & Warehousing	Transportation & Material Moving	Registered Nurse
2	Health Care & Social Assistance	Management	Retail Salesperson
3	Administrative Support & Waste Remediation	Business & Financial Operations	Application & Software Developer

4	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	Healthcare Practitioner & Technology	Miscellaneous Manager
5	Construction	Healthcare Support	First-line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers

By job numbers, the 5 top growing industries are Transportation and Warehousing, Health Care and Social Assistance, Administrative Support and Waste Remediation, Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services, and Construction. The 5 top-growing occupations are Registered Nurse, Retail Salesperson, Application/Software Developer, Manager (misc.), and First-line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers.

Required of high demand occupations by employers of the industry sectors identified above.

Top 5 In-DEMAND Skills			
Rank	Industry Specific	Specialized	Soft
1	Nursing	Customer Service	Communication
2	Warehousing	Scheduling	Teamwork/Collaboration
3	Merchandising	Sales	Organization
4	Marketing	Vaccination	Planning
5	Auditing	Project Management	Problem Solving

The most in-demand software skills of 2022, according to NJDOL data, are dominated by the Microsoft Office Suite, with special demand for Excel, PowerPoint, and Word along with Office overall. Rounding out the top 5 skills is SQL, or Structured Query Language, a programming language used for database integration and management.

Top 5 in-demand software skills 2022 (per NJDOL):

1. Microsoft Excel
2. Microsoft Office
3. Microsoft PowerPoint
4. Microsoft Word
5. SQL

The five employers dominating job openings in the region are in the healthcare, higher education, and biology-life science sectors, with the Hackensack Meridian Health and RWJ Barnabas Health networks representing healthcare, Rutgers and Princeton representing education, and Covance representing pharmaceuticals. Combined, these 5 employers advertised 7,434 openings between July 15 and October 12, 2022.

Top 5 employers in region, Q3 2022 by number of job postings (per NJDOL):

1. Hackensack Meridian Health – 2,574 openings
2. Rutgers, the State University of NJ – 1,926 openings
3. Covance Incorporated – 1,114 openings
4. Princeton University – 960 openings

5. RWJ Barnabas Health – 860 openings

How will your region work jointly towards meeting the demands and needs of existing/emerging sectors and occupations?

The Central Jersey Region closely monitors Labor Market trends utilizing several data sources. In addition, each local area leverages its WDB's Business Committees to collect input from businesses regarding industry trends, emerging occupations, workforce proficiency, and economic conditions. These factors are considered when analyzing labor market data to facilitate active customer preparation for current job opportunities, while focusing on the future upskilling needs of regional employers.

How will your region work jointly to target jobseekers and workers to meet these industry needs and support skill development and barrier removal for these individuals? Who are the specific populations that are a priority for service based on the data?

The region plans to develop a customer outreach strategy that will highlight training programs which closely match the needs of the labor sectors previously identified. These outreach efforts will utilize a multi-faceted approach including both in-person and virtual information sessions. Collaboration with community partners including libraries and other community-based organizations will be encouraged. Regional outreach materials will be developed and distributed widely throughout the region. The use of appropriate social media platforms will also be utilized to disseminate program information, by targeting specific audiences, that typically may be hard to reach.

Each local area in the region has developed their own Priority of Service Polices in alignment with WIOA guidelines, as indicated above. Should economic and/or social conditions change, the region is prepared to pivot accordingly and redirect resources as necessary. Appropriate wrap-around services will be provided through partners of respective one stop systems, along with access to any supplemental resources that address the various barriers to customer success. These may include but are not limited to Social Services, Literacy Programs, Health Services, Behavioral Health, Housing, Transportation, Child Care, and access to Technology.

Please provide an overview of how your region engages in ongoing analysis and review of LMI data to track changes and adjust strategies.

How does the region work collectively to gather and disseminate LMI information?

LMI data is compiled from sources such as LinkedIn Insights, DOL data, and Lightcast. Data is gathered locally and compiled through comprehensive discussions and communication channels such as the Garden State Employment and Training Association. LMI data is used for strategic decision making and reviewed by partners quarterly. LMI data is also taken back to industry leaders, employers, and other representatives, to verify the results and trends with lived experience. This review provides critical insight and sparks broader discussion of regional labor market and workforce developments.

How does the region work together to build capacity in utilizing LMI?

CJP utilizes each LWDB's Business Services sub-committee to share and analyze LMI. The committees will conduct regional convenings that will evaluate LMI and provide recommendations to CJP regarding demand occupations, training needs, industry recognized credentials, and educational requirements. In doing so, CJP will continue to take a proactive approach in training customers for current and future career opportunities. CJP is dedicated to building a career pathways system that will consist of various

workforce development strategies including career services, work-based learning, and customized training.

How does this information drive collective regional efforts to support employers, jobseekers, workers, and other workforce stakeholders?

Labor Market Information is used as a facilitator in relationships with employers and jobseekers. The data information is used as a foundation for strategic priorities and helps to frame conversations around various program scope and application, most often influencing decisions made around training initiatives.

What types of staffing and/or resources are shared regionally to drive this work? How are they funded?

Staffing capacity varies greatly by each partner county in the Central Jersey region due to local priorities and funding allocation. Therefore, efforts toward the review and tracking of LMI data is based upon the needs of residents and the oft changing current circumstances of labor market. The process is continually evolving with its environment and the staff that track LMI changes promptly disseminate information which affects all. While staff are made available and adequately allocated toward ongoing LMI analysis and strategy adjustments, current funding levels do not suffice to meet the needs of the region.

Section 1:B – Strategic Priorities

Regional Strategies for Career Seekers:

- Ensure access to the technology required to compete in the job market.
- Ensure lifelong access to education and training to maintain and advance careers.
- Ensure access to relevant LMI to determine current and future needs.
- Build a foundation of workforce services that are adaptable to evolving economic conditions.

Regional Tactics for Career Seekers:

- Conduct region-wide "Career Day" for High School Students modeled off Middlesex County's current activities and utilizing current resources, connections, & frameworks
    - *Engaging parents, targeting graduating students that are not college bound.*
- Execute fundable marketing initiatives, including both traditional social media and organic posting.
- Conduct region-wide training information sessions.
- Create region-wide partnerships with library systems or other community organizations (laptop loaner programs, SkillUp, workshops, etc.)

Regional Business Strategies:

- Ensure businesses and employers retain and grow (in size or in professional development, upskilling, etc.) their current workforce while remaining competitive in the global economy.
- Build a foundation of workforce services that are adaptable to changing economic conditions.
    - *Training/webinars curated specifically for businesses and employers.*

Regional Business Tactics:

- Convene a Regional Business Advisory Summit (Annual)
- Convene Joint Regional Workforce Development Board meeting (Bi-Annual)

    - Supplemented by Bi-Monthly Regional WDB Senior Staff Meetings, and
    - Special Board/Staff meetings as necessary to address collaborative initiatives or coordinated events.
- Convene Regional Business Services meetings (Quarterly)
- Develop work-based learning partnerships (IWT, OJT) with Regional County Colleges (Ongoing/Regular)
- Review Labor Market Information to adjust services based on market conditions (Bi-annual and/or additional as needed)

Please identify the specific areas where regional partners will target regional approaches to support local strategies through shared capacity and/or joint initiatives.

What opportunities exist for shared programs or service delivery at the regional level that support local area implementation?

Regional approaches and initiatives discussed previously are all opportunities for improved programs and service delivery that support and advance each local WDB's implementation. An emphasis will be placed on taking a regional approach to contracts for access to technology and shared services. Central Jersey Partners continually explores opportunities that enhance service delivery, increase operational capacity, and provide cost savings across the region. For example, Business Services are being regionalized by labor sector to eliminate redundancy with employers. A similar approach is being considered with program monitoring. In many cases each local area utilizes the same Eligible Training Providers. A common monitoring tool will be utilized and shared among the regional partners, so that a more efficient approach to conducting site visits is realized.

How might the region set a common vision, goals, and/or specific strategies related to:

Industry Pipelines and career pathways

Vision, mission, goals, and strategies are set at the state level through GSETA initiatives and input from all levels of leadership.

Goal 1 – Increase Access to programs and services through regional outreach, including the use of social media, conduct virtual information sessions, and continue a hybrid model of service provision, both in-person, and virtually.

Goal 2 – Establish a "Continuum of Services Model" that encourages customers to establish career pathways through repeat engagement with American Job Centers, short and long term.

Goal 3 – Enhance existing connections to businesses in the region, to further align their training and hiring needs by establishing and maintaining relevant career pathways.

Goal 4 – Integrate Work-based Learning opportunities by aligning the relevant WDB policies regionally, to create a consistent model for job seekers and businesses alike.

Goal 5 – Convene more regional meetings to measure growth and development of the region's strategies and desired outcomes.

Service delivery, including around ITAs, virtual learning, full range of work-based learning opportunities, supportive services, and job assistance and placement.

The region uses various strategies to prepare customers for demand occupation opportunities. They include ITAs, work-based learning activities, supportive services, career exploration, and job placement assistance.

- Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) — Provide customer access to training programs listed on the Eligible Training Provider's List (ETPL) as approved by the New Jersey Departments of Education, and Labor & Workforce Development. This customer choice option enables job seekers to choose their desired training program, according to their needs and abilities.

- Work-Based Learning Activities — Provides job seekers with several options that provide the opportunity for immediate job placement. These activities allow customers to earn a wage, while learning or enhancing existing skills. On-The-Job-Training (OJT), Transitional Jobs (TJ), Incumbent Worker Training (IWT), and Apprenticeship, are the programs mainly offered through this model. The region participated in technical assistance sessions conducted by the GSETA Institute, providing the LWDBs with cutting edge approaches to implementing WBL strategies.

- Supportive Services — Supportive services are services that are necessary to enable an individual to successfully participate in activities authorized under WIOA sec. 134(c)(2) and (3) (adults and dislocated workers) and sec. 129(c)(2) (youth) and defined in WIOA sec. 3(59). Each LWDB has established local policies for the provision of Supportive Services. These Services include but are not limited to the following:

    1. Linkages to Community Services.
    2. Assistance with Transportation.
    3. Assistance with Child and Dependent Care.
    4. Assistance with Educational Testing.
    5. Reasonable Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities.
    6. Legal Aid Assistance.
    7. Referrals to Health Care.
    8. Assistance with Uniforms and other Work Attire.
    9. Assistance with Books and Fees
    10. Payments for Employment Related Applications & Fees, and Certifications

- Career Exploration and Job Placement Assistance — Customers can access SkillUp NJ to explore career interests and take assessments that will guide them toward the appropriate career pathway. Additionally, each American Job Center offers job placement assistance through Business Services and Case Management Staff. Each AJC has "real-time" job postings that feature current employment opportunities listed by local area, regionally, statewide, and nationally. These postings vary from entry level jobs up to high skilled opportunities.

Please describe how the region will track progress and manage implementation of activities related to common goals and/or specific strategies.

The Central Jersey Partnership has established a meeting schedule for program years 2023 – 2024, which will be composed of the below events and convenings of staff, where progress will be tracked, initiatives will be evaluated, and the planning of activities related to common goals and specific strategies will be discussed.

Regional Operations Meeting - Quarterly (starting in July 2023)

The purpose of these convenings will be to share relevant information and data that impacts the central region of the state. These meetings will provide the opportunity to review regional plan strategies and tactics, as well as measure the progress of new initiatives that have been proposed within.

Regional Business Services Team Meeting - Quarterly (starting in August 2023)

The objective of these meetings will be to share and analyze regional LMI. This will position the LWDBs to strategically offer services that align with current and future training and hiring trends.

Business Advisory Summit - Annual (rotating counties each year, starting in September 2023)

This summit will be based on Middlesex County's Annual Business Summit that was established more than five years ago. A regional summit will highlight best practices, new trends, and highlight the accomplishments of partnering businesses. Additionally, the regional summit will provide insight into the positive impact that the respective WDBs have in each community for job seekers and employers.

Regional Directors Meetings - Quarterly/Monthly (continued)

These meetings were previously established and will continue.

Regional Board Members Meeting - Annual (starting in 2024)

The LWDBs believe that one annual Regional Board meeting will result in better alignment across respective partner organizations.

2023 Central Jersey Partnership Meeting Calendar

Meeting	July	August	September	October	November
Regional Operations	17			16	
Regional Business Services Team		14			13
Annual Regional Business Summit			20		

2024 Central Jersey Partnership Meeting Calendar

Meeting	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov
Regional Operations	15			15		15			21	
Regional Business Services Team		12			13		12			11
Annual Regional Business Summit								18		
Annual Regional WDB Members			20							

Please include details regarding specific partners/stakeholders that will contribute to these efforts, as well as specific in-kind or financial contributions that partners will offer.

CJP is using LMI to identify key industry sectors in the Region, then further drilling down to identify high demand occupations within those sectors. The Region will then target priority populations through comprehensive outreach programs including information sessions and regional "career days" in schools as indicated in the above responses to Section 1:B – Strategic Priorities.

Please describe specific plans for leading and supporting the development of career pathways and industry pipelines at the regional level.

What industry sectors or occupations is the region targeting or prioritizing and why?

CJP is using LMI to identify key industry sectors in the Region, then further drilling down to identify high demand occupations within those sectors. See Section 1:A – Analysis of Labor Market Information, specifically questions pertaining to Labor Market Trends.

How are career pathways strategies aligned with serving identified target populations and priority populations identified in WIOA and New Jersey's state plan (including disadvantaged adults, dislocated workers, youth, and other underserved populations)?

CJP is using LMI to identify key industry sectors in the Region, then further drilling down to identify high demand occupations within those sectors. The Region will then target priority populations through comprehensive outreach programs including information sessions and "career days" in schools.

Establishing career pathways is a major priority for the region. We are working toward building a "Continuum of Service Model" that embraces career pathways and encourages customers to continue access One Stop Services beyond initial job placement. Services include additional training, incumbent worker training, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training opportunities. This model known as "From E-Level to C-Level" encourages customers to access services through American Job Centers by promoting customer to engagement with the local One-Stop System as necessary.

What stakeholders from across local areas are part of these efforts?

CJP collaborates with multiple stakeholders from the region and state. Listed below are the partners we engage with on a regular basis:

- New Jersey Department of Labor & Workforce Development
- State Employment and Training Commission
- Garden State Employment and Training Association
- New Jersey Business Action Center
- New Jersey Council of Community Colleges
- New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Program
- State, County, Municipal, & Group Chambers of Commerce
- County & Municipal Economic Development Offices/Agencies
- Vocational and Technical Schools
- New Jersey Economic Development Authority
- NJ Department of Education

- NJ Department of Higher Education
- Human Services Advisory Committees
- Community & Faith-based organizations
- Consortium of Libraries

How will regional partners engage in and continue this work?

Continued commitment to regional partner engagement has been sufficiently detailed above. In addition, we are mindful that additional partnerships can be forged depending on shifting priorities and changes in the economy. By leveraging the resources and expertise of these partners, we will continue to build a seamless regional workforce development system that encourages innovation, is responsive, and efficient. Building Career Pathways is the main pillar of the region's approach to providing services that serve both job seekers and businesses. This strategy enables us to utilize a variety of approaches including ITAs, Co-Hort Training, and Work-Based Learning Programs. This empowers local areas to "meet customers where they're at" in response to their job training and placement needs.

Section 2 – One Stop Career Center Operations

Section 2:A – Service Delivery and Flow

Please explain how the region will help support the integration of partners, programs, and services across all One Stop centers in the region.

What partner and program relationships can be developed at the regional level to support integration of services across One Stop Career Centers?

There are five American Job Centers within the Central Jersey Partners Region – one in Mercer County, one in Ocean County, one in Monmouth County, and two in Middlesex County – and all service delivery is designed to be uniform across the locations. Some well-established and structurally integrated partners include state agencies such as: Employment Services (ES), the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVR), and the 55+ program; ES specifically collaborates on WIOA Title III services while DVR collaborates on Title IV. Across the region, these partners and their analogues will coordinate resources, programs, and efforts. This will include, but will not be limited to, working with each local County's Workforce Development Board and government administration Economic Development arm, each County's respective educational institutions including Community Colleges, Vocational Technical Schools system, and additional public/private colleges and universities.

What common models or recommendations for operational efforts related to One Stop delivery and flow might be established at the regional level?

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the region has been making efforts to implement a human-centered design/service delivery model, to meet customers where they are. Initially this began with designing a network of satellite locations for extended One-Stop Career Center Services, making use of local partnerships with community-based organizations and public libraries. During and after the pandemic, the emphasis has shifted to expanding virtual services in such a way as to bring services deeper into the community and making them more accessible. These virtual services have included virtual assessments and certifications, online/remote learning, free digital workshops on a variety of relevant workforce readiness topics, and online job fairs and hiring events. The Job Fair format was also revised during the

Health Care Emergency to include Drive-thru Job Fairs. Beyond that, virtual services have expanded staff training and development opportunities, as well, through the GSETA Institute, Workforce GPS, and NJDOL's free mental health-focused workshops.

What mechanisms or resources can be organized regionally to support partner and service integration and coordinated service delivery in an ongoing way?

Across the region, transportation is a significant barrier for many service populations when it comes to attending in-person programs and appointments. In Middlesex County, the Middlesex County Area Transit (MCAT) shuttle helped alleviate the transportation burden for some but was terminated immediately prior to pandemic and has not been resumed. A regional partnership to provide transportation solutions throughout the four CJP Counties would be a welcome resolution, but in practice the endeavor would be logistically difficult and financially nonviable. The focus, instead, will therefore be on expanding virtual services and service delivery modalities, applying telehealth models to customer counseling, and encouraging virtual service delivery whenever possible technological limitations must be considered, as not all customers within service populations have regular access to desktop computers, smart devices, and/or high-speed internet. State and Federal funding for expanding technology access is also periodically available to allow for expansion of laptop lending programs; applying for these opportunities as a regional consortium will allow for more competitive applications and larger collective pools of resources. Virtual learning contracts through service providers such as Aztec Learning, Metrix Learning, and LinkedIn Learning can be negotiated at better rates and deployed on a regional level to a wider customer base.

What other regional partnerships can be leveraged to support partnership and service delivery across the regions One Stop Career centers?

Primarily through Work First New Jersey programs, strong relationships have been formed with various local, state, and national-level entities that target the various priority service populations of the CJP, such as the New Jersey Business Action Center, the Consortium of Community Colleges, the New Jersey statewide Chamber of Commerce, New Jersey Reentry Corporation, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Youth & Job Corps, and the Literacy Partners of Central New Jersey. Local partnerships include family support organizations, food distribution organizations, social services organizations, the Literacy Partners of Central New Jersey, The Father Center of New Jersey, Community Based Organizations, and numerous others. Through these community relationships, the American Job Centers have a perpetual flow of customers, along with triage, case management, and service delivery assistance. By investing in and nurturing these relationships, the CJP can ensure greater community outreach and integration, consistent service delivery with a regular flow of customers, and overall, a better reputation among priority populations.

Please describe how the region will integrate the voice of those who are served into program development, design, and operation. Regional Youth Voice efforts must be described.

The Shared Youth Vision Council is a state-wide body formed by the State Employment and Training Commission, which serves as a platform for WIOA Youth and their service providers to collaborate on developing successful, results-driven education and employment programs and models. Because this is a state entity, regional pathways for collaboration are already well-established. Going further, exit surveys are to be conducted regularly by the One Stop Operators for WIOA program participants and job seekers and by respective business/employer liaisons for employers; efforts will be made to formalize and

standardize these surveys and analyze and exchange results to inform best practices. Strategies to improve response rate to these surveys are being explored.

Please describe any efforts at the regional level to engage and outreach to new and existing partners to enhance service delivery across the region's One Stop Career Centers.

Each member of the Central Jersey Partners has cultivated a local network of community partners providing supportive services, employers and trade organization representatives, and focused resource and advocacy agents. Though many supportive services are delivered locally, Central Jersey Partners will engage regional and/or statewide organizations, as appropriate. Regardless of the regional or local footprint of the provider(s), each CJP local area will create an inventory of supportive services and providers to distribute to staff and customers. By combining each Partner's individual repertoire into a cache of shared resources, the CJP will be able to provide options and fill local level service gaps.

How might partnerships at the regional level enhance and support service delivery related to:

Supportive services: mental health, substance abuse, housing, transportation, childcare services

The CJP will share their respective WDB's policies for support services, share social service resource directories, and offer specialized services that cross over borders, e.g. JARC transportation grants and local transportation services to Six Flags/Great Adventure for summer employment. Each of the local areas has fully executed Memorandums of Understanding with its One Stop Partners. In addition to the mandated partners, there are others included in the MOUs that provide wrap-around services for customers. Include a list of regional one-stop partners in addendum.

Employer engagement: Business/trade organizations, Economic development

The streamlining of business and employer communication channels and coordinated messaging on seamless service/program delivery that transcends county borders within the CJP region will demonstrate mechanisms by which partnerships will be strengthened on the regional level to enhance and support service delivery. As previously stated, CJP will facilitate discussion between Economic Development entities, local and statewide, to enhance communication and lessen duplication of services within respective business communities and industries.

Specific target populations: Youth services, LGBTQIA organizations, organizations promoting DEI.

Working with specific target populations will be a focus of the CJP's internal/staff training and development efforts. The GSETA Institute has offered multiple training programs within this space, as have individual County Human Resources departments.

Section 2:B – Operational Priorities

Please describe any region-wide operations/service priorities that should inform and guide operations/services across local areas.

The process by which region-wide operation and service priorities were developed and their use in informing and guiding local area activities has been discussed throughout Section 1. These answers describe and demonstrate the CJP's opinion of significant, valuable influencing factors that should be considered.

Please describe the supports that the region will offer in supporting regional operations/service priorities and/or common local priorities.

Will the implementation of specific programs or services occur at the regional level?

Specific programs and services that can be deployed at the regional level include enhancements to online learning opportunities such as LinkedIn Learning, Metrix/SkillUp, and other online platforms that may be procured. Further, as stated in Section 1, the expansion of recruiting events, both virtual and in-person, in the form of regional job fairs and wider-reaching virtual hiring events, is a crucial goal for the Central Jersey Partners, with a priority placed on learning from successful pandemic strategies and cooperating to avoid cannibalizing overlapping service populations.

Will the region offer specific funding to support these service priorities?

Because of limitations on funding, compounded by present technical restrictions on joint outcome reporting, it will not be possible for the region to directly pool financial resources across the Central Jersey Partners' WDBs. However, opportunities for collaborative application for additional resources will be pursued, as appropriate. When circumstances dictate as much, there will be a priority on the formation of coalitions and consortia in the pursuit of additional funding via grants to facilitate regional efforts.

Will the region offer specific training to support the implementation of these priorities?

Statewide training through the GSETA Institute will remain the primary source of education on these priorities. Beyond that, specific training aligned to local and regional priorities will be provided as needed by way of in-person and virtual workshops and seminars. Once standard operating procedures have been formalized, they will be written and distributed among the CJP, as a persistent reference.

Will the region support data collection?

While the ability to generate regional reports is as-yet limited by the current databases and software that New Jersey's Workforce Development Boards have access to, each Partner can generate and share their individual local reports and has access to state-wide reports regarding jobseeker activities. Beyond that, services such as Lightcast, LinkedIn Talent Insights, and LinkedIn Recruiter will allow for both in-depth granular and aggregate regional and local labor market data. The CJP will analyze and leverage this data for collaborative endeavors. The CJP will also utilize FutureWorks to gather and analyze local data beneficial to the region.

Please describe any role that the region may play in supporting operations at the local level by coordinating activities related to:

Outreach/recruitment

Because of the proximity of the CJP's respective areas, there is significant overlap in service populations, and customers living on borders of the component Counties, especially, can benefit from having access to services by multiple One-Stop Career Centers. Therefore, to ensure reach captures all job seekers across the region, the CJP will consolidate, where appropriate, outreach and recruitment efforts by way of E-mail, social media marketing, text messaging via GuideByCell, website and online presence, joint events, and more. Over the next two years, the CJP will develop a cohesive and comprehensive regional social media outreach plan, first by creating and promoting a LinkedIn Career page for the Central Jersey Region to consolidate individual efforts and expand reach.

Service delivery related to, e.g., ITAs, work-based learning, and/or supportive services.

The region plans on offering training through a cohort model, that would allow the CJP to extend training opportunities to larger groups of job seekers throughout the program year. The types of training offered through this model would be determined using LMI and input from employers regarding job opportunities they are looking to fill. While the use of ITAs can be effective, the CJP believe that training a group of customers in in-demand occupations will have a greater positive impact on meeting businesses' hiring demands.

CJP also plans on developing a regional strategy for work-based learning activities. While funding for these activities varies in each local area, it will not impede progress in this area. CJP will utilize the NJ DOL's Master Work-Based Learning (WBL) Master Agreement that is currently being developed. This will streamline employers' participation in WBL activities. Furthermore, as described in Section 1, CJP intends to take a larger regional approach to delivering Business Services, including WBL. Regional outreach materials will be developed for both businesses and job seekers, highlighting the benefits of WBL.

Under WIOA, local areas can provide eligible customers supportive services correlated to the services received at the American Job Centers. Typically, these supportive services are provided on an individual basis as determined by customer needs and circumstances. While CJP shares information on community resources, it is unlikely that any sort of regional funding mechanism for the provision of support services will be established, other than what is allowed though WIOA.

Follow-up supports and achievement of successful outcomes for participants.

Please describe opportunities for the region to support programs and/or services related to specific target populations highlighted in the bullets above.

Each LWDB has developed policies that articulate their Priority of Service strategies in accordance with WIOA. These populations include:

- Recipients of Public Assistance
- Veterans
- Formerly Incarcerated
- Homeless
- Differently Abled
- Long Term Unemployed

Section 2:C – Service Expansion and Accessibility in OSCC

Please describe the role of the region in the development/implementation of any technical solutions designed to expand the reach of services provided by local areas.

How might the region support joint development to ensure consistency across the area?

Statewide, all WDB Directors meet on a biweekly basis, using this meeting to generate and discuss solutions to issues, while sharing best practices and procedures. This began during the pandemic, and the demonstrable benefit of such lends itself to continuing these meetings for the foreseeable future. These convenings often include NJDOL partners and other collaborators from across New Jersey who share resources that are relevant to workforce development activities and services.

How might the region support joint training of staff or training with staff in individual local areas?

CJP participates in staff training and development that is provided to all LWDBs statewide through the Garden State Employment and Training Association's Garden State Training Institute's comprehensive course offerings. Additionally, the region utilizes additional training resources offered through USDOL's Workforce GPS, The National Association of Workforce Boards, The National Association of Workforce Development Professionals, and other nationally focused Professional Associations.

Please describe any role the region would take in physically or programmatically expanding the access to facilities, programs, or services.

How would the region ensure support/participation for individuals with disabilities and ensure that any expansion considers diversity, equity, and inclusion?

The primary goal is to ensure that facilities are ADA, PDA, and EEOA-compliant; as specific regulations and requirements change over time, there will be an emphasis on maintaining and updating infrastructure and embracing accommodations as circumstances allow, ideally pre-empting issues before they become liabilities. This will require the continued regular inspection of facilities to ensure compliance with the aforementioned laws. If any issues are identified, the appropriate Partners will be contacted so that remediation can occur. As an example, statewide, the One-Stop Career Centers have all recently been equipped with lactation rooms to meet the needs of nursing individuals. Going further, the CJP will forge and enrich relationships with government and non-government entities that serve individuals with disabilities to enhance available services while also building a referral network that goes beyond the resources afforded to the CJP directly. These relationships include the NJDOL Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, the NJDOL Office of Diversity and Compliance, and the NJDHS Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, as examples of government agencies, as well as local non-profit and community-based organizations like the Easterseals. One method by which these relationships will be strengthened will be through the actions of the respective LWDB's Disability/Abilities Committees.

How would the region include joint training for regional partner/stakeholder training? Please provide insight on efforts to make expansion and any associated materials and training tools accessible for individuals with disabilities.

Per WIOA regulation, the LWDBs must convene certain mandatory committees, among which are disability-focused committees. These Disability/Abilities Committees serve as established pathways by which community needs can be communicated to the WDBs and can be additionally utilized in a collaborative manner across the CJP. Committees can be used to provide technical assistance training, along with virtual workshops and webinars targeting the disabled population. For instance, the Middlesex WDB's Abilities Committee worked together with DVRS in early 2023 to organize virtual "Beyond the ADA" workshops, along with a more substantial neurodiversity-focused event to coincide with Autism Awareness Month, using the Abilities Committee as an avenue for regional collaboration and learning. The region plans to consult with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) subject matter experts to come up with strategies for training not only One-Stop staff and partners but other collaborators in the region.

Please describe the process the region would use in taking a lead role in any form of expansion and how it would work with and inform its individual members and respective LWDBs.

Instead of the four Central Jersey Partner Counties working separately toward individual goals in a haphazard manner, the goal is to collaborate across the region to unify the approach to expanding accessibility. Planning matters such as training initiatives, infrastructural upgrades, program and service delivery protocols, expansion of access to services, and so on, will begin at the regional level then be implemented individually by the Partners.

Please indicate what considerations the region shall make to ensure that service expansion considers new approaches/strategies for potential resolution. This should include, but not be limited to, digital equity and education considerations.

A key consideration in the expansion of virtual services referred to in Section 2:A is digital equity and accessibility. The CJP will prioritize building or redesigning websites such that they are compliant and accessible to people regardless of ability, language, or sensory limitations, from writing in plain language to reach the widest audience to including captions on videos, transcripts of audio, and descriptive text on visual media. To successfully deploy virtual services, consistent and universal access to technology and Broadband service is crucial, making this a significant priority in the local areas. For example, during the pandemic, LWDBs procured hardware such as ChromeBooks, to loan to constituents who lacked adequate technology to access One-Stop Services. These ChromeBooks and similar devices are equipped with AirCards, enabling customers to access no-cost broadband service through the County. In many cases, the local areas partnered with other government agencies, libraries, and community-based organizations to facilitate the distribution of the previously referenced devices. Although the pandemic has mainly abated, the LWDBs continue to offer their respective laptop loaner programs. Going further, initiatives to expand no- or low-cost broadband access to low- and moderate-income residents of the CJP have been proposed at the local level, although these plans are longer term.

Section 2:D – Detailed Partnership and Service Integration

Please describe how regional efforts may assist local areas in building relationships and coordinating with key partners – those articulated in WIOA as required partners, as well as any critical regional partners unique to your area – to move beyond referrals/handoffs to integrated service models for participants and co-enrollment opportunities.

What role has and/or will your region play in leading discussion with specific partners/stakeholders who must be included in local Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) or include in an Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFAs)?

The New Jersey Department of Labor has extended each local area's current MOU and IFA through the end of calendar year 2023. It is anticipated that new MOUs and IFAs will be implemented January 1, 2024. As part of the process, each local area will take the lead in negotiating and drafting revised MOUs and IFAs. Where appropriate One Stop Operators provide support in this effort, serving as the conduit between the LWDBs and One Stop Partners required to sign to the MOU and IFA.

What role has and/or will your region play in helping to negotiate with specific partners/stakeholders to establish agreements with partners/stakeholders, particularly those that have a regional footprint?

Each LWDB has common regional partners that are parties to MOUs and IFAs. Many of these include state agencies such the New Jersey Department of Labor, the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Other common partners include Youth Build, Job Corp., Department of Housing & Urban Development, TANF, SNAP, Employment Services offered through the Wagner-Peyser Act, Trade Adjustment Assistance, Senior Community Service Employment, Migrant& Seasonal Farm Worker Program, Native American Programs, and WIOA Title I Programs including Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth.

Please describe how regional efforts may help to build the capacity for service integration in local One Stop Career Centers through cross-training of staff, provision of technical assistance, sharing of information, etc., and other supports.

Each local area has had internal discussions about cross-training and educating staff. This includes many One-Stop partners such as Employment Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Trade Act, and WorkFirst New Jersey. This effort will be driven by the WDB Directors in each local area who provide oversight to the local workforce system and its partners. Wherever appropriate, communication will be generated by the WDB director and filtered through the WDB to relevant partners. Each WDB guides the direction of their respective local area, specific to their needs as reflected in their local WIOA plans.

Section 2:E – Employer Engagement

Please describe the role the region will play in the Employer Engagement efforts.

How will the region conduct outreach to, as well as develop and maintain relationships with, employers?

Business services staff will liaison employer communications to all regional services staff. Regional partners will also work in tandem with State DOL Industry Pathways liaisons to foster the growth of existing relationships.

What services or programs, if any, will be delivered regionally?

Regional service and program delivery has been previously described, both in Sections 1 and 2. Examples provided thus far include public outreach and educational efforts such as career days and super job fairs covering the geographic region.

What shared costs and capacity will support these regional efforts?

Each local area is limited to the funding as provided and budgets are approved by respective WDBs; system does not allow for direct redistribution of funds. The streamlining of employer communication channels and coordinated messaging on seamless service/program delivery that transcends county borders within the CJP region will constitute shared capacity efforts and subsequent cost-sharing by means of reducing duplicated activities with identical intended outcomes, and consequently providing individual staff greater availability for other projects and responsibilities.

The CJP will work to regionalize services to enhance existing local level output production without pooling resources directly due to funding limitations. Each local area responds accordingly to alternate funding sources that exist, and the CJP will form consortia and coalitions as applicable.

Please describe how the region's efforts will coordinate with local efforts and those of other partners/stakeholders working with employers in the region, including state Business Services activities.

What will be the roles and responsibilities of state partners, the region, LWDBs, and other entities in building coordinated employer engagement strategies and a system of services and supports?

The coordination of Business Services has been, and will continue to be, a primary focus of the Region. The CJP Meeting Calendar (Section 1:B) includes quarterly Regional Business Services Team meetings which will be attended by state and local staff. The Regional Business Services Team meetings will be designed to share best practices, develop innovative strategies, establish service delivery priorities, and coordinate sector-based outreach efforts.

In addition, an Annual Regional Business Summit is also on the CJP Meeting Calendar. Gathering intelligence from the business community is a cornerstone of the CJP engagement strategy.

When appropriate, the Business Reps of the CJP will work together as one team in relation to employer interactions, business development, and job placement activity. They will

- Share ideas, insights and develop a strategy on how best to serve a particular employer(s)/industry within the region.
- Share job leads and designate a Single Point of Contact when a large multi-county employer with significant hiring or training needs. That Rep will become the lead and disseminate job orders, etc. to the regions BSRs to maximize CJP ability to serve the employer and link candidates from across the region to that employer.

What will the flow of employer engagement and services look like? Where will different partners support this flow?

As mentioned above, quarterly team meetings and an annual business summit will form the framework for employer engagement. The goal of these efforts is to support the region's commitment to building strong relationships with business partners to support their recruitment, reskilling, and retention needs.

Please describe how the region might help build employer engagement capacity across and within local areas.

Will the region offer specific funding to support employer engagement activities?

It is unlikely that the four regional partners will combine or regionalize funding for employer engagement activities. However, an effort will be made to develop regional outreach materials, for example, that can be shared among the partners.

Each LWDB leverages WIOA funding to provide Business Services by local staff, coordinating these activities with NJ DOL Business Services Representatives. This tandem approach allows the LWDBs to establish seamless employer engagement activities through a coordinated effort between local and state staff. Such efforts include local/regional hiring efforts, including positive recruitments, job fairs, job postings, and job matching.

CJP and the other WDB regions in New Jersey recently partnered with the New Jersey Business Action Center to enhance business outreach efforts. NJBAC will coordinate the initiative with GSETA and provide access to its vast database of businesses located in New Jersey, including those in the Central

Jersey Region. It is anticipated that this initiative will significantly augment business engagement efforts by educating employers about One-Stop Services, and the role of Workforce Development Boards.

Will the region offer specific training or technical assistance to support the implementation of these priorities?

As with all staff, training for the Business Services Teams will be an on-going priority. The GSETA Institute and GSETA Conference offer business training opportunities, as will the sharing of best practices during the quarterly team meetings.

Will the region support coordinated data collection?

Historically, data collection has been conducted by the NJ DOL and shared with local areas. It is not anticipated that this arrangement will change. Any data provided to the local areas will be analyzed and used to identify labor market trends, and changes in economic conditions throughout the region.

Section 3 – Local WDB Structure & Functions

Section 3:A – Labor and Workforce Development Area Structure

Please describe any role the region will play in support the capacity and development of LWDBs and/or fiscal agents.

By way of convening regular, scheduled meetings and events among the Partners and respective WDBs, the Central Jersey Partners will play a collaborative role in improving the performance, and expanding the capacity, of local WDBs and fiscal agents.

Does the region have any formal role in identifying potential Board members for its local colleagues?

The Central Jersey Region does not have a formal role in identifying Board members for its local colleagues, however, each local Workforce Development Board in the region is individually empowered to make recommendations to respective chief elected officials regarding Board membership. The Central Jersey Partners practice a more conventional approach to identifying potential individuals for any type of engagement of the local boards. The region's role continues to be in the collective strengthening of relationships with major regional employers, such as the RWJ-Barnabas and Hackensack-Meridian Health networks or PSE&G, to encourage the participation of industry leaders in workforce development planning, activities, and strategy.

Does the region have any joint committees to discuss shared matters? How are committees structured and how is business conducted?

Although the region does not have joint committees specific to the central region of the state, initiatives such as the Garden State Employment and Training Association (GSETA), act as the platform for regional and broader state-level cooperation and collaboration about shared matters. This environment enables discussion between members of local-level Boards and committees through activities like conferences, state-wide coalitions, professional development seminars, Lunch-and-Learn workshops, and more. Further, the state of New Jersey is geographically small and dense in population, and as such the State benefits from numerous tools to empower communication between Counties, municipalities, and other local and regional entities.

Does the region provide any training or technical assistance to support LWDB capacity-building (e.g., agreement development, designation)

Training support, and other assistance, is provided to Local Workforce Development Boards more so on the State level than the regional level in the great state of New Jersey, the second most populated territory in the nation. The proximity and co-location to colleagues allow for more frequent opportunities to support capacity building on a wider scale. The unique set of circumstances under which the New Jersey Workforce ecosystem operates can again be seen through the Garden State Employment and Training Association (GSETA) and its subsidiaries. Each LWDB is represented through their leadership team's participation in this state-wide alliance, which serves as a clearinghouse for solution building, consensus agreement development, and strategy alignment. The sharing of resources such as procurement documents, for example use-case studies, are practiced on a continuous basis. GSETA serves as a hub for all LWDB's in the state and functions as a collective training provider for staff development, activity alignment, policy development, and technical assistance.

Section 3:B – Procurement of Operator and Services

Please describe any role the region has or intends to have in assisting its members in the procurement of a One Stop Operator, One Stop Career Services provider, or Youth Services providers, e.g., supporting procurement procedures, sharing procurement materials, managing lists of potential vendors, and/or supporting the development of scopes of service.

Commonly held principles and standards are developed through proactive collaboration on the state level through GSETA leadership and are not designed to be based on WIOA Region, again due to the compact nature of the State as a whole. State and Local Workforce Development Board members meet regularly through GSETA committees, NJDOL project teams, and Statewide Training & Employment Commission meetings. The Central Jersey Region functions as a collaborative team of supports and resources which are readily available to one another and most often address the effects of nearby and/or overlapping demographics, geography, industries, sectors, and business entities. While these characteristics resemble those measured at the state level, the role of the Central Jersey Region is to serve as auxiliary advocates based on the specific traits of the defined area boundaries established by the SETC and promulgated according to WIOA mandate. Some examples of shared resources are provided in the response to the questions included in the immediately prior subsection A.

Section 3:C – Oversight and Monitoring

Please describe any role or support the region will play in oversight and monitoring of programs/services within the region, e.g., monitoring of shared providers, facilitating sharing of results, or supporting shared analysis of individual LWDB monitoring reports

Descriptions of the role(s) performed by the region can be found in the response to the second and third questions of Section 3:A, as well as the response provided above for subsection B prompt. Examples of shared supports comprising the role(s) are demonstrated throughout the regional plan's previous answers in this section as well as Sections 1 & 2.

Please describe how oversight and monitoring efforts that are conducted or culled at the regional level are shared with LWDB members and staff.

Please reference Section 3, subsection A, question 2, and subsection B. To elaborate further, GSETA oversees and monitors the activities of the localities within the Central Jersey Region, by way of dedicated Operations, Monitoring, Youth program, Fiscal, MIS, and other state-wide committees where representatives from each County periodically meet and exchange best practices. The existing structure of state and regional levels of decision making and efforts are conducted with both regional and local, members and staff, having a seat at the table. GSETA also collects regional data and generates reports which are then distributed among the CJP and other invested parties through digital means such as e-mail, newsletters, and the GSETA website. These state-level processes continue to streamline oversight and monitoring efforts by reducing the breadth of top-to-bottom communication streams and minimizing the amount of time required for messages to transpire. The result of which is a culture that is transparent and a network of informed professionals which lessens the number of individually dedicated local board staff work hours previously dedicated toward duplicated tasks.

Section 3:D – Performance Measures and Accountability

Please describe any role or support the region will play in helping LWDBs to track and measure local levels of performance, e.g., training, shared tracking, etc.

Per NJDOL regulations, the CJP region is not permitted to use third-party databases for measurement and/or tracking of performance levels across the region beyond the approved AOSOS and FutureWorks' Performance Matters software programs. With this restriction in mind, the Central Jersey Partners will work collaboratively to improve data management and reporting capabilities through participating in the State Workforce Modernization Core Committee, which was convened by the NJDOL to identify a new database system for procurement across the state. The Director of the Middlesex County Workforce Development Board will serve as the region's representative on this state-wide Committee.

The CJP will explore the possibility of adopting a new approach to using existing, approved database management systems to generate regional reports measuring service levels, enrollments, exits, carryovers, and demographics. Central Jersey Partners have initiated conversations with the software manufacturer to gauge their interest in the proposed request. The CJP maintains the belief that bypassing technical restrictions could allow for the aggregation of data points, therefore producing the components needed to calculate regional performance levels, solely through internal efforts. While the proposal is still in its initial phases, internal discussions on future implementation have included various ideas including the annual or biannual collection of these regional data points to be analyzed for the purposes of illustrating correlation measurements between labor market data and area enrollment rates, program reports, customer migration patterns and other performance metrics as available.

Section 3:E – Training and Development

Please describe any role that the region will take in training and development.

How will the region support staff and partners in developing their practice and aligning capacity with the expectations of state, regional, and local plan priorities (training, technical assistance, conference attendance)?

Please reference previous Section 3, subsection A – C responses for descriptions and examples of shared supports, best practices, and general priority alignment. As has been established thus far, most New

Jersey's activities and practices are more frequently performed on a state level, through the Garden State Employment and Training Association. This approach has, and will continue to, produce more efficient and effective outcomes for the state. Additional details can be found throughout this publication.

Who will regional training and development opportunities target and why?

State training (also known as Regional in New Jersey) as well as development opportunities will target managers, mid-, and lower-level staff of LWDB's, according to NJDOL funding guidelines and best practices. The strategic goal of training and development opportunities is to improve processes, procedures, and protocols that best allow the CJP to serve the public and attain collective and individual goals pertaining to workforce and economic development growth. Training opportunities will also be extended to contracted One-Stop Operators and other partner entities such as Eligible Training Providers, employers, and resource agencies, as appropriate, to facilitate collaboration and cooperation.

What specific topics will training and development opportunities cover?

Based on past topics of professional development conferences and training through the GSETA Institute, WorkforceGPS, USDOL/NJDOL, SETC, and Workforce180, as well as existing partnerships with GSETA, the NJ Business Action Center, the NJ Economic Development Authority and others, the following topics which were covered in 2022, will be expanded and added to.

<u>2021 GSETA Annual Conference</u>

Webinar development and delivery, Customer Service, Human Resources, Data Systems, Community Outreach, Transformation Leadership, Leadership Styles & Strategies, Motivational Techniques, Documentation Skills, Personalized Learning, National Workforce Policy, Client Partnerships, Training Services Investments, Health & Wellness.

<u>WorkforceGPS Webinars</u>

Co-Enrollment Strategies, DEIA (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility) Strategies for WDB Boards & Entities, Training Employment Guidance, Outreach & Marketing, TTA (Training Technical Assistance) Workshops, WIOA Funding Sources, Employment & Case Management, etc.

<u>US&NJ DOL/SETC</u>

Work-Based Learning: Candidate and Employer Processes, Lead Generation, Prospecting, Contracting, Invoicing, Fiscal Trackers. WIOA Program Oversight and Development, SkillUp Staff Training, Individual Employment Plans (IEP), Individual Service Strategies (ISS), Measurable Skill Gains (MSG), Federal Bonding, Adult and Dislocated Workers, Services for Individuals with Disabilities, Governance and Planning, Performance Accountability, Career Pathways and Industry Partnerships, Services for Youth, One-Stop Operations

<u>Workforce180</u>

Business Services, Case Management, Leadership Development, Motivational Interviewing, Racial Equity, Reentry Services, Time Management, Business for Women, OSY/ISY Youth Worker.

<u>Metrix Learning: SkillUp</u>

The thousands of courses in Metrix Learning's SkillUp course catalogue – which are available to all staff at no cost – cover a wide range of topics from soft skills like communication, problem solving and mediation, managing customer relationships, and time management, to technical, credential-aligned skills like project management, data analysis, and various Microsoft certifications. Over 100 ETPL Industry Recognized Credentials.

How will individual LWDBs contribute to training agendas and costs?

Per federal statute, 1% of WIOA budgets is to be allocated to staff training and development. Each local area will follow state and federal procurement procedures for securing additional training services in accordance with this funding allowance while also investigating and sharing additional no-cost resources should they be discovered. All local WDB directors throughout the State of New Jersey contribute to and collaborate on developing training and conference agendas through the Executive Committee of GSETA.

Please describe how the region will identify and secure training and development partners, safeguard against conflicts of interest, and ensure that suitable firewalls are in place.

Please refer to all prior Section 3 responses referencing the activities and operations of the Garden State Employment and Training Association. To reiterate and expand upon the previously provided answers, each local area will follow their local, state, and federal procurement processes for the securing of training providers. Additional no-cost resources such as those conducted by USDOL and WorkforceGPS trainings will be utilized in addition to the occasional, no-cost, workshops provided by NAWDAP, NAWB, and the GSETA Institute. Supplementary resources such as NJDOL hybrid technical assistance programs and auxiliary training opportunities will also be leveraged for the purposes outlined in this prompt. Further, each local area recently completed an annual procurement training through GSETA Institute addressing conflicts of interest and firewalls, etc. This exercise will continue to be followed each program year.

Please describe any specific learning platforms and/or online tools and resources that the region will draw on to support training and development.

Through GSETA and other local initiatives, the CJP will have access to numerous online learning platforms & tools including SkillUp, WorkforceGPS, and various one-off or occasional webinar and workshop providers. Central region partners will explore options to expand their repertoire of virtual learning platforms and curricula through the pursuit. Descriptions of the learning platforms and online tools referenced thus far can be found on the respective websites of the educational providers and government entities.

Section 3:F – Regional and Local Plan Development

Describe process to create regional and local plans, in respective plans, and provide assurances that it was an open and transparent process, including, the following:

List and describe any meetings of workgroups, taskforces or similar efforts. Documentation of these meetings, including minutes and attendees, must be maintained regionally or locally. Include a list of the participants and their organizations. (This should include representatives of LWDBs, LWDB staff, fiscal agent staff, local elected officials, local public entities, regional and local economic development partners, employers and employer organizations, WIOA/One Stop service providers and partners, such as Adult Education and Literacy providers, community colleges, NJ Industry Partnerships and other entities with a stake in the local workforce system and plan.)

Describe the process used by the region and the LWDBs to make available copies of the proposed local plan to the public, through electronic and other means such as public hearings and local news media; ensuring that the document was made available in accessible formats.

Regional & Local Plans will be published in both print and online press outlets in accordance with WIOA regulations. In addition, plans will be posted on each partner county's WDB government webpage, shared through multi-media channels, and distributed to members of the local boards of the central region of New Jersey for review and feedback. Throughout the planning process, several stakeholder engagement meetings were held to empower the involvement of employers, higher educational institutions, and related partners, in the process of proactively responding to the anticipatory needs and concerns of those entities, and their employees.

The CJP hopes to see the growth of State's capacity to provide not only, more inclusive, accessible copy formats for the draft to be provided through, but also a dedicated 'regional' partner's section of the State site that could act as the lead authority for the maintenance and upkeep of contact information, plans, and related documents for public access. Similar to the Career Services Support Form, comments and feedback could be submitted through and funneled to the appropriate designated staff using a statewide digital platform.

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

During the planning process, stakeholder meetings were held in advance of the writing stages of the Plan to allow for early strategic guidance and input from representatives of business, labor organizations, and education. The status of the plan has been and will continue to be regularly mentioned in open public WDB meetings, which themselves are an avenue by which the public may offer their feedback for direct review by the CJP – whether by way of e-mail, a comment box, or other web-based submission form.

The Central Jersey Partnership hosted their first stakeholder engagement meeting in October of 2022.

Describe any additional regional and/or local requirements or processes for public comments. Provide a list of stakeholders who were notified of the opportunity for public comments in both regional and local plans. Include as an attachment to the finalized plans any such comments including those that represent disagreement with the plan.

Plans should be viewed as system-wide/community documents. To that end, it is expected that any resulting document is not the sole work of any individual or a single entity. Please ensure that the plans highlight the ways in which community partners at the regional and local levels were involved in the development of plans and resulting documents. This joint effort should be ongoing and documented and not based solely on a vote of approval prior to submission of a completed document.

Section 3:G – Additional Elements

Regions and LWDBs may include any additional elements to the local plan that they believe are relevant that do not fit within the framework outlined above. To retain formatting and order of elements, all additional sections should begin with this item number and be placed here at the end of the plan.

One of the strategic priorities of the Central Jersey Partnership for the next 3 program years is to increase public education and awareness of the local workforce system and services. Through working towards establishing a local/regional method of measuring and accessing performance benchmarks, we aim to capture information that can be used to portray the qualitative attributes of the businesses, workforce, job seekers, and community that can be leveraged in telling the narrative of the CJP. We plan to use demographic measurements, such as DEI diversity, equity, and inclusion, to tell Central Jersey Region's story from a high-level perspective, helping to convey the breadth of services available and the resulting impact on the lived experience of residents and businesses. The goal is to initiate broader conversation and attract greater engagement through familiarizing residents with the programs and resources offered, as well as testimonials from people they know or businesses they recognize, to break down any misunderstanding or existing stigmas.

This Regional Plan demonstrates Central Jersey Partnership's objective to develop policies, deliver services, and monitor compliance in a coordinated manner. By using this plan for strategy implementation it is anticipated that administrative costs will be reduced among the partners by sharing resources, including staff, facilities, outreach, and recruitment.

Central Jersey Partners
Regional Plan Modifications

ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT LABOR MARKET CONDITIONS

Focus on the evolving needs of the logistics and transportation industries

The industry employment in the Central Region has not changed significantly since the 2023 plan, one notable change is the increase in the employment of Transportation and Warehousing. While this is not a significant increase, it mimics the increase of Central Jersey residents seeking to obtain their Commercial Driver's License (CDL). Residents are increasingly pursuing CDL credentials due to the short training period and the high earning potential. With the Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics (TDL) industry expanding across the region, many see CDL training as a practical pathway to stable employment. This also matches the data that by 2032, there is expected to be a 24.6% increase in Transportation and Warehousing for the Central Region.

NAICS + Industry Sector	Units	Average Annual Employment	Average Annual Wages	Total Wages	Percent of Private Employment
62 Health care and social assistance	13,805	184,652	$67,808	$12,520,933,355	19.0%
44 Retail trade	7,546	118,683	$42,990	$5,102,182,881	12.2%
54 Professional and technical services	9,730	93,417	$133,978	$12,515,817,356	9.6%
72 Accommodation and food services	5,713	84,792	$29,781	$2,525,232,507	8.7%
56 Administrative and waste services	4,506	75,264	$57,144	$4,300,871,989	7.8%
48 Transportation and warehousing	2,181	69,896	$56,329	$3,937,154,617	7.2%
31 Manufacturing	2,037	56,242	$100,017	$5,625,160,004	5.8%
42 Wholesale trade	3,328	48,537	$94,470	$4,585,287,120	5.0%
23 Construction	5,829	48,322	$89,113	$4,306,105,577	5.0%
81 Other services, except public administration	6,067	40,171	$52,821	$2,121,880,549	4.1%

A notable business that has come to the Central Region, Monmouth County, is Netflix. Not only will this allow the Central Region and its residents to be exposed to the film industry, it will also allow for the creation of jobs from a Production Assistant to Set Construction to Electrician but also the need for supplies to be brought to locations through the use of the Transportation, Distribution and Logistics industry.

FILM AND DIGITAL MEDIA

Netflix Fort Monmouth project is an East Coast flagship studio project on a 292-acre parcel, planned at over one million square feet, with 12 soundstages plus backlot, office, and production support space. NJEDA states the full facility is planned to open in 2028, and the state is framing it as a source of good paying construction and permanent jobs. (SOURCE: NJEDA, May 8, 2024)

The Netflix Fort Monmouth studio is not just a project, it is a demand generator for an entire production ecosystem (crew, vendors, post-production, logistics, creative talent). The opportunity is to build a regional workforce pipeline aligned to that demand, consistent with the WIOA sector strategy, career pathways, and employer-led design. It's projected to generate thousands of jobs across occupations, not just creative roles. (i.e. electricians, carpenters, drivers, IT, and accounting, just to name a few.)

NJ is scaling this through incentives and workforce programs like NJ Film Works grants (training and apprenticeships. (SOURCE: tworiverstimes.com, October 24, 2025) Current educational and training assets within Monmouth County includes Brookdale Community College's NJ Film Academy programming (entry-level film training, production workflow, set protocols; Monmouth County Vocational School District's career academies (technical pipeline, which can be adapted to media production pathways), and is home to the Communications High School, which states it is New Jersey's only full-time four-year career academy dedicated exclusively to communication and media arts, with concentrations including film, TV broadcasting, and audio production. [SOURCE: brookdalecc.edu, Brookdale Leads the NJ Fil Academy Initiative, October 10, 2024] Middlesex County's key assets encompass Middlesex College's NJ Film Academy credentials tied to industry pathways through a strong and direct NJ Film Academy. Middlesex County Magnet Schools provide specialized training in film and digital media at the secondary (high school career & technical education level, as well.

While this development remains in its early stages, the Central Region is strategically positioned to respond to emerging demand generated by the film and digital media industry. The region will leverage existing workforce development systems, including WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs, as well as WorkFirst New Jersey (WFNJ), to support the development of a skilled talent pipeline aligned with industry needs. Through a coordinated regional approach, partners will expand and align training offerings, including those connected to the New Jersey Film Academy network and related media and production programs, to ensure residents can access relevant, demand-driven career pathways.

The Central Region is committed to strengthening regional partnerships among community colleges, workforce development boards, employers, and industry stakeholders to support work-based learning opportunities, including internships, work experience, and on-the-job training and youth work experience (Summer and Year-Round) opportunities. Emphasis will be placed on both creative and technical occupations, including production support, skilled trades, logistics, and administrative functions that are essential to the film production ecosystem. These efforts will ensure that residents are equipped with the skills necessary to obtain and retain sustainable employment, while supporting the long-term growth of this emerging industry section within the region.

HEALTHCARE

In addition to emerging industries such as film and digital media, the Central Jersey region continues to prioritize the advancement of healthcare career pathways as a core component of its sector strategy. Healthcare remains one of the largest and fastest-growing industries across Monmouth, Middlesex, Ocean, and Mercer counties, with sustained demand for both clinical and non-clinical occupations. The region recognizes healthcare as a critical pathway to sustainable employment, offering opportunities for career advancement through stackable credentials and clearly defined career ladders. The Central Region is home to several large healthcare systems and organizations that serve as major employers and critical partners in workforce development efforts. These systems contribute significantly to regional employment and play a vital role in shaping training needs, career pathway design, and workforce demand across clinical and non-clinical occupations.

Through a coordinated regional approach, the four counties are working collaboratively to strengthen and expand healthcare workforce pipelines by aligning education, training, and workforce development systems with employer demand. Partnerships with major healthcare systems, educational institutions, and workforce development entities support the development of comprehensive career pathways that include entry-level, mid-skill, and advanced occupations. These pathways encompass roles such as Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA), Patient Care Technicians (PCT), Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN), Registered Nurses (RN), Medical Assistants, EKG Technician (CET), Phlebotomy Technician (CPT), Surgical Processing Technician (SPT), and allied health professionals, as well as non-clinical positions in administration, billing, and healthcare support services.

Regional collaboration includes leveraging community colleges and training providers to deliver industry-recognized credentials, integrating Work-Based Learning opportunities such as clinical placements, inter/externships, and on-the-job training, and utilizing WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth funding, as well as WorkFirst New Jersey (WFNJ), to support participant access to training and supportive services. The region also continues to engage employers to inform curriculum development, identify in-demand skills, and create direct pipelines to employment.

The Central New Jersey Region continues to actively work together to enhance healthcare pathways through shared strategies, including the alignment of training programs, expansion of credentialing opportunities, and coordination of outreach and recruitment efforts. This regional approach ensures consistency in service delivery, reduces duplication of efforts, and maximizes resources across the workforce system.
These efforts position the Central Jersey region to meet the growing demand for healthcare professionals while providing residents with access to high-quality training, career advancement opportunities, and sustainable employment. By strengthening partnerships and aligning workforce strategies with industry needs, the region is advancing a comprehensive and responsive healthcare workforce pipeline.

Key regional partnerships, including collaboration with major healthcare systems such as Robert Wood Johnson Barnabas Health (RWJBH) and other regional providers, further support the development of demand-driven training models and career pathways aligned with industry needs.

TRANSPORTATION & WAREHOUSING

The Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics (TDL) sector is a critical and expanding industry across Mercer, Middlesex, Ocean, and Monmouth Counties, with projected regional growth of approximately 24.6% by 2032. A key driver of this growth is the increasing demand for Commercial Driver's License (CDL) holders, including Class A and B drivers, to support freight movement, last-mile delivery, warehousing operations, and regional supply chain activity. The region's proximity to major transportation corridors—including the New Jersey Turnpike, Interstate 95, Route 1, and access to port and distribution networks—positions it as a strategic hub for logistics and transportation employment.

In Middlesex County, the presence of major warehousing and distribution centers, coupled with strong highway connectivity, continues to drive demand for CDL drivers, dispatchers, and logistics coordinators. Mercer County benefits from its central location and access to both northern and southern markets, supporting growth in regional distribution and increasing demand for transportation-related occupations. Monmouth County is experiencing expansion tied to both logistics activity and emerging industries, further increasing the need for CDL-certified workers to support goods movement and service delivery. Ocean County, while more geographically dispersed, is seeing growth in regional delivery services and local distribution networks, though workforce access is impacted by more limited public transportation infrastructure.

Across all four counties, housing affordability and availability remain critical factors influencing workforce participation in the TDL sector. Rising housing costs, combined with the location of many logistics' facilities in industrial or suburban areas, create barriers for workers who must commute longer distances to access employment opportunities. This challenge is particularly pronounced for entry-level CDL drivers and warehouse workers, who may face financial constraints related to transportation, fuel, and housing stability.

To address these challenges, regional workforce strategies emphasize expanding access to CDL training programs, including employer-informed training models and credential attainment aligned with industry needs. Additionally, supportive services—such as transportation assistance, mileage reimbursement, and housing referrals—are being integrated into workforce programming through WIOA and WorkFirst New Jersey (WFNJ) to reduce barriers to employment in addition to Career Pathway Enabling Services to provide job readiness, workplace behaviors, digital literacy, and Adult Basic Education (ABE). Regional collaboration continues to focus on aligning workforce development efforts with transportation planning and housing considerations to ensure that jobseekers can access,

retain, and advance in high-demand TDL occupations. (SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Employment Projections – Transportation and Warehousing Sector; Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers (SOC 53-3032). New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOL), Labor Market)

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholder engagement for the Central Jersey Partners Regional Plan modifications was conducted in alignment with WIOA requirements for regional planning and included a broad range of partners representing key industries and workforce system stakeholders. Engagement efforts included employers, community colleges, vocational and technical schools, community-based and faith-based organizations, state agency partners, and business representatives reflective of the region's priority sectors, including Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics (TDL), Healthcare, and emerging industries such as film and digital media.

Input gathered through this process was informed by current labor market trends, including continued growth of the TDL sector and the increasing demand for Commercial Driver's License (CDL) training, as well as new economic drivers such as the development of the Netflix production facility in Monmouth County. Stakeholders provided critical feedback on workforce needs, training capacity, and opportunities to align education and training programs within industry demand, including pathways connected to media production, skilled trades, and logistics occupations that support film production.

Stakeholder engagement specific to healthcare sector included collaboration with regional healthcare systems, community colleges, training providers, and workforce partners across the Central Region. These stakeholders provide input on workforce demand, in-demand occupations, and necessary skills to support both clinical and non-clinical roles. Feedback informed the development and continued alignment of healthcare career pathways, including credential-based training, work-based learning opportunities, and employer driven program design, ensuring that workforce strategies remain responsive to industry needs.

This collaborative engagement process ensured that the Central Jersey Partners Regional Plan modifications are grounded in data-driven decision-making and reflect a coordinated regional approach to career pathway development, sector strategies, and workforce system alignment. Stakeholders input directly informed the identification of priority industries, the expansion of training offerings, and the strengthening of partnerships necessary to support residents in obtaining and retaining long-term sustainable employment.

REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

A recent review of performance outcomes and case management practices across the Central Region identified the need for enhanced technical assistance, strengthened data validation practices, and continued alignment with NJDOL guidance. The region remains committed to continuous improvement of performance outcomes in accordance with WIOA performance accountability measures, including employment, credential attainment, measurable skill gains, and retention. Ongoing collaboration with NJDOL supports through technical training, supports the implementation of updated guidance and reinforces consistency in program delivery, documentation, and reporting across all partner programs.

In response, the Central Region has implemented targeted strategies to improve the accuracy, completeness, and timeliness of data entered into the State's Case Management system (AOSOS). Emphasis has been placed on ensuring that all services and activities provided are fully documented and supported by appropriate source documentation, that participant files are complete and audit-ready, and that case notes clearly reflect the sequence of services, participant progress, and outcomes. These efforts include reinforcing same-day or timely data entry standards, strengthening internal controls related to documentation integrity, and ensuring alignment between data files and system records.

To support sustained performance improvement, the region has institutionalized ongoing monitoring and quality assurance practices, including routine desk audits, file reviews, and targeted technical assistance. Additional staff training is provided as needed to address identified gaps and ensure adherence to established policies and procedures. These continuous improvements efforts are further aligned with the region's evolving sector strategies, including high-demand industries such as Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics (TDL) and emerging sectors such as film and digital media. By strengthening data quality, aligning services to industry demand, and reinforcing accountability systems, the Central Region is positioned to improve performance outcomes and support residents in achieving sustainable employment.

INTEGRATION OF NEW POLICIES OR INITIATIVE

One of the priorities that the Central Region has identified is the need for Adult Literacy which also includes a Digital Literacy component. Throughout the region, whether through an NJDOL funded program or County funded, an iteration of an Adult Literacy program has been created or expanded upon to include digital literacy. These programs are designed to promote equal opportunity, support upward mobility, and foster economic fairness by equipping individuals with essential digital skills.

The central region has also participated in collaborating with other WDB's to tap into the Digital Equity Training Grants through public libraries. This initiative aided those within the WorkFirst New Jersey populations.

A common challenge faced by organizations working to help individuals secure employment is that many job seekers lack basic computer skills. While they may be proficient on their phones, they often struggle with using desktop computers. This gap in digital literacy is frequently accompanied by limited interpersonal skills and difficulty adapting to a professional work environment. As a result, organizations are not only teaching technical skills but also guiding individuals on how to behave, communicate, and present themselves professionally. This includes lessons on workplace etiquette, responsibility, and respect for the opportunities received. To address these challenges, many organizations are emphasizing internship opportunities, which allow them to assess fit and provide hands-on training to help individuals develop the skills needed to succeed in their roles. Programming also allows career counselors to refer participants to partner programs, such as GED, training vendors, or directly to the Business Services Manager, who can place clients in direct contact with businesses with whom a strong relationship has been built.

The Central Region has also put an emphasis on continuing to implement a Summer Youth Work Experience Program (SYEP) as well as year-round paid work-based work experience opportunities for youth participants within the Opportunity Youth Program (OYP), supporting both in-school and out-of-school youth ages 16 to 24 years of age. Programming gives participants valuable work readiness training that includes resume building, financial literacy, and soft skills. Youth will also learn essential job skills and basic workforce etiquette that slows them to successfully transition into the workforce beyond the summer. This program is also used to engage with local businesses and community organizations. Through this initiative, partnerships with existing partners are strengthened and new partnerships are created. ‘

The Central region continues to focus on strengthening the linkage between customers and employers by creating a marketing plan with each partner, engaging employers in the development of relevant employment events, and targeting business and industries that are not involved in the workforce system so that their needs can be met.

ALIGNMENT WITH STATE GOALS

The New Jersey Combined State Plan states the following:

- Expand and develop pathways and services that open up access to career opportunities for all New Jerseyans, particularly for historically disadvantaged populations, including students, workers, and jobseekers.

- Aligning the systems and supports serving business and those supporting career-seeking matching talent and supporting training to meet the skill and labor needs of employers, specifically those that are providing good jobs and career opportunities.
- Strengthen public infrastructure to both support and enforce high quality employment opportunities and practices including fostering protection for workers and supporting a competitive business climate, through the implementation of new technologies and streamline processes.

MERCER COUNTY

The Mercer County Workforce Development Board's (WDB) strategic vision aligns with the vision and goals of the State and regional Central Jersey Partners (CPJ) plans. The Mercer WDB is committed to developing a highly competitive workforce that will allow employers to attract, retain, and grow area businesses. Through the provision of policy development, guidance, planning, and oversight, the Mercer WDB will ensure that the Workforce Development system partners are responsive to the needs of jobseekers and employers in this County through four (4) Core Values.

Core Value 1 – Driving Investments Based on Industry Needs - The WDB, primarily through its committees, will continue to work with the workforce development partners to ensure that the services and activities of the workforce system are meeting the needs of employers.

Core Value 2 – Meeting Jobseekers Where They Are - Addresses the need to identify key industries in the Mercer County region that characterize occupation growth opportunities where county citizens may realize full-time employment.

Core Value 3 - Equipping the Workforce for Employment - Addresses the need to increase and strengthen communication and collaboration regarding employment requirements and prospects between the WDB and local and regional employers. This will be accomplished by the development of a communication plan with a focal message linking local and regional employers to the WDB as the potential primary provider of their workforce for the greater Mercer County area.

Continued collaboration with local Chambers of Commerce and the Industry Partnerships are both essential to equipping the workforce. Strengthening and leveraging relationships with local businesses in growth sectors and our educational institutions shall continue to be a priority.

Core Value 4 - Increasing System Accountability - WIOA and Wagner-Peyser programs are both held accountable to standards set by Performance Measures. Each local area is bound by standards set by USDOL and the State. The WDB looks

beyond the required measures to identify additional measures that may be necessary to evaluate vendor performance.

MIDDLESEX COUNTY

Middlesex County's Office of Workforce & Career Development (OWCD) is fully committed to advancing upward mobility, equitable opportunity, and long-term career success for every resident. OWCD prides itself on its client-centered model, providing upward mobility for Middlesex County residents. OWCD continues to build a comprehensive workforce ecosystem that supports individuals at every stage of their education and career journey's while responding directly to emerging labor market needs.

At the core of our approach is a commitment to providing training, credentials, and work-based learning opportunities in New Jersey's and Middlesex County's most in-demand and high-growth sectors, including Life Sciences, Biotechnology, Advanced Manufacturing, Health Care, Artificial Intelligence & Data Science, Clean Energy, Construction & Skilled Trades, and Transportation, Distribution, & Logistics (TDL). OWCD aligns all service strategies with regional employer demand, real-time labor market intelligence, and the needs of both jobseekers and businesses.

To achieve this, Middlesex County leverages a strong and coordinated network of partners. The County's Department of Economic Development, training providers, community-based organizations, nonprofit agencies, employer coalitions, and K-12 and higher education institutions collaborate to provide client-centered services and upward mobility. These partnerships are central to our ability to expand access to career pathways, support wrap-around services, and bridge clients from training to employment.

OWCD's service model emphasizes career pathway development, ensuring residents can enter, advance, and thrive within high-growth industries through accessible on-ramps such as individualized career counseling, skill assessments, digital literacy supports, occupational training, credential attainment, paid work experience, incumbent worker training, and apprenticeships. By expanding supportive services—such as transportation and childcare, etc. as well as Career Pathway Enabling Services to provide foundational skills to forge a pathway into occupational training and/or employment, it aids in guiding clients towards the path of attaining their educational and career goals,—OWCD removes barriers to participation and ensures residents can fully engage in training and employment opportunities. Furthermore, OWCD collects data through surveys from job seekers, employer partners, training providers, and other stakeholders to identify areas for continuous improvements in processes.

MONMOUTH COUNTY

The Monmouth County Workforce Development Board (MCWDB) remains committed to providing resources and support services to expand the needs of our workforce and fulfill the hiring demands for employers. MCWDB's strategic priorities are effectively determined

by framework derived from labor market data, trends, and projections and encompass fundamental market successes such as Basic Employment Skills Academy (BESA), Summer Youth Work Experience Program (SYWEP), and Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) opportunities.

These strategic priorities align essential partnerships with Brookdale Community College, and cooperative initiatives with our training vendors, to assist in preparing our customers for employment opportunities that currently exist, as well as expanding opportunities coming to Monmouth County. The largely anticipated Netflix's investment ($1Billion) has facilitated the demand for MCWDB's essential services to upskill and train our customer for a widespread range of employment opportunities to include but not limited to construction, commercial driving, food services, and retail within Netflix locations and in the surrounding areas.

These modifications highlight MCWDB's strategic outlook and operating initiatives that will strengthen our existing partnerships and develop new affiliations. These priorities will provoke expansion in our educational and career development for all customers with an increased emphasis on participants between the ages of 16 – 24 and ensure that Monmouth County residents are ready to meet the future employment needs. MCWDB's continues to prepare local customers for work readiness in Healthcare, Retail, Food Services, Professional & Technical services, Construction, Administrative, Waste management services, Transportation & Warehouse, Manufacturing & Wholesale, and other immerging industries

The foundation of our local plan aligns with the Central New Jersey Regional emphasis composed of the Three C's; Compliance, Customer focus, and Collaboration to continue to maintain the highest standards in governance, service delivery, and performance measures. Our support services place customers first, enhancing their experience through MCWDB's collaboration with our local workforce.

OCEAN COUNTY

In Ocean County, Ocean County College (OCC) has been working with the New Jersey Council of County Colleges to look at methods to adjust their offerings to meet the needs of the community. There has been an effort not to change or lose any of the existing degree programs, but to add programs that offer stackable credentials, create a pathway to a career and enable students to have a broader knowledge of the field they are looking to enter. As a result, students will be more marketable to potential employers. OCC has also begun looking at their curriculum to ensure that what is being taught to students is going to aid in their journey to a long-term career. They have added programming such as radiography, dental hygiene, and aestheticians have been added. OCC has also partnered more with the Ocean County Vocational Technical School to think more about long-term goals and allow students to be able to utilize both institutions and all the services that they offer, such as career coaching or a business certificate. The main goal of the partnership is

to offer programs and services that add value to students making them marketable employers especially in industries that don't necessarily have a lot of openings.

While the counties that make up the Central Region are different in many ways, there are also similarities that are being used to create collaboration & partnerships, ensure services are available to all residents, and utilize the resources and best practices in each county to enhance and improve services and WDB roles and responsibilities.

CLOSING

The Central Jersey Partners Regional Plan modifications reflect a coordinated, multi-county approach to strengthening workforce system alignment, responsiveness, and accountability. Building on established sector strategies, the region is advancing targeted efforts to address foundational skill gaps—particularly in adult and digital literacy—while expanding access to work-based learning opportunities that support career entry and progression.

Regional partners continue to prioritize employer engagement and data-informed decision-making to ensure training, credentialing, and service delivery remain closely aligned with labor market demand. These efforts are supported by strengthened partnerships across workforce development boards, educational institutions, and community organizations, creating a more integrated and responsive system.

To further support partnerships and collaboration, a website will serve as a centralized hub for sharing timely and relevant information related to the workforce development activities in the counties that make up the Central Region. It will provide updates on upcoming events, training opportunities, and meetings ensuring that staff, partners, and community members stay informed and engaged. The website will also host important documents such as policies, reports, and relevant data, offering easy access to essential resources. By streamlining communication and improving transparency, the website will support collaboration among counties and enhance the delivery of workforce services to residents and employers alike.

In alignment with the New Jersey Combined State Plan, the region maintains a focus on equitable access, career pathway development, and improved service coordination for both jobseekers and employers. Counties within the Central Jersey Region are implementing strategies that reflect shared priorities while addressing local workforce needs, contributing to a cohesive regional framework.

Ongoing enhancements to data integrity, performance monitoring, and program oversight reinforce the region's commitment to compliance, continuous improvement, and audit readiness. Collectively, these strategies position the Central Jersey region to effectively support sustainable employment outcomes, meet evolving industry needs, and strengthen long-term economic competitiveness.