

III. REGIONAL INDICATORS

The California Workforce Development Board has established “regional indicators” to assess coordination and measure progress within California’s 15 RPUs. The indicators serve to track processes and activities utilized by regions, providing a foundation for regional approaches that align with the needs of businesses in key sectors.

Regions must choose at least two of the following indicators:

- Indicator A: The region has a process to communicate industry workforce needs to supply-side partners.
- Indicator B: The region has policies supporting equity and strives to improve job quality.
- Indicator C: The region has shared target populations of emphasis.
- Indicator D: The region deploys shared/pooled resources to provide services, training, and education to meet the target population's needs.

A. Regional Indicators and Associated Metrics

The SJVAC RPU has selected indicators B and D. The following are the outcomes and metrics established for these two regional indicators of efficiency and effectiveness.

Metrics for Indicator B: The region has policies supporting access and strives to improve job quality.

Outcome 1: The region has developed benchmarks and measurements to track progress toward ensuring access and job quality and serving employers that provide quality jobs that provide economic security through family sustaining wages and comprehensive benefits.

The region developed a statement on system access along with corresponding principles that will support regional work and can be adopted by local boards to fulfill goals within their areas. Each local area will determine its primary target population. WIOA performance measures provide the foundation for metrics associated with this outcome.

Outcome 2: The region has developed benchmarks measures to track individuals that complete training and/or attain industry-recognized credentials aligned with the sectors and occupations emphasized in the Regional Plan.

The SJVAC region has developed training completion benchmarks and measures for target populations. The CalJOBS system will be used to track data.

Metrics for Indicator D: Region deploys shared/pooled resources to provide services, training, and education to meet target populations’ needs.

Outcome 1: The region has a system in place to track co-enrollment strategies to serve participants holistically and track individuals that complete training and/or attain industry

recognized credentials aligned with the sectors and occupations emphasized in the Regional Plan.

The local boards within the SJVAC RPU utilize the CalJOBS system to manage co-enrollments, while recognizing that the system has limited capabilities for co-enrollment reporting. Some local boards in the region offer cohort training for their customers. In such cases, services are coordinated, and customer progress information is shared. For example, as part of the English language learners served under SJVAC RPU's Regional Planning Implementation grants 4.0 and 5.0, individuals enrolled in training were tracked to determine how many obtained an industry-recognized credential and, of these individuals, how many receive certificates aligned to the region's target sectors and local demand occupations.

Outcome 2: The region has developed benchmarks and methods to track workforce staff and partner professional development training on services, job training, and education programs to meet target populations' needs.

- The SJVAC RPU conducts a bi-annual assessment of staff development needs to determine training that will be made available to regional partners and staff. Trainers are identified and properly procured, and a training calendar is developed. Those who participate in regional training complete evaluations at the conclusion of each session and follow-up surveys are conducted to gauge participants' retention of information and the impact of training in the workplace. Training topics are aligned with goals of both the Regional Plan and each of the eight WDBs' Local Plans.
- The region addresses all priority training areas for frontline staff that are identified in State policy guidance on required content for Local Plans. These areas include:
 - Expand proficiency in digital fluency and distance learning.
 - Ensure cultural competency, and.
 - Understand of the experiences of trauma-exposed populations

Outcome 3: Leveraging resources across local areas for regional initiatives.

This outcome is measured through collaboration and leveraging of financial resources, including the following:

- **HR Hotline Service:** The SJVAC and Middle Sierra regions contract with the California Employers Association to offer "HR Advice on Demand" services for local employers. Participating WDBs include Kern/Inyo/Mono, Madera County, Merced County, Mother Lode, Stanislaus County, and Tulare County. Each participating local area contributes a fair share of the cost for these services.
- **Regional Equity Recovery Partnership (RERP) Grant:** The SJVAC region and partners leveraged \$3,941,926 in support of RERP grant services to targeted populations.

- Joint Procurement of a One-Stop Operator: The WDBs in Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, and Stanislaus counties entered into an agreement for the procurement of a One-Stop Operator. This consortium is currently procuring a new OSO to be in place by July 1, 2025. The new Sub-regional contract will include Kings, Madera, Stanislaus, and San Joaquin Counties.

B. Impact of Indicators and Metrics on Service Delivery

The SJVAC RPU's regional indicators, metrics, and outcomes will have the following anticipated effects on programs, services, strategies, and approaches at the local service delivery level.

Local Service Delivery Impact for Indicator B: The region has policies supporting equity and strives to improve job quality.

The development of the regional statement on access and related corresponding principles enables local boards to develop local service delivery goals and strategies resulting in increased participation by and outcomes for underserved and vulnerable populations. Service strategies that target populations that are most in need of services strive to increase enrollments in WIOA services; referral to and co-enrollment in partner programs and services; co-case management of participants across two or more partners; completion of academic and vocational training; credential attainment; job placement in career path employment; wages; and job retention. Over time, local strategies utilized to improve services and outcomes for targeted populations will be shared and, potentially, scaled across the SJVAC region.

Local Service Delivery Impact Indicator D: Region deploys shared/pooled resources to provide services, training, and education to meet target populations needs.

Tracking referrals and co-enrollments will enable local boards to identify strategies for holistic service delivery that result in better employment, earnings, and retention outcomes for participants. The indicator's focus on training for local boards' staff and partners will enable frontline staff and others to provide services that address participant barriers and respond to their needs. In addition, continued leveraging of financial resources among local boards will provide WDBs greater budget flexibility to meet their organizational needs.

To support Indicator D, local board Directors and board Chairs have agreed to meet annually to discuss regional and local activities, share best practices, and have conversations on challenges and opportunities.

IV. FOSTERING DEMAND-DRIVEN SKILLS ATTAINMENT

Labor market information and intelligence gathered from representatives of businesses in priority sectors help to inform the content and quality of local and regional workforce programs. The workforce programs administered by local boards in the Central Valley are intensively focused on career pathways within key sectors of the regional economy.

A. In-Demand Industry Sectors for the Region

SJVAC RPU's PY partners have again selected the following sectors as priorities:

- Advanced manufacturing
- Construction (including public infrastructure)
- Energy (including green energy)
- Healthcare
- Transportation and logistics
- Agriculture

The SJVAC Regional Plan continues to prioritize these sectors due to their prevalence within the region and predicted strength well into the foreseeable future. While some of these sectors have less growth than others, over the four-year period covered by the plan, there is demand for workers in these industries based on worker replacement considerations and regional demand for workers in emerging sectors, such as clean and renewable energy.

An analysis of the region's in-demand industries and occupations is provided in Section II-C of the Plan.

Regional Labor Market Conditions

Despite the gravity of the acute public health crisis that the COVID-19 pandemic presented, the labor market and regional economy have proven to be remarkably resilient. Nearly all major industries have shown expansion. As the economy bounced back more quickly than originally anticipated, original labor market data trajectories become more apparent. A previous regional analysis done in 2021 noted the emergence of several key industries along with the potential weakening of the total farm labor employment. For instance, the Transportation and Logistics sector has shown strong growth in the region. This is due to relatively inexpensive land, access to major highway arteries, and an increasing share of retail trade being conducted online and with fast delivery guarantees.

Other notable gains are found in Mining, Logging, and Construction, Educational and Health Services, and Leisure and Hospitality. Wildfires in 2021 and 2022 left large areas of dead timber within various public and private jurisdictions that will continue to take many years to evaluate and remove. While state and local governments have taken recent steps to limit the expansion of fossil fuel extraction, there remains a robust

extractives industry, specifically in Kern County. Public Health outcomes for much of the San Joaquin Valley region are lower relative to the rest of the state owing to poverty, lack of health care access, environmental pollutants, and other reasons specific to the geography and economy of the region.

There are some variances in the total job gains within the RPU's eight local workforce areas, but notably all have shown substantial growth. Despite having a slightly higher unemployment rate compared to the rest of the state, this suggests a robust labor market that has approached all-time highs in many of the region's counties.

Economic Growth and Incomes

The Central Valley region has generally seen positive economic growth in the five years from 2019 to 2024, the last year of available county level data that the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis has released. Historically, the agriculture industry has represented a major share of economic activity for much of the region. Economic output from this sector, along with the extractives sector, relies heavily on worldwide commodity markets and is subject to pricing swings year to year. This can have the effect of clouding overall growth numbers and masking growth in the non-farm economy. Still, agriculture is the economic anchor for the region, and a bad year for agricultural output will have spillover effects in tax revenue, public services, and other closely related industries.

Since 2019, the region has seen a slower cumulative growth in economic output compared to the rest of the state, although that trend was reversed in 2023. A slowdown in the technology sector, the entertainment industry, and other high value economic activities present in other regions of the state can help to explain these circumstances.

B. Sector and Related Industry-Focused Initiatives

There are fully developed sector-focused career pathway programs in the Central Valley, many of which were developed based on specific requests from and input by industry. Other initiatives are emerging. While many of these sector initiatives already cross local boundaries, others are suitable for scaling up throughout the region. Examples of current and anticipated sector and industry-focused initiatives include:

Healthforce Partners - Healthcare

The healthcare sector in the Northern San Joaquin Valley needs qualified workers. Community residents want to pursue healthcare careers. To achieve these compatible goals, healthcare employers, educators, workforce development professionals, and community leaders worked together to launch an innovative partnership: HealthForce Partners Northern San Joaquin Valley. The mission is to serve as a catalyst to improve career pathway opportunities for community residents and to increase the supply of skilled healthcare workers. HealthForce Partners brings together leaders from healthcare, education, and workforce development to develop strategies that meet the needs of the region's employers and expand educational and work opportunities for community

residents. The partnership convenes key stakeholders to identify workforce gaps and develop solutions to address them. Programs include, but are not limited to: Registered Nursing, Certified Nursing Assistant, Medical Assistant, and Behavioral Health.

This program continues to expand to keep pace with the needs of the healthcare sector. Healthforce has and continues to provide insight on the needs of the health care sector for multiple local areas. Healthforce Partners is actively working toward having a presence in more AJCCs to help staff and the public fully understand the needs of the healthcare field and the experiences and skills necessary to fill critical roles in the healthcare field.

Tulare - Kings Health Care Partnership – Healthcare

This industry-driven partnership addresses the workforce, education, training, and competitiveness needs of the healthcare industry in Tulare and Kings counties. Established in 2009, it has 6 participating organizations representing over 9,000 employees. The partnership hosts an annual exploratory career conference for high school students, plans and facilitates an annual teacher externship event, and works to address industry pipeline needs through ongoing partnerships with education and workforce development. Tulare County WIB provides staffing support for this partnership, as this approach continues to function as an effective means of engagement with industry.

EMS Corp – Healthcare

Stanislaus County and Fresno County are engaged in the EMS Corp, which targets youth and young adults. The goal of the program is to prepare for entry level positions in the Emergency Medical Technicians field. This is considered a starting point on a career path to many other occupations in the healthcare sector. With additional education and training, EMT's may eventually become hospital support staff, Licensed Vocational Nurses, Registered Nurses, Surgical Technicians and other healthcare professionals. The EMS Corp is designed to spark interest in and give underserved youth an opportunity to join the healthcare sector workforce.

South Valley Industrial Collaborative - Manufacturing

The South Valley Industrial Collaborative (SVIC) is a partnership for community excellence that provides a platform to build industry-led, industry-driven, and community-supported partnerships to strengthen economies in the South San Joaquin Valley. This partnership grew out of an Industrial Advisory Board for which the Tulare County WIB provided staffing support. It is now an industry controlled 501(c)(6). The South Valley Industrial Collaborative provides a sub-regional platform, particularly focused on Tulare and Kings counties, for industry and businesses to collaborate and connect with regional, state, and national partner organizations to support the region's efforts to become a globally competitive location for manufacturing and industrial jobs. Key priorities for the SVIC Focus Teams are talent acquisition, development and retention; policies and regulations impacting business; and infrastructure.

Tulare - Kings College and Career Collaborative – Multiple Industries

Workforce boards from Tulare and Kings counties co-facilitate a workgroup to strengthen and scale industry partnerships. This year, the workgroup prioritized the launch of three regional industry advisory boards to connect education and industry. Workgroup members include representatives from chambers of commerce, the K-12 education system, post-secondary education, and workforce development. Volunteers have agreed to staff and support the advisory groups, develop an industry-focused structure, participate in facilitation of training, and launch three regional advisory boards: Business and Finance; Information and Communication Technology; and Arts, Media, and Entertainment. The workgroup is also considering advisory boards for Manufacturing and Product Design and Building Trades and Construction.

Tulare-Kings TRAIN – Multiple Industries

The Training Resources Aligned for Industry Need (TRAIN) Network facilitates coordination between local workforce areas and educational institutions by aligning program development with the needs of businesses in the region's target sectors. This is achieved through established sector partnership convenings, shared labor market analyses, and direct engagement with industry representatives to identify skills gaps. Education partners use this input to adapt curricula and create programs that address workforce demands, ensuring alignment with industry standards and regional economic goals. Current sector partnerships include one in healthcare and an industrial partnership, as described above, with plans to launch an agriculture sector partnership by utilizing leveraged funds.

Fresno-Madera K-16 Collaborative

Fresno State Foundation, on behalf of the Central San Joaquin Valley K-16 Partnership was awarded \$18.13M by the California Department of General Services, Office of Public School Construction's Regional K-16 Education Collaborative Grant Program to equitably strengthen education-to-workforce pathways and ensure that educational, vocational, and workforce programs work in partnership to address issues of income, racial, and gender disparities in education and employment.

Kern County - Displaced Oil and Gas Workers Fund (DOGWF)

Kern County Employers Training Resource was awarded the Displaced Oil and Gas Workers Fund (DOGWF) Grant in the amount of \$11,244,000 from the State of California EDD and California Labor and Workforce Development Agency. The grant's purpose is to provide services to oil and gas workers who have been displaced due to the recent shift in the oil industry in California. Participants will receive training services through a diverse selection of Industries while also receiving supportive services. The goal is to transition participants into other industry sectors that provide stable careers and comparable wages to the oil industry. The grant will serve 750 participants.

Central San Joaquin Valley K-16 Partnership

This collaboration of the Fresno-Madera K-16 Collaborative and the Tulare- Kings College and Career Collaborative was created to strengthen the region's education and socio-economic conditions, leadership, support, and impact on K-16 students and adult learners. The aim of the partnership is to eliminate intersegmental silos and unite partners to build relationship infrastructure for future work. By braiding approaches and resources, the partners are confident there will be a significant increase in filling an LMI-supported job talent pipeline to ensure that individuals thrive personally and professionally.

Biomethane Production – Green Energy

The Central Valley has seen substantial renewable energy production and infrastructure construction over the last five years. One area that is evolving and on the cusp of moving from small independent operations to more commercial production is biomethane producing anaerobic digesters, which use organic matter (dairy manure was the first) to produce two key products: renewable biomethane that is fed back into the grid through current infrastructure and remaining organic matter that is used as a natural fertilizer for agriculture. Growth is being spurred by new regulations. Specifically, these are the Mandatory Commercial Organics Recycling provisions that were put in place in 2016 under AB 1826 which phased up in September 2020. These provisions require all businesses with more than 2 cubic yards of solid waste to recycle a minimum of 50% of their organic waste, rather than dispose of it in the land fill. This has created a secondary market for the purchase of organic waste which supports transport, builds supporting equipment, and provision of supporting infrastructure from SCE and PG&E. The first large scale projects in the upper and lower parts of the Central Valley (complexes at least 100 acres each) have completed feasibility studies. This sector of the economy is currently impacting all Central Valley counties. This is exemplified by a facility in Madera County and by investments in and scaling projects in Stanislaus and Merced counties. The workforce system can provide training and placement services to support this emerging energy subsector.

Carbon Capture and Sequestration Project

Kern County is working on a carbon management business park that could clean the air in the Central Valley by participating in the U.S. Department of Energy's "Local Energy Action Program called "LEAP." Participating in the LEAP Program would be the first such initiative to explicitly align with the economic development and social related priorities of the County's B3K Prosperity economic development collaboration. The LEAP Technical Assistance Grant seeks to help communities access the economic and environmental benefits of clean energy and clean energy manufacturing. Opportunities and potential benefits include lower local air pollution, lower utility costs and energy burdens, improved access to reliable energy, enhanced economic productivity, and new clean energy supply chain and manufacturing.

The Good Jobs Challenge

The Good Jobs Challenge is a 4-county regional project led by the Fresno Economic Development Corporation where Madera, Fresno, and Tulare WDBs serve as backbone leads for the Transportation, Construction, and Manufacturing industries to facilitate sector partnerships between industry and education partners, determine gaps in training curriculum and pipeline, and increase access to training and expand work opportunities to upskill individuals. Madera's Transportation partnership has led to the development of our first Truck Driving Extravaganza and Job Fair as well as the development of a School Bus Driver training program between Advanced Career Institute and the Madera Unified School District to meet the needs of local employers.

Valley Build – Construction

The Valley Build High Road Construction Careers (HRCC) project is led by the Fresno Regional WDB and serves an expansive region that includes the following fourteen (14) counties: Alpine, Calaveras, Fresno, Kings, Inyo, Kern, Madera, Mariposa, Mono, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Tulare, and Tuolumne. The project provides inclusive access to MC-3 pre-apprenticeship training and related services that enable individuals from all backgrounds to qualify for employment and acceptance into apprenticeships in the skilled building and construction trades. The goal of the project is to build a network of community partners throughout the region to promote Valley Build and to recruit target candidates for pre-apprenticeship training.

Central Valley Forestry Corps

The Central Valley Forestry Corps is a partnership between the Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board, the Mother Lode WDB, Madera WDB, Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission's Local Conservation Corps, Reedley College, and Columbia College. The Central Valley Forestry Corps will train the next generation of forestry workers to address the natural disasters occurring within our forests. Beginning with funding from CalFire, the initiative is preparing an untapped workforce within the Central Valley to assist in the removal of more than 100 million dead trees. Training is crucial to decrease the number of wildfires in California.

Inland Ports Initiative

Fresno, Merced, and San Joaquin counties collaborated on a grant application to the California State Transportation Agency Port and Freight Infrastructure Program that seeks to improve the capacity, safety, efficiency, and resilience of goods movement to, from, and through California's ports. With a key focus on the transportation and warehousing sector, tied to this initiative will be training for workers across a wide range of occupations.

Fresno-Merced Future of Food (F3)

Serving Fresno, Kings, Tulare, Madera, and Merced counties, the Fresno-Merced Future of Food Innovation (F3) coalition, led by the Central Valley Community Foundation, will receive approximately \$65.1 million from Economic Development Administration (EDA) to accelerate the integration of technology and skills in the region's agriculture industry, improving productivity and job quality for existing farmworkers while driving a more resilient and sustainable food system. The coalition unites partners such as University of California, Merced, the California Farmworkers Foundation, industry leadership like the California Fresh Fruit Association, regional philanthropy, and local government around a vision for a more innovative, equitable, and resilient agricultural industry in one of the country's most important food-producing regions. Today, California's Central Valley produces 25 percent of the nation's food supply yet has one of the highest food insecurity rates among low wage farm workers. EDA funding will launch iCREATE, a new ag-tech hub, with the mission to accelerate the development and transfer of technology between researchers at local universities and farmers across the region, with a focus on reaching BIPOC or underserved small farmers. At the same time, community colleges throughout the Central Valley will receive access to new technology and training to equip workers with the skills needed to access higher quality, higher paying jobs in ag tech, improving both farm productivity and wages.

UC Merced Water Systems Management Lab Project

The project examines the impacts of the drought on California agriculture. Recent California climate extremes, which include among the most severe droughts on record, highlighted rapidly changing conditions that affect water supply for agriculture and the state's growing population. Incremental water management and institutional learning at all levels has provided building blocks to better manage water shortages. At the same time, communities connected to agricultural areas share, to varying extents, multi-year drought impacts such as water shortages, high temperatures, and their lingering effects through dry wells, fire risk, and degraded air and water quality. A project team made up of UC and CSU academics, in partnership with the Public Policy Institute of California Water Policy Center, will develop various milestone products including economic impact assessments, policy briefs, and an open access web tool that builds from currently available tools, and past collaborations. From this information, the workforce system in the Central Valley will assess and respond to workforce needs arising from water management strategies.

Stanislaus 2030 – Multiple Industries

Stanislaus 2030 leads collective action towards implementing the economic and workforce initiatives identified in its Investment Blueprint through coordination and aligning efforts across governmental agencies, private-public partnerships, educational institutions, businesses, service providers, and community groups for the greatest impact for all in local communities.

Child Care Expansion: \$1 million toward Child Care Expansion that will be administered by First 5 Stanislaus. These funds will support the Stanislaus 2030 Child Care Implementation Plan, which aims to scale home-based childcare entrepreneurship across the county. Stanislaus 2030 and First 5 will continue to engage collaborative partners over the next two years to achieve the goal of launching or expanding 200 home-based childcare businesses, which will create an additional 1,600 licensed child care spaces across the county.

Small Business Development: \$2 million from Stanislaus County will be administered by the Stanislaus Workforce Development Agency to manage projects to bolster the small business ecosystem, including launching a one-stop platform for businesses to access support and financing, a CDFI Cohort Program to manage loans and provide technical assistance, and a Business Support Cohort Program to build and expand capacity for businesses to develop service offerings, streamline operations, and improve service delivery. Considering that 99.9% of businesses in Stanislaus County are small businesses, with 56.8% of Stanislaus' workforce employed by a small business, this funding will be instrumental in catalyzing the bedrock of the region's economy.

Talent Development: \$1.5 million will also be managed by the Stanislaus Workforce Development Agency to strengthen the manufacturing talent pipeline, ensuring the local workforce meets the demands of expanding industries. The fund will offer grants and technical assistance to local education and workforce institutions for programs that advance strategies identified in the Stanislaus County Manufacturing Strategic Workforce Plan, and will enhance industry and education collaboration, address manufacturing perception challenges, improve job quality, expand apprenticeships and other "earn and learn" models, pilot and test innovative strategies to reduce time to certificate/credential completion, and develop robust career pathways.

Regional Equity and Recovery Partnerships (RERP)

Through the High Road approach of advancing economic opportunities and strengthening the workforce based on industry demand, the SJVAC region's "Skills to Success" projects will provide access to various training programs and work-based learning and increase opportunities and access for targeted populations. The targeted populations will gain access to the necessary skills to fill the skill gaps and become self-sufficient.

Fresno Regional WDB – Construction and Manufacturing: With the anticipated influx of public infrastructure spending, FRWDB in coordination with Fresno City College and the State Center Adult Education Consortium seeks to address the human capital needs of the Fresno metropolitan area and the surrounding rural communities by providing short-term training that will equip residents to secure quality, good wage jobs in the two sectors.

Kern, Inyo, Mono WDB – Healthcare: The Kern/Inyo/Mono RERP project, in partnership with education, is designed to address industry needs and educational capacity to

increase the pipeline of healthcare workers. The RERP initiative will address unmet needs and expand access to healthcare careers and quality jobs, especially among minority residents. Presently, Employer Training Resources has a partnership with Bakersfield College, Cerro Coso Community College, and Taft College to increase the number of individuals trained to be Registered Nurses, Licensed Vocational Nurses, Nursing Assistants, Medical Assistants, Emergency Medical Technicians, and Dental Hygienists.

Madera County WDB – Manufacturing: The project in Madera County will focus on manufacturing training for middle-skill jobs in the industrial maintenance, manufacturing and welding career pathways. Participants will earn a certificate of achievement in one of the pathways that prepares them for entrance into the manufacturing workforce or the ability to transfer to a four-year college program.

Merced County WDB – Manufacturing: Merced County will focus on the development of GED/High-School Diploma-to-Skilled Manufacturing pipeline. The project will cover Merced County as a whole but will utilize culturally competent outreach strategies to focus on residents living outside of the County’s two largest cities (Merced and Los Banos) in the County’s more rural communities.

San Joaquin County WDB – Manufacturing and Transportation and Logistics: The San Joaquin County WDB will address the workforce gaps in warehousing, goods movement, distribution and manufacturing. In partnership with the Delta Sierra Adult Education Alliance (DSAEA), the WDB will provide onramps to career paths in the transportation-distribution-logistics and advanced manufacturing sectors for community residents, including pathways to middle skill jobs requiring some college.

Stanislaus County WDB – Manufacturing: Stanislaus County will assist workers to enter the manufacturing occupations, discover their personal interests and strengths, and prepare for an apprenticeship that will lead to high wage occupations and journey-level skill attainment. Stanislaus County will offer options for job seekers to enter the manufacturing occupational career ladder and provide incumbent workers with tools necessary to further their value to employers.

Tulare County WIB – Construction, Manufacturing, Transportation and Logistics: The Tulare Workforce Investment Board (WIB) intends to use this investment to accelerate the work the WIB and its community colleges are doing together to ensure that the local economy expands and that its historically marginalized populations have an opportunity to participate in the resulting prosperity by securing quality jobs in demand sectors.

C. Strategies to Communicate with Regional Employers

Most business contacts are made at the local level between the eight WDBs and employers within their service areas. This is primarily accomplished through direct contact and outreach by Business Service Representatives, and through sector partnerships. When two or more local boards work with the same business across their jurisdictions, they make every effort to collaborate and coordinate messaging and service delivery.

These efforts are common in rapid response and layoff aversion activities, the formation of industry-focused partnerships that cross regions, and with businesses that are establishing new operations in two or more areas in the Central Valley.

The region contracts with the California Employers Association to offer employers a no-cost option to assist businesses with their human resource needs. A Human Resources (HR) Hotline allows employers to call in five days a week and connect with a live HR director who is ready to answer questions on a variety of HR topics. In addition, no-cost monthly webinars are available that cover a variety of topics businesses are faced with. The utilization of the HR Hotline has allowed local boards throughout the region to engage with and offer value added resources to businesses. Local boards will continue to promote the HR hotline with the goal of encouraging more businesses to take advantage of this valuable service.

Several WBDs in the region are advancing sector partnerships in regional priority industries. The creation and facilitation of sector partnerships allows local boards to engage with employers to find solutions that will help advance in demand sectors. The utilization of sector partnerships and sector strategies greatly increases the collaboration and relationships between industry and local boards. Over the next four years local boards will continue to develop, foster, and advance industry-wide sector partnerships to expand business relationships throughout the region.

Local boards have collaborated on the development of a regional website focused on services for businesses. The Valley Work site communicates how workforce programs assist businesses, provides examples of strategies that have been deployed to support Valley-based companies, and includes contact information for employers. To improve the utility of the site, local boards continue to examine ways in which it can be revised for greater access to information about regional support for businesses. Under consideration and review are information about the HR Hotline service; promoting recruitment events, such as job fairs throughout the region; providing information beyond direct local board services, such as “employer tax credit” information; highlighting sector strategy initiatives; and various other enhancements. The local boards continue to work through the Central California Workforce Collaborative as described in Section VII (A) and its workgroups to design, develop, and implement improvements to the Valley Work site.

V. ENABLING UPWARD MOBILITY FOR ALL CALIFORNIANS

Workforce system leaders throughout the Central Valley fully support the State Plan's focus on ensuring that workforce and education programs are accessible for all Californians, especially populations that experience barriers to employment. The region is committed to promoting access for everyone to training and services needed to prepare for careers that offer opportunities for long-term economic self-sufficiency and economic security.

A. Working with Businesses that Provide Quality Jobs

The eight local boards all focus on identifying businesses that pay competitive wages and offer benefits and on matching qualified job seekers to openings with these businesses. Still, the nature of the work requires local workforce systems to assist job seekers from a wide range of backgrounds with varying levels of skills and experience. Local boards' strategies concentrate on the use of career pathway programs to train and prepare job seekers to become competitive candidates who qualify for good jobs that are commensurate with their skills and experience. Job placement on the path to a high road job is the first step for many participants.

High Road Jobs Strategy

The local boards have prioritized sectors that represent high demand, high wage jobs. Such jobs exist in healthcare, logistics, construction, manufacturing, clean energy, and other industries targeted by the region. Companies in these sectors that pay the highest wages and offer the best overall packages to employees are those that are highly competitive and/or have unique positions within the economy. They include large companies, utilities, public agencies, and businesses whose workers are represented under collective bargaining agreements, among others. There are also small and medium-sized businesses that offer very attractive wages and benefits in an attempt to secure the best talent, enabling the businesses to grow and to fare better in the marketplace. As stated above, the local workforce system targets these companies and refers qualified candidates for available jobs. Because many of the job seekers accessing local workforce systems have limited work experience and entry-level skills, local boards also work with a wide range of other businesses, including those with jobs paying lower wages and offering fewer benefits. These jobs are not intended to be jobs with no potential for advancement. Rather, for job seekers on a career path, they provide the opportunity to gain experience, build their resumes, and put skills (including those that are newly acquired as the result of training) to work in a competitive work environment. The jobs are a step on a career path to high skilled, high wage, high road jobs.

Focus on Career Pathways

The local boards represented by the SJVAC RPU have implemented regional career pathway strategies that begin with the provision of information. Such information is available through a regional initiative that culminated in the development of a website,

www.careersinthevalley.com, which encompasses the entire SJVAC RPU. Job seekers engage in career exploration that informs choices about the jobs and careers they want to train for and increases their knowledge about training, skills, and experience necessary for these jobs and careers. For example, healthcare is the sector with the highest demand for jobs in the Central Valley and it provides a range of career ladder and career lattice opportunities. Most job seekers do not come to the one-stop system with skills that will enable them to become a Registered Nurse (RN) within a year. However, there are less skilled positions that can be trained for in that timeframe. Workforce system participants become aware of the steps necessary to move from a Certified Nursing Assistant position to that of RN. The position is part of the career path they have selected. The entry-level job and its wages are a stop on the way to a career destination.

Promoting Job Quality

The local boards promote job quality by looking for the best job matches for participants at all skill levels. They also do so through investments, such as focusing on on-the-job training positions that pay wages above a prescribed level and by only approving training that prepares individuals for high demand jobs in priority sectors through career pathways programs and other models focused on high growth and other demand industries.

There is no regional policy on job quality, as there is no structure through which a “region” can adopt policy. Policy is the purview of workforce development boards. Some WDBs have adopted or are working toward a definition within their respective local areas. Tulare County WIB has developed a forward-thinking definition that is “modular” in its design, recognizing that a “quality” job may vary based on a worker’s characteristics, career path, family size, priorities, and other factors. The Kern-Inyo-Mono WDB has defined a quality job for its Better Bakersfield and Boundless Kern (B3K) Prosperity Neighborhood Initiative as one paying no less than \$21.80 an hour.

In October 2022, The Stanislaus County Workforce Development Board adopted a tiered approach self-sufficiency standard which included a Good Jobs definition. Stanislaus 2030 released the 2022 Market Assessment Executive Summary in which they identified a good job starting at \$28.58. As a foundation, a good job means workers earning enough for the family to achieve self-sufficiency and economic mobility. Jobs in the report were categorized as “good”, “promising”, or “other” based on earnings, benefits and durability.

This definition of Good Jobs includes:

- i. Pay at least the target annual wage, meeting expenses and savings needs without California “safety net” benefits (e.g. SNAP, TANF, Medicaid).
- ii. Provide employer-sponsored health insurance, proxy for likelihood of other benefits like paid leave and retirement contributions; and
- iii. Afford stable career options to continue holding a good job in the future, considering factors like automation and career progressions

Other local areas in the region are working on producing a definition of job quality that aligns with median pay scales relevant to the local labor market. In some cases, this may

be related to a percentage of the Lower Living Standard Income Level for the area. Workforce leadership will continue to engage board members in discussions about job quality to determine what fits best with the policy framework of their local workforce systems.

B. Shared Target Populations and Targeted Service Strategies

While the SJVAC RPU covers a massive area representing about one-fourth of California's geography, there are many commonalities throughout the region, including populations that are most in need of workforce services. The region's ability to identify shared populations and develop common strategies to meet the needs of these job seekers is enhanced by the WDBs' commitments to collaboration that are described throughout this plan.

Shared Populations

Across the entire region, target populations include English language learners, individuals who lack a high school credential, those who are basic skills deficient, CalWORKs recipients, individuals with disabilities, formerly incarcerated individuals, communities that are digitally disenfranchised, non-custodial parents with child support enforcement orders, disconnected youth, and veterans, among others. At a sub-regional level, there are also target groups shared by two or more boards. For example, boards in the northern part of the Valley serve many individuals who become commuters to jobs in the Capital region and the Silicon Valley. Counties which are home to the Valley's largest cities are increasingly focused on working with homeless and housing insecure individuals and families. Five of the region's boards completed a grant project that addressed workforce and support needs of individuals experiencing opioid addiction. Local boards agree that many served by their workforce systems have multiple barriers to employment.

Targeted Service Strategies

The region's local boards use many of the same strategies to address the needs of target populations. Often, due to distance factors, these are common strategies among the local boards, rather than systems that share providers or services. Joint grants in which multiple boards participate (e.g., Prison to Employment, Regional Equity and Recovery Partnerships) offer opportunities to apply common service strategies for target populations. One example is the use of Navigators across many grants. This strategy has proven successful in working with job seekers with disabilities, English language learners and other vulnerable populations. Moving forward, regional workforce leaders expect many opportunities to identify services strategies that may be effective for target populations across many local areas. As local boards address workforce needs during economic recovery, issues will likely arise that require new approaches that could be developed regionally and implemented locally.

VI. CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The PY 2025-28 planning period marks the first time the eight local boards within the San Joaquin Valley are addressing environmental sustainability and climate resilience within the Regional Plan. However, the WDBs and their workforce system partners are not unfamiliar with these challenges and their impact on the regional economy and local labor markets. Within the expansive ten-county region, issues such as dead and dying trees, movement away from fossil fuels, and water conservation needs are beginning to affect the focus and content of workforce programs. Strategies have been developed to address the workforce needs associated with these and other issues impacting the environment. What is needed to gain momentum in these efforts is an overarching plan and structure to shape workforce programs into effective models to support a climate neutral transition.

Opportunities for Building a Climate Resilient Economy and Workforce

As part of the process of developing the Regional Plan, local boards examined research and looked to existing efforts dealing with environmental sustainability in the Central Valley. A 2024 report by the Clean Air Task Force (CATF), [*An Exploration of Options and Opportunities for the San Joaquin Valley's Clean Energy Future*](#) stood out as uniquely pertinent to the interests of the local boards with respect to climate and the environment. The report reflects more than a year of intensive efforts to engage local government leaders, community leaders, subject matter experts, and state agencies on what a clean energy future might look like in the region. These leaders developed the following vision statement on how clean energy investments can contribute to the region:

The San Joaquin Valley will leverage clean energy investments to authentically engage impacted communities, create a dynamic and inclusive economy that elevates local talent and enduring community benefits, generates high-road jobs, cultivates innovation, supports federal and state decarbonization efforts, and accelerates achievement of the region's sustainability goals.

According to the report, the region has high resource potential and multiple pathways to support a clean energy future. The Valley is well suited to be a key player in the clean energy transition given its existing industrial base, rich land resources, skilled labor, multiple academic institutions, access to major transportation routes, and existing transmission infrastructure, alongside solar and other renewable energy and fuel potential. Clean energy brings new opportunities, not only by the direct value and jobs it creates, but also through its potential to attract other supply chain and manufacturing sectors, which can create sustained economic activity for the region.

Key activities for state and local partners will include:

- More detailed planning, including the completion of the Jobs First plans (discussed below);
- The development of locally determined community benefit agreements and/or frameworks;

- Workforce training needs assessment and training initiatives; and
- Federal, state, philanthropic, and private investments in project implementation.

The report states that Valley leaders have taken ownership of this effort and are continuing to push forward a thoughtful, self-determined, and coordinated approach to clean energy planning and established the following objectives:

SJV Clean Energy Objectives

Objectives		Potential Outcomes
Equity	Help those who least benefit from the current economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility • Embed environmental justice & Justice40²³ principles • Create local wealth • Construct an economy that benefits everyone in some way
High Road Jobs	Create quality jobs that stay in the Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure sustainable, long-term jobs with investment in workforce and professional development and training programs • Create quality jobs that provide a living wage and benefits, such as health care and retirement
Wealth Creation	Attract business and investment to the Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of entrepreneurs and business headquarters in the Valley • Attract private investment and Intellectual capital • Invest in workforce development and training so local residents can access high-road jobs
Health	Result in cleaner environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects result in cleaner air, with the reduction of local fossil fuel consumption, and cleaner water • Consider including additional recreational facilities in negotiated community benefits
Builds Upon Existing Assets	Complement existing SJV industries and build upon existing infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complement ongoing local initiatives and infrastructure projects in both industrialized and rural communities (civil, physical, educational, etc.)

Experts from RAND, the international consulting firm, worked with Valley leaders through an iterative process to develop the San Joaquin Valley Clean Energy Portfolio Toolkit, which consists of:

- A spreadsheet-based Portfolio Design Tool to help stakeholders create portfolios of clean energy buildout over time in the Valley;
- A mathematical Portfolio Evaluation Model (modeling) to evaluate each portfolio along a variety of key metrics; and
- A Portfolio Explorer that provides interactive visualizations of the model results.

Among the workforce-focused themes that are consistent across the evaluated portfolios are:

Expansion of clean energy generation can create thousands of jobs annually within the Valley. Depending on the amount of different technologies in each portfolio, roughly half

of those direct jobs would be permanent jobs. For most technologies, well over half of all direct jobs are considered high-road jobs that pay more than the median U.S. income. Adding in indirect and induced jobs roughly doubles the estimated job creation.

Some technologies create more jobs than others. Hydrogen, bioenergy, and biogas projects create more jobs than solar per unit of energy they produce, and more of those jobs are permanent jobs. While utility-scale solar creates fewer jobs than other technologies per kilowatt-hour, solar still has the biggest clean energy resource potential, and given its scale, could still be a significant job creator. Solar energy is also used to support other technologies, such as hydrogen production, which, in turn, creates more jobs.

The modeling estimates are a lower bound for jobs created in the Valley. Efforts could be made to attract jobs to the region that might go elsewhere in the country. Clean energy development, in conjunction with jobs that are created to support or attracted to clean energy development (indirect and induced jobs), can serve as a foundation for additional job growth in the region.

The modeling does not show significant workforce constraints given existing workforce size, composition, and skills. However, existing workers will likely need training to successfully pivot to clean energy opportunities. Workforce training will be necessary and San Joaquin Valley leaders will need to do a gap analysis of what training is needed to meet clean energy transition jobs. The number of people who may require training is consistent with current graduation rates from community college training programs for similar skills in the region.

By working with leaders who are engaged in the work described in CATF's Clean Energy Future report, the region's local workforce development boards can align their climate-focused planning with those of industry, economic development, government, and other critical stakeholders.

Utilizing the California Jobs First Initiative as a Launchpad for Climate-Focused Workforce Development

In 2021, California launched a \$600 million initiative (formerly known as the Community Economic Resilience Fund or CERF) to support thirteen (13) economic regions in creating quality jobs and bolstering their resilience to climate and global challenges impacting the state's diverse regional economies. As part of this program, each of the 13 regions has built a California Jobs First Collaborative tasked with developing a clear vision for their region's economic future.

The Central Valley is home to three California Jobs regions: Northern San Joaquin Valley, the Central San Joaquin Valley, and Kern County. Collaboratives in each of these regions are coordinated independently, with specific target industry sectors and foundational elements, enabling strategies that tie into a broader plan for an inclusive regional economy. The local boards within each region have been instrumental in the leadership

of these efforts across the Valley. This includes the Central San Joaquin region, where the Tulare and Madera County boards lead sub-regional efforts, and in the Northern San Joaquin Valley, where the Merced County Workforce Development Board serves as regional convener.

California Jobs First Northern Region: The North Valley THRIVE Strategic Plan charts the roadmap to a sustainable and inclusive future, where the people of San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Merced counties together realize the region's full potential. Stakeholders envision a future where the region is known for what people create and how they innovate, as well as for how communities care for each other and the land in and around local communities. Regional leaders will continue to be a key part of the dynamic Northern California mega region, with growing links to the Bay Area and Sacramento regions. The North San Joaquin Valley (NSJV) Strategic Plan outlines a transformative vision for the region's economic future by focusing on first deploying new technologies within the region, then on translating and manufacturing of advanced products and technologies within the region, and simultaneously on nurturing home-grown start-ups that take root within the region and help form distinct industry. Strategies focus on four priority sectors: Advanced Manufacturing, Clean Energy, Carbon Management, and Circular Bioeconomy. These sectors are identified as pivotal in transitioning the NSJV toward a more sustainable, equitable, and high-value economy that can meet the challenges of the 21st century, such as climate change, re-localization of supply chains, and increasing economic resilience in the face of technological disruption.

California Jobs First Central Region: The Sierra San Joaquin Jobs (S2J2) project is led by the Central Valley Community Foundation (CVCF) and is a four-county project consisting of Fresno, Madera, Tulare, and Kings counties. Utilizing a bottoms-up approach, local conveners have allowed for maximum input and inclusion at the local level by facilitating community conversations on the needs and challenges of each area and prioritizing project goals to elevate up to the region. CVCF kicked off an 8-week Spring Sprint in May 2024, to establish workgroups around the region's eight key priority areas: Climate Solutions, Responsible Food and Agriculture Systems, Circular Manufacturing, Water, Broadband, Small Business, Community Health, and Education and Skill Building. CERF Catalyst funds in the amount \$5.5 million of are available to support efforts in these priority areas. Local evaluators have screened and advanced project proposals to regional evaluators for funding consideration. The WDBs have been invited to serve on the Education and Skill Building Leadership Group to determine next steps for this component of the S2J2 regional plan. Four specific Investment Plans are included under the Climate Solutions: Clean Energy, ZEV Transition, Nature Based Solutions, and Carbon Capture. As S2J2 moves forward, the project will translate the broader strategies into specific, actionable initiatives. CVCF will engage in detailed planning and coordination of stakeholders to further define and prepare for implementation.

California Jobs First Kern County: The Kern County region's response to the California Jobs First initiative is led by the Kern High Road Transition Collaborative (KHRTC), a collective of members from disinvested communities, labor, business, government, and

other community stakeholders, such as economic development, philanthropy, education, and workforce development partners. The priority tradable industries emerging from this analysis are clean energy, advanced manufacturing, and agriculture. KHRTC prioritized clean energy for its competitive advantage in the Kern County region, positive impact on the environment, and strong alignment with state priorities. Advanced manufacturing, as a cross-cutting aspect of other industry verticals like agriculture, clean energy, and aerospace and defense, offers opportunities for inclusive employment that keeps industry value chains within the region, bolstering economic resilience. The announcement of new large, private solar and wind projects in the area, including Camino Solar Project and Alta Wind Battery Energy Storage, has led to expectations that clean energy jobs will grow rapidly in the Kern County.