

- Create more options for people with ID/DD to prepare for and get a CIE job.
- Help people with ID/DD to make their own choices about working in the community.

In 2018, the CWDB and EDD issued guidance to FRWDB on the development of a 2019 biennial modification to our four-year Local Plan. This guidance required that FRWDB connect with and seek to participate in the efforts of local partners (local education agencies, the DOR district office, and the regional center) to deliver CIE services as outlined in a Local Partnership Agreement (LPA). These agreements articulate the ways in which local partners will work together to streamline service delivery, engage their communities, and increase CIE opportunities for individuals with ID/DD. LPAs are the result of conversations and enable the local partners to determine strategies that will work best for them and the populations they serve.

The core partners in the Fresno LPA are:

Local Education Agency Partners: Clovis Unified School District, Fresno County Superintendent of Schools, and Fresno Unified School District

Department of Rehabilitation: DOR Fresno Branch Office

Regional Center Partners: Central Valley Regional Center

The LPA also acknowledges the participation of the following non-signatory “community partners:” DOR vendors, stakeholders, collaborative contract partners, College 2 Career Project Search, Youth Leadership Training Program, Transition Partnership Programs, and work-based training programs. The LPA partners are committed to strengthening linkages with the WIOA Title I-funded workforce development system and its full range of partners and stakeholders. This goal will be accomplished through the following steps:

- Include FRWDB and Workforce Connection leadership in LPA meetings.
- Develop a plan to integrate WIOA Title I program services with those of the LPA partners in support of the CIE blueprint.
- Link Workforce Connection to current and future CIE pilot projects and initiatives.
- Encourage FRWDB and the WIOA Title I service providers to develop and implement strategies to promote CIE for individuals with ID/DD.

The LPA partners envisions collaboration with the Workforce Connection centers as including promotion of projects and initiatives that support ID/DD individuals, such as the DOR’s pilot student internship program.

D. Coordination with Community-Based Organizations and Other Local Partners That Serve Individuals Who are English Language Learners, Foreign Born, and/or Refugees

English Language Learners (ELLs), foreign born individuals, and refugees have always been key target groups for the local workforce development delivery system. Nearly 55% of the county's population is Hispanic and more than 10% are Asian. Approximately 20% are foreign born. While many individuals from these groups come to the workforce system seeking assistance to prepare for and find employment, many also need services such as English language skills instruction. FRWDB works closely with many organizations to serve this population and continuously strives to improve services for ELLs and other populations with barriers to employment.

Partners in Serving ELLs and Immigrants

Adult education programs and the community colleges have long been important partners in providing English as a Second Language instruction and other basic education skills to ELLs and immigrants. AJCC staff regularly refers clients to WIOA Title II programs and other training to assist customers in building their English proficiency, increase other basic education skills, and provide support in earning a high school diploma or equivalency credential.

FRWDB and AJCC staff collaborate with other organizations and programs to provide education, job skills training, and placement support to ELLs and immigrants. These partners include, but are not limited to, the Central Valley Immigrant Integration Collaborative, Central California Legal Services, Proteus, Inc, DSS, The Fresno Center, Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries (FIRM), and Centro La Familia.

Strengthening Services for this Vulnerable Target Group

FRWDB continues to increase programs and services for this population, as well as staff's awareness of community agencies serving this target group. Specific efforts to improve accessibility of services to ELLs, foreign born individuals, and refugees have included:

- Presence of State Center Adult Education Consortium staff at AJCCs, which increase efforts to assist participants with enrollment in high school equivalency preparation and ESL classes; referrals for financial aid; and assistance with college applications.
- FRWDB and WIOA Title I service providers have Spanish speaking staff. FRWDB marketing staff develop promotional materials in English and Spanish, as well as in other languages, based on needs. The marketing team

also uses Spanish language radio and TV stations to expand awareness of workforce development programs.

- FRWDB's English Language Learner Integrated Education and Training (IET) grant supports a model to prepare ELLs for in-demand, high quality jobs with sustainable wages. The IET instructional strategy incorporates adult education services with occupational skills training, which expedites their entrance into and advancement in the workforce. The IET program model utilizes a sector-based approach to education and training and robust employer partnerships. Expansion of the IET model will increase access to career pathways and bridge educational gaps to help ELLs with significant barriers. Centro La Familia serves as the service provider, while Valley ROP provides IET training in three (3) tracks: Certified Nursing Assistant, Wildland Firefighting, and Heavy Equipment Operator training.
- FIRM and Fresno Center are members of FRWDB's Community Partner Alliance. As such, they provide information on their services and coordinate referrals with AJCC staff. Center representatives attend FIRM's quarterly stakeholder forums.
- Increased availability of translation services for non-English-speaking customers.

E. Coordination with Local Veteran Affairs, Community-Based Organizations, and Other Local Partners That Serve Veterans

As indicated in Section II of this Plan, FRWDB's primary partner in providing workforce development services to veterans is EDD and its staff who are funded under the federal Jobs for Veterans State Grants program.

In support of workforce services for veterans, EDD's Local Veterans' Employment Representative hosts monthly meetings at the AJCC for WIOA, DOR, and special projects staff. Information is provided on community-based resources and employment opportunities. During these meetings, the partners also discuss collaboration on recruitment events targeting veterans.

FRWDB Special Projects staff outreaches to local veteran support groups, attends career fairs, and participates in presentations at the Clovis Veterans Memorial District. Staff also collaborates with America Works, a local provider of services to veterans and other specialized groups, in targeted recruitment and case management. America Works refers veterans who are interested and in need of training to the Workforce Connection Centers.

F. Collaboration with the Strategic Planning Partners to Address Environmental Sustainability

The PY 2025-28 planning cycle marks the first time that local workforce boards and RPUs have been required to address their efforts to collaborate with partners on efforts to promote environmental sustainability in connection with workforce development service delivery and oversight. While some current FRWDB projects support environmental sustainability, the four (4)-year period represented by this Plan will provide the opportunity to conduct strategic planning with system partners and stakeholders related to state, regional, and local climate goals and their connection to jobs and the economy.

Existing local efforts to promote environmental sustainability include FRWDB's leadership of the Greater Sierra Forestry Corps (GSFC), which provides training and work experience opportunities through which participants learn skills that support preemptive firefighting by reducing fuel loads in local forests and CalFire worksites. To oversee the project, FRWDB has established the GSFC Advisory Council. The Council reviews industry needs and make recommendations on programs and service delivery. GSFC leadership, staff, and Council members remain connected to industry stakeholders through their participation in forestry and environmental conferences, panels, and interviews.

Over the next four (4) years, FRWDB leadership anticipates that it will significantly expand its work in connection with industries and occupations that support and enhance climate resiliency and environmental sustainability. In addition to forestry and fire management, for which FRWDB has been an early implementer of workforce strategies and solutions, other key sectors where skills training will be critical in businesses' efforts to ensure environmental sustainability include agriculture, water management, manufacturing, transportation and warehousing, and construction, among others.

IV. WIOA TITLE I COORDINATION

The following narrative addresses services, activities, and administrative requirements of FRWDB under the WIOA Title I formula programs, along with strategies for staff preparation, training, and ongoing professional development to effectively respond to participant needs.

A. **Staff Training and Professional Development to Increase Digital Technology Skills**

FRWDB manages a training calendar for center staff and system partners that coordinates on-going training activities. This ensures that FRWDB front-line staff located at the AJCC, along with partner representatives, have up-to-date skills and knowledge necessary to work in an environment where they can communicate, access data, and provide information through a variety of digital tools, such as web-based data systems, online video-conferencing platforms, social media, email, text messaging, and more. Training in digital technology focuses on four (4) skill areas:

Skills that Enhance Work Productivity

The focus will be on providing group training and identifying tutorials, webinars, workshops, and learning strategies related to uses of technology to support managing time while working remotely; conducting effective meetings; closing any technology skill gaps; and remote communications.

Skills that Enable Learning on a Wide Range of Topics from a Variety of Sources

To ensure that staff members are able to successfully participate in training directly related to their jobs and to education and training activities that are part of their overall goals for professional development, training will be provided on various applications and platforms used in distance learning. Instruction will include remote communications via the web, sharing documents in an online classroom setting, streaming videos, and related skills.

Skills that Enhance Knowledge of Economic Issues, the Labor Market, and the Economy

Economists, labor market analysts, businesses, educators, and workforce development professionals utilize many online data management tools to access information that supports their work. Training will be provided in effective uses of these tools and technologies.

Skills that Improve the Capacity to Virtually Serve Job Seekers and Business Customers

Staff will participate in training to elevate their skills in using online platforms to conduct virtual workshops and interactive sessions with customers, partners, colleagues, and others. They will also learn to use software to obtain digital signatures and the complete e-forms.

To ensure that the staff's skills remain up to date with new technology and that new staff are exposed to the digital technology applications they need to work effectively in their roles, training will be provided annually, and refresher courses will be provided on an ongoing basis.

Recent training addressing the areas identified above have included "How to Tell Your Story with Data," along with ongoing training in various aspects of the CalJOBS system. A new series of digital literacy workshops is being rolled out in 2025. Other recent professional development and training topics include the following:

- Time Management and Creating a Work/Life Balance
- Pre-Apprenticeship Recruitment Training
- How to Help People Heal
- Trauma-Informed Care
- How to Find Hidden Assets in the Hard to Employ
- Communication Training
- Conversational Spanish
- Teamwork and Communication
- Communication Training from a Trauma-Informed Lens
- Imposter Syndrome
- Connecting Tomorrow's Trends with Today's Economy
- Time Management
- Leadership Development
- Case Noting
- Career Coaching
- Resume Writing
- WIOA Eligibility
- Customer Service
- Job Matching

Within the last two (2) years, staff has earned licenses from online training via www.knowledgecity.com and www.metrixlearning.com.

As this new four (4)-year Plan is implemented, FRWDB will secure staff and partner input on training and build an annual training plan and schedule around the topics

that are most pertinent to the FRWDB's focus, system priorities, and skills needed to support business and job seeker goals.

B. Frontline Staff Training and Professional Development to Increase Cultural Competency and Effectiveness in Working with Individuals and Groups that Have Been Exposed to Trauma

Fresno County's population is racially and ethnically diverse and this diversity is reflected in the customers who use Workforce Connection services. In addition, the workforce system staff estimates that a significant number of the customers they see may have experienced various forms of trauma, based on the vulnerable groups that they represent.

Training on cultural competence and trauma-related services addresses the following topics:

Training in Cultural Competence Skills

Training supports staff's understanding of the general characteristics of cultural diversity, cultural norms, and cultural differences. Staff will learn the importance of respecting individual cultural experiences, better communicating with others to understand, and addressing potential barriers to service and develop greater cultural sensitivity within the workplace. Through training, staff become more aware of their own cultural beliefs and culturally related behaviors, and potential power imbalances, privileges, or biases when providing services.

Training to Enhance Skills in Working with Individuals Dealing with Trauma

FRWDB staff will identify and facilitate training on working with trauma-exposed participants. This will include developing skills to promote conversation; learning how to respond to disclosure; integrating participants' safety when providing services, advocacy, outreach; and trauma-informed care. FRWDB will partner with local community agencies to share expertise, provide assessments, encourage participants to join support groups, share resources, and coordinate services. DSS has provided training in this area.

C. Coordination of Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion Activities

FRWDB's overall approach to Rapid Response and layoff aversion activities is one that focuses first on maintaining business stability so that companies and workers can compete and thrive. Delivery of these services fits into FRWDB's overall approach to business services, recognizing that the workforce development system's success hinges on the ability of businesses to create, maintain, and grow jobs for workers.

Approach to Layoff Aversion

Industry sectors whose strength will have the most significant impact on the future of the workforce area are the most appropriate targets for layoff aversion efforts. The FRWDB takes into consideration key factors for identifying such sectors. They are industries that:

- Pay middle-class wages and benefits and offer job and training ladders for low-income populations
- Create greater economic spin-off activity (i.e., an economic multiplier effect)
- Offer diversification of the economy
- Provide a foundation for new industry clusters

The FRWDB focuses on a combination of industries that provide the greatest positive impact for the region.

Early Warning System Network: Key economic stakeholders comprise the Early Warning System (EWS) network, which identifies and tracks vulnerable companies and industry sectors that might benefit from layoff aversion strategies. The EWS network identifies companies at risk of closing or moving operations before actual decisions are made by the businesses to shut down or move. The FRWDB's EWS network includes local, state, and federal agencies; chambers of commerce; industry groups; organized labor; and telecommunications/media companies; along with community-based and community development organizations.

Detecting early warning indicators is a strategy that complements other information gathered through the EWS network and aids in identifying and tracking companies in possible distress. Information sources include, but are not limited to:

- Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act (WARN) notices, which are useful in analyzing layoff activity by industry sector and occupations being laid off.
- Major trade journals, business journals, and local or regional newspapers
- Dun & Bradstreet, Econovue, or Experian, which provide information on companies and industries under stress. Relevant information can be found in the financial stress score, the commercial credit score, and through other indicators.
- Direct referrals
- Changes in management behavior
- Removal of equipment
- Sign of a "cash crunch" or unanticipated cutbacks

FRWDB's Business Services staff provide layoff aversion services that include:

Business Vitality Assessments: This service evaluates a company's ability to adapt, innovate, and grow sustainably in a dynamic environment. Vitality is a key factor in a business' long-term success and ability to manage uncertainty.

Resource Mapping: This activity identifies and creates an inventory of community resources in LWDAs. Assets may include many of the organizations in the EWS network and among the Fresno4Biz partners.

Business Turnaround Services: These services are provided when it is determined that an employer needs intervention beyond the menu of services provided by the EWS network and community partners. Services will be provided through an outside entity with expertise in business turnarounds. Potential employers are thoroughly assessed for intervention suitability based on early warning indicator data. Specific business turnaround services include the following: financial restructuring; operations and cost management; new market and product development assistance; production of business plans, financial projections, and financing memorandum; developing labor management partnerships; assistance in acquiring new equipment; assistance with training grants; and assistance with loans and guarantees.

Incumbent Worker Training: To assist in averting layoffs, Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) can be provided. Such training is an important strategy for meeting an employer's needs for skilled workers and can take place in or out of the workplace and during or after employees' work hours. Employer and worker assessments are conducted to determine whether the provision of IWT is appropriate.

Work Share Unemployment Compensation Program: The Work Share Program offers an alternative to businesses facing a reduction in force. Under the Work Share Program, an employer reduces the hours of work each week among a specific group of employees instead of laying off the employees. Wages lost to the employee due to reduced hours are offset by the receipt of UI benefits.

The Rapid Response Team and Services

When a WARN notice is issued, the FRWDB Rapid Response team proceeds with the activities described above. If, in meeting with business representatives, it becomes clear that layoffs are inevitable, the focus turns to assisting affected workers as quickly as possible, providing them access to UI and with information

and support that will result in their rapid re-employment. FRWDB coordinates services through a Rapid Response Team that connects affected employees to the one-stop system. The Team includes: FRWDB; EDD; DSS; Community Housing Council; Fresno County Public Library; California Department of Insurance; National Alliance on Mental Illness, Fresno; and Fresno4Biz (entrepreneurship).

Within 48 hours of notice, Rapid Response Team members will have met with business and labor representatives (as applicable) and organized orientations at the worksite(s) for employees to provide them information on a wide range of services and support. By connecting workers to Workforce Connection services (or those of the workforce system in the county where they live) the Team's objective is to quickly assess workers' skills, identify the needs for any training or support, and make referrals to employment opportunities that are aligned to the laid off individual's skills, experience, and needs. Many workers are quickly reemployed, while others train for new skills prior to returning to work.

D. Services and Activities Available under WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs

FRWDB offers a wide range of services for job seekers enrolled in the WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. Services meet the needs of individuals with various levels of education and work experience and job seekers from vulnerable populations who may have one (1) or more barriers to employment. Services are designed to prepare participants for entry-level and higher positions with businesses in Fresno County, particularly businesses within the priority sectors that are identified in the San Joaquin Valley and Associated Counties PY 2025-2028 Regional Plan (stanworkforce.com/about-us/strategic-planning/)

One-Stop Delivery System

FRWDB maintains four (4) Workforce Connections/AJCC locations: Two (2) comprehensive sites in Fresno and two (2) affiliate sites, which are located in Mendota and Parlier. Core and AJCC partners are co-located full-time, part-time, or by appointment at the comprehensive and affiliate centers. Staff utilizes technology for partner referrals and co-enrollment to ensure participants have access to all workforce system services. This technology includes Unite Us, CalJOBS common case management system, e-mail, cloud data repositories, and web-based virtual platforms.

Under FRWDB's current model, one (1) contractor provides WIOA Adult program services, and another contractor provides Dislocated Worker program services across Fresno County. FRWDB's service model ensures services are available for individuals with barriers to employment who may require longer-term career and training services. Efforts are continuously made to bring more services online to create greater access. This is especially important as Fresno County is largely rural with limited public transportation. As one means of promoting greater access to web-based services, FRWDB will provide training on digital literacy.

WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker Services

FRWDB's AJCC system offers three (3) levels of career services: Basic Career Services, Individualized Career Services, and Training Services. These are supplemented by follow-up services. Services are provided in no specific sequence. Instead, services are tailored to meet the needs of individuals, while still allowing for tracking of outcomes for reporting purposes.

Basic Career Services: Basic Career Services are made available to all individuals, and include:

- *Outreach, Intake and Orientation* services that are available to all job seekers. Once applicants view an online orientation, they are able to submit an appointment/referral request form.
- *Determinations of Eligibility for WIOA.* Individuals who do not meet WIOA eligibility criteria may continue to access Basic Career Services and may be referred to partner programs and those of community-based agencies.
- *Initial Assessment of Skill Levels* are conducted that address literacy, numeracy, and English language proficiency, as well as aptitudes, abilities, and supportive service needs.
- *Labor Market Information* is available including job vacancy listings, information on in-demand industry sectors and occupations, regional labor market information, and information on non-traditional employment.
- *Partner Information and Referrals* are based on individual needs and requests from customers.
- *Training Provider Information* includes data on performance and costs of programs offered by eligible providers of training services, adult education, and career and technical education.
- *Assistance in Establishing Eligibility for Programs of Financial Aid Assistance* for training and education programs not provided under WIOA.
- *Supportive Services Information* includes types, limits, and sources.
- *Unemployment Insurance Information Assistance* includes support for filing unemployment compensation claims.

A Self-Reliance Team, which is comprised of AJCC provider staff, is responsible for interviewing participants who have requested Individualized Career or Training

services. The purpose of this interview is to determine the best course of action for the participant to prepare for employment.

Individualized Career Services: These services are provided when needed for an individual to obtain or retain employment. AJCC staff relies principally on assessments to determine the need for and appropriateness of individualized career services. Included are:

- *Job Readiness Workshop:* This activity is comprised of modular, hands-on, engaging activities that focus on eight (8) key skill areas: Adaptable and Productive Problem Solver; Digital Literacy; Learning, Creativity and Adaptability; Communicator and Collaborator; Responsible and Ethical Decision Maker; Life Skills; Personal Development; and Resumes.
- *Skills Assessments:* These include computerized O*NET Interest Profiler and Work Importance Profiler (Values/Importance) assessments and WorkKeys® Applied Math, Workplace Documents, and Graphic Literacy assessments.
- *Individual Employment Plans:* These customized plans are developed through an in-depth interviewing and evaluation process to identify employment barriers and appropriate employment goals. The plan outlines activities to attain career objectives.
- *Interview Workshops:* Participants are exposed to interviewing techniques and strategies. They are presented with examples of strong responses to interview questions. At the end of each module of this training, participants complete module worksheets creating a personalized answer to commonly asked questions.
- *Group or Individual Counseling*
- *Financial Literacy* services are provided based on individual needs.
- *Supportive Services*, including services such as transportation, childcare, uniforms, and tools required for employment.
- *English Language Acquisition* and integrated education and training programs are provided based on individual need.
- *Job Readiness Assistance*
- *Job Search and Placement Assistance*

Training Services: FRWDB provides access to a wide range of training programs, which fall broadly into two (2) types: Institutional (classroom) training programs, and work-based training programs, which are developed directly with employers and include activities such as on-the-job training, transitional jobs, or customized training.

- Occupational skills training, including training for nontraditional employment
- On-the-job training
- Incumbent worker training
- Programs that combine workplace training with related instruction, which may include cooperative education programs

- Training programs operated by the private sector
- Skill upgrading and retraining
- Entrepreneurial training
- Transitional jobs
- Adult education and literacy activities
- Customized training conducted with a commitment by an employer

Follow-Up Services

For 12 months, follow-up services may be provided to participants, including technical skills training, counseling, mentoring, crisis intervention, life skills, or emergency support required to sustain long-term employment.

Priority of Service

As outlined in the guidance provided in EDD Workforce Services Directive 24-06, priority is provided in the following order:

- Veterans and eligible spouses, who are also recipients of public assistance, are low income or are basic skills deficient.
- Adults who are recipients of public assistance are low income or are basic skills deficient.

An applicant's priority status is established during the process of determining eligibility. All applicants complete an initial CASAS assessment to determine if they are basic skills deficient. Whether an applicant is unable to compute or solve problems or read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society is determined through structured assessments and observation by the eligibility staff.

FRWDB has established guidelines for AJCC staff to obtain and maintain appropriate documentation to support any of the criteria listed under the priority of service. If staff is unable to obtain the required supporting documentation, a waiver request must be submitted and approved prior to the use of self-attestation (i.e., an applicant statement).

E. Services and Activities Available under WIOA Title I Youth Program

FRWDB's Young Adult Services program serves WIOA-eligible individuals ages 14 to 24, offering a wide variety of services that are customized to the needs and preferences of each participant.

WIOA Youth Programs and Service Delivery Sites

Youth programs are delivered by competitively procured providers with experience in offering workforce development services to both in-school and out-of-school youth. Youth services are provided across Fresno County from two (2) urban and two (2) rural locations. These locations ensure that services are within reasonable distance to youth no matter where in the County they reside.

Youth Services

Services and activities fall broadly into three (3) categories to which youth are oriented when they first inquire about the program:

Academic Assistance: Services include tutoring in reading and math; high school diploma and GED assistance; dropout re-engagement assistance; college and vocational training preparation assistance; and assistance in preparing for and transitioning to post-secondary education or career technical education.

Job Readiness: This process prepares youth to succeed in the Fresno County labor market by allowing the youth to explore and develop employability skills through activities such as: soft skills job readiness workshops; interview preparation workshops; work-based learning opportunities; pre-apprenticeship opportunities; vocational skills training; entrepreneurial training; leadership activities; career guidance, coaching, and counseling; and job placement assistance.

Follow-up services: Support and guidance from an Academic and Career Advisor is provided to youth for up to 12 months after WIOA closure. This may include links to mentoring programs, personal and leadership development opportunities, financial literacy workshops, supportive services, and education and employment referrals.

The program makes available all 14 WIOA-required Youth Program elements. Specific services aligned to these required elements include the following:

Orientation: All youth interested in receiving services are provided with a WIOA youth orientation which provides an introduction and exposes youth to all features and benefits of the program.

Eligibility Determination: Youth meet with one-on-one with a staff member to complete eligibility determination. The meeting may be conducted in-person or through videoconferencing. Eligibility documents are submitted via the CalJOBS secure messaging system, or they may be collected in person. Applicants 18 years and older who are not eligible for WIOA youth program are referred to the AJCC for use of Basic Career Services and eligibility determination for Adult and/or Dislocated Worker programs.

Objective Assessment: This evaluation examines barriers, skills, education, needs for supportive services, and career and employment goals.

Basic Skills and Career Assessments: CASAS provide an initial assessment of skill levels including literacy, numeracy, and English language proficiency. O*NET (Interest Profiler and Work Importance Profiler) considers aptitudes and abilities, and helps to identify skills gaps; and the WorkKeys® assessment includes Applied Math, Workplace Documents, and Graphic Literacy and help to match career goals

Individual Service Strategy: This customized service strategy plan is a “living” document that addresses all of the following factors affecting participants’ readiness to achieve educational and employment goals. It may be updated and adjusted throughout a youth’s participation in the WIOA program.

- *Labor Market Information*, including research and information on high demand occupations, minimum requirements for jobs, career exploration, and career counseling.
- *Referrals* to services that address each youth’s needs and preferences.
- *Post-Secondary Education Information* including career technical education, short-term vocational skills certifications, and college enrollment.
- *Assistance with Financial-Aid Applications* for education programs that are not covered under WIOA.
- *Supportive Services* and/or referrals for supportive services assistance from partner agencies for childcare, transportation, housing, food, uniforms, work attire, tools, and more.
- *Leadership Development* through academic; personal development, and community and civic awareness.

Job Readiness Workshops: This required two (2)-week activity addresses soft skills, digital literacy skills, financial literacy, and building a strong resume.

Job Readiness Assistance: These activities include career guidance, coaching, counseling, identifying, and overcoming potential barriers to employment, resume writing, interview preparation, job search, and job placement assistance.

Individual Comprehensive Counseling and Guidance: All WIOA enrolled youth are assigned to an Academic Career Advisor that provides one-on-one assistance to guide and support the academic and employment goals of the youth.

Mentorship: Adult partner role model mentorship is available during program participation and for up to 12 months of program follow-up.

Work-Based Learning/Work Experience: Up to 200 hours of paid, hands-on learning experience that includes occupational and academic components.

Training Services: Activities include occupational skills training; entrepreneurial training; adult education and literacy activities; on-the-job training; and internships in combination with training.

Activities to Prepare for and Transition to Post-secondary Education and Training: Connect youth with direct referrals to postsecondary education counselors in the community colleges and assist with college and financial aid applications.

Follow-up Services: Youth are provided with no less than 12 months of follow-up services that may include assistance to retain employment, referrals to other community services, connections to adult mentorship programs, information on entrepreneurial programs, and other support services, as needed.

Services to Increase the Digital Skills of Youth

Many youth may have access to an electronic device, such as a cell phone, tablet, laptop, or desk top computer. Others do not. Digital access problems for portions of Fresno County include poor or no internet connection, especially in the rural areas. For youth participants, there may also be engagement issues, such as not wanting to turn on a web camera during virtual meetings, lack of participation, and lack of motivation.

Serving Youth with Disabilities

The Young Adult Services program ensures that all youth participants, including youth with disabilities, receive the same types and quality of services and level of support to achieve their career planning, education, skills training, and employment goals. To ensure that services for individuals with disabilities meet their full range of needs, WIOA staff may collaborate with DOR, Central Valley Regional Center, instructors and staff from local special education programs, and Community-Based Organizations to develop effective service strategies.

F. Entity Responsible for Disbursal of Grant Funds and the Competitive Process Used to Award Contracts for WIOA Title I Activities

The Fresno Area Workforce Investment Corporation is authorized as the entity responsible for the disbursal of grant funds under the Administrative Services Agreement that has been executed with the Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board.

The FRWDB competitively procures AJCC Operator, Adult and Dislocated Worker Program Career Services, and Youth services providers. AJCC Operator services are procured every four (4) years and WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker. Youth Program services are procured every five (5) years. During the four (4)-year period covered by this Local Plan, Adult Program and Dislocated Worker Program will be procured in 2026, with AJCC Operator services being procured in 2025. Youth Program services will be bid in 2028.

G. How the Local Board Fulfills the Duties of the AJCC Operator and/or the Career Services Provider or Selection of AJCC Operators and Career Services Providers

FRWDB competitively procures the services of both an AJCC/One-Stop Operator (OSO) and career services providers for the WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs.

AJCC/One-Stop Operator Function

The OSO is responsible for coordinating service delivery, responsibilities, and contributions of required WIOA partners as agreed upon in the FRWDB WIOA Partner MOU. Specific duties and responsibilities include the following:

- Convening meetings to support implementation of the FRWDB's MOUs between WIOA One-Stop partners.
- Coordinating with the One-Stop partners to develop agendas and facilitate meetings.
- Convening monthly site council (partners delivering services at specific centers) meetings to ensure service coordination.
- Convening quarterly system-level partner meetings.
- Convening other partner meetings required to support MOU implementation.
- Implementing policies established by the FRWDB.
- Ensuring the implementation of partner responsibilities and contributions agreed upon in the FRWDB's MOUs.
- Coordinating with other WDBs and operators for regional planning purposes, as directed by FRWDB staff.
- Coordinating with partners in program design, implementation, and capacity building/staff development; and
- Completing other duties that may be necessary to fulfill WIOA requirements of and maintain compliance as an OSO.

The OSO is also responsible for assisting FRWDB staff in meeting continuous improvement goals established as a result of the 2024 AJCC Certification process.

Career Services Provider Function

The career service provider function involves the implementation and delivery of career services and follow-up described in section IV.D, above.

V. SYSTEM GOALS AND PRIORITIES FOR PROGRAM YEARS 2025-28

As the Local Plan concerns not just the work of the WIOA Title I programs administered by FRWDB, but all of the organizations, programs, and services that comprise the local workforce development system, FRWDB leadership sought input from a range of system partners and stakeholders. As described in Attachment I, a public input session was held to gather input on key issues affecting the delivery of services to job seekers and businesses.

The priorities described below capture key issues, ideas, and recommendations expressed during the community input sessions. These nine (9) priority areas will be addressed by FRWDB and partner representatives throughout the four (4)-year period covered by this Plan.

A. Increasing Service Accessibility

FRWDB and the workforce system partners recognize that ensuring the greatest possible access to services is critical to making certain that workers are prepared for in-demand jobs and that there is a job ready pool of talent available to local businesses. Access is reliant on widespread information about the availability of services, physical locations to which customers can easily travel, access points in remote locations where brick-and-mortar career centers are not located, online services, and service schedules outside traditional business hours, among other strategies. FRWDB and the full range of stakeholders should regularly examine and take action to improve access to services.

B. Services for Rural Communities

System partners have identified service needs in rural communities as an ongoing challenge. As suggested in the preceding narrative, ensuring access to services in rural areas requires multiple strategies. Partners are committed to providing services to remote areas through access points, technology, and a structured visitation program through which services are brought to communities on a regular basis. These strategies will continue to be tested, adjusted, and implemented.

C. Support for Refugees and English Language Learners

There is a significant population of refugees and English Language Learners in the greater Fresno area, which is diverse in its circumstances and needs. There are several local organizations that work with refugees, foreign born individuals, and those learning English on issues ranging from resettlement and housing to employment and skills preparation. These organizations and their customers could benefit from stronger collaboration with the Workforce Connection centers and the

full range of workforce system partners. With skills among individuals from these groups varying from entry-level to highly technical, support from the workforce system could better connect refugees and others to jobs that require their skill sets.

D. Support for Older Workers

A range of factors is contributing to the increase in older workers remaining in or returning to the workforce. While these experienced individuals bring skills and traits that are highly valued by many employers, they also face challenges in preparing for, securing, and retaining employment. Digital technology, job application and work processes, and the dynamics of a multigenerational workforce are issues that may affect the success of older individuals. The workforce system should examine opportunities to provide stronger, more focused support for older job seekers.

E. Increasing Digital Skills and Ability to Utilize Advanced Technology

A focus on developing the digital skills of job seekers has been ongoing for several years. However, stakeholders point out that the type and range of skills needed to apply for, secure, and succeed in a job is ever evolving. The ability to utilize digital processes is now a requirement to apply for employment with most companies. Even for job classifications that require few digital technology skills, companies utilize digital processes for time and record keeping, payment of wages, human resources functions, and more. In addition, technology tools themselves are changing, and the introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) tools is altering the ways jobs are done and skills requirements to secure and keep jobs. FRWDB, its service providers, and partners must regularly reexamine and update the content of and approach to digital skills training.

F. Business Partners and Securing Business Input

The local workforce system connects with businesses in a multitude of ways, with efforts varying in effectiveness and impact. Workforce system stakeholders continue to observe that programs built on strong partnerships with businesses tend to have impressive results in terms of job placement and retention. FRWDB and the system partners should examine how they can build additional partnerships with business, especially companies in growth and emerging industries. As part of this effort, the board should identify processes that are effective for securing business input on existing and anticipated needs, including focus groups and sector partnerships.

G. Support for Entrepreneurs

Workforce system stakeholders acknowledge that many individuals seeking support from the workforce system have an interest in entrepreneurship and would be good candidates to launch a microbusiness using existing skill sets or skills that

they could acquire from locally available training programs and Workforce Connection career services. While there are services within the LWDA that could support entrepreneurs and new business startups, the workforce system partners should consider ways in which they could shape such support and what a structured entrepreneurship strategy for system participants would look like.

H. Workforce Development System Staff Learning and Development

To ensure that the services and strategies of the local workforce development delivery system continue to keep pace with changes in the labor market and innovations in workforce preparation, FRWDB, along with core and other workforce system partners, must ensure that the knowledge and skills of frontline staff and management remain up to date. Among the information and training that must be regularly updated and reinforced is skills needed by businesses in key sectors of the Central Valley economy, career services strategies, information on training programs and modalities, labor market information, barriers faced by job seekers, and services available in and around Fresno County for job seekers and businesses.

I. Greater Resources

While FRWDB as well as other public and non-profit organizations have done an excellent job of bringing an array of specialized resources and funding to the region, stakeholders agree that additional resources are critically needed to provide the full range of services necessary to support businesses in hiring and developing workers and job seekers in preparing for work. Local organizations should continue to explore opportunities for secure funding, including those where joint ventures among the partners could increase the likelihood of success.

VI. ATTACHMENTS

The following Items are included as part of the Local Plan.

- Attachment 1: Stakeholder and Community Engagement Summary
- Attachment 2: Public Comments Received that Disagree with the Local Plan
- Attachment 3: Signature Page

Attachment 1**STAKEHOLDER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY**

To facilitate the engagement of stakeholders in planning for the local workforce development delivery system and in the development of the PY 2025-2028 Local Plan, the FRWDB hosted a community and stakeholder forum focused on topics affecting strategies and services across the system. The topic for the forum was *"Priorities for Developing the Local Workforce."*

Questions/topics addressed included, but were not limited to:

- What services are most needed by individuals who are new to the workforce and those who are unemployed and looking to return to work?
- What are the training programs of most interest to local job seekers and how do these align with jobs available in the local labor market?
- Are there opportunities for the local workforce, education, and community service agencies to work together to serve job seekers more effectively?
- In what ways do services need to be "modernized" to meet the evolving needs of workers and businesses?
- Other ideas about the development of the local workforce.

This forum was held in-person on October 10, 2024

The table below summarizes participation in the community and stakeholder engagement process to develop the FRWDB PY 25-28 Local Plan

Mode of Outreach	Target of Outreach	Summary of Attendance	Comments
Email	Employment Development Department	Attended	Participated in forum discussions
Email	Department of Rehabilitation	Attended	Participated in forum discussions
Email	Center for Employment Opportunities	Did not attend	

Mode of Outreach	Target of Outreach	Summary of Attendance	Comments
Email	Fresno County Department of Social Services	Did not attend	
Email	Central Valley Women's Entrepreneur Center	Attended	Participated in forum discussions
Email	Valley Community SBDC	Did not attend	
Email	United Way Fresno Madera	Did not attend	
Email	Butte County Office of Education Back 2 Work	Attended	Participated in forum discussions
Email	Firebaugh Las Deltas Unified School District	Did not attend	
Email	Reedley College	Did not attend	
Email	Grace Family Lov LLC	Did not attend	
Email	Federal Bureau of Prison-Mendota	Did not attend	
Email	Shine-Helping Young Mom's Shine Bright	Did not attend	
Email	River Vista Behavioral Health	Did not attend	
Email	Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist, Inc. (Veterans)	Did not attend	

Mode of Outreach	Target of Outreach	Summary of Attendance	Comments
Email	West Care	Attended	Participated in forum discussion
Email	Fresno City College	Did not attend	
Email	Fresno County- Probation Department	Did not attend	
Email	Center for Employment Opportunities	Did not attend	
Email	CalVet	Attended	Participated in forum discussions
Email	SER-SCSEP Director	Did not attend	
Email	Mayors Office of Community Affairs- City of Fresno	Attended	Participated in forum discussions
Email	California Indian Manpower	Did not attend	
Email	Department of State Hospital- Coalinga	Did not attend	
Email	Central La Familia	Did not attend	
Email	Western Governors University	Did not attend	
Email	State of California- California Conservation	Did not attend	
Email	Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries	Attended	Participated in forum discussions
Email	Fresno State TRIO	Did not attend	

Mode of Outreach	Target of Outreach	Summary of Attendance	Comments
Email	State Center Adult Education Consortium	Attended	Participated in forum discussions
Email	Fresno County Library	Did not attend	
Email	Fresno County Department of Social Services	Did not attend	
Email	Office of Senator Shannon Grove	Attended	Participated in forum discussions
Email	America Works of California	Attended	Participated in forum discussions
Email	Central La Familia	Did not attend	
Email	Fresno City College-Applied Technology	Attended	Participated in forum discussions
Email	Catholic Charities	Did not attend	
Email	Fresno County Veterans Services Office	Did not attend	
Email	Central Labor Council Partnership	Attended	Participated in forum discussions
Email	Small Business Association	Did not attend	
Email	Job Corps	Did not attend	
Email	California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation-Parole	Did not attend	
Email	America Works-Ticket to Work	Did not attend	

Mode of Outreach	Target of Outreach	Summary of Attendance	Comments
Email	Fresno Housing	Did not attend	
Email	Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission	Did not attend	
Email	Fresno EDC	Did not attend	
Email	Owens Valley Career Development Center	Did not attend	
Email	EDD-Local Veteran Representative	Did not attend	
Email	Reading and Beyond	Did not attend	
Email	Fresno Mission	Did not attend	
Email	Fresno County Superintendent of Schools	Did not attend	
Email	Turning Point of Central California	Did not attend	
Email	Deaf and Hard of Hearing Service Center	Did not attend	
Email	Central California Food Bank-CalFresh Outreach	Did not attend	
Email	Fresno Area Hispanic Foundation-Community Service Assistant	Did not attend	
Email	Habitat for Humanity	Did not attend	
Email	Community Vocational Services	Did not attend	

Attachment 2

PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED THAT DISAGREE WITH THE PY 2025-25 LOCAL PLAN

1. From: _____ Date: _____

Comment:

2. From: _____ Date: _____

Comment:

(Placeholder comment pending completion of public comment period) There were no comments received during the public comment period for the PY 25-28 Local Plan.

SIGNATURE PAGE

The following signatures represent approval of the Local Plan by Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board and the Chief Elected Official for the Local Workforce Development Area.

For the **Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board**:

Edgar Blunt, Chairperson

Date

For the **Fresno Local Workforce Area – Chief Local Elected Officials**

Jerry Dyer, Mayor, City of Fresno

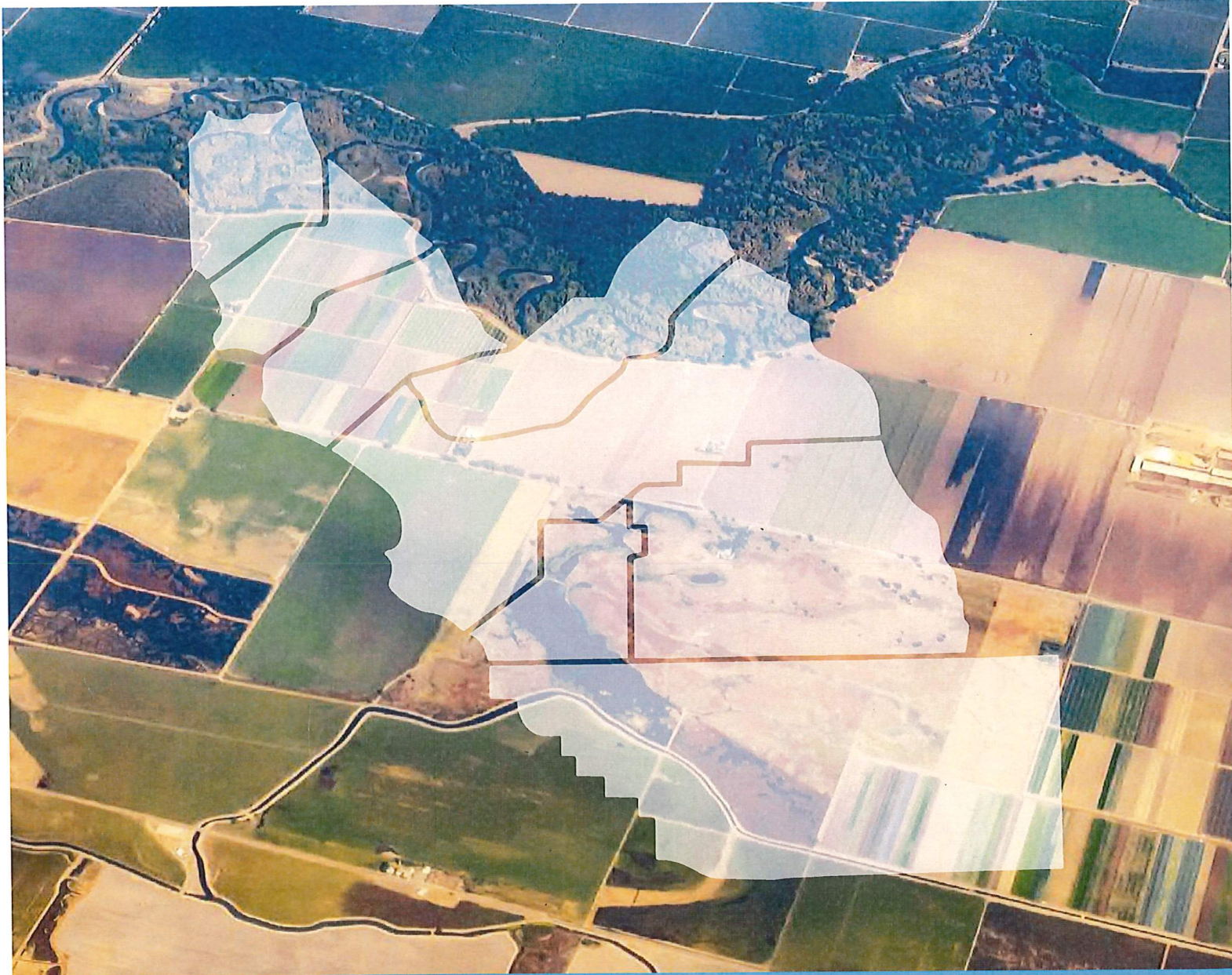
Date

Ernest Buddy Mendes, Chair, Fresno County
Board of Supervisors

Date

San Joaquin Valley & Associated Counties Regional Planning Unit

REGIONAL PLAN



2025 - 2028

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I. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

With the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014, Congress moved the national workforce system in a new direction in terms of how to approach economic and labor market demands. While establishment of local workforce areas over the last four decades has always taken into account local labor markets, WIOA recognizes that economies tend to be regional, spilling easily over jurisdictional boundaries that commerce finds inconsequential. WIOA's recognition of regional economies gave rise to California's establishment of Regional Planning Units (RPUs), which represent groups of local workforce areas that work collaboratively to develop strategies reflecting regional economic needs of business and the workforce. In accordance with federal and state guidance, the San Joaquin Valley and Associated Counties (SJVAC) RPU has developed this four-year Regional Plan to guide strategic initiatives throughout Program Years (PY) 2025-28, which covers July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2029.

A. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

Passed by Congress with a wide bipartisan majority, WIOA is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in a global economy. WIOA represents the most recent version of federal workforce legislation providing funding to states and local areas to administer and operate workforce development programs. WIOA was preceded by the Job Training Partnership Act (active from 1982 to 2000) and the Workforce Investment Act (active from 2000 to 2015).

WIOA requires that a workforce development board (WDB) be established in each local workforce development area (LWDA). The area's chief local elected officials appoint members to the WDB. Local workforce development boards are business-led and the majority of members must come from the business community. Required WDB members also include representatives from labor, education, economic development, and specific federally funded workforce programs. The chief local elected officials may also select representatives from other groups, such as community-based organizations, to sit on the WDB.

While the PY 2025-28 Regional Plan addresses the programs, services, and activities of many organizations that derive their primary funding from a wide range of federal, state, and private programs, it is WIOA that requires the development and publication of the Plan and that prescribes its core content.

B. Regional Plans and the WIOA Planning Structure

The SJVAC RPU Regional Plan is best understood within the context of a three-tiered planning structure envisioned by WIOA that requires development of plans at the state, regional, and local levels.

State Plans: Under WIOA, state plans communicate the vision for the statewide workforce development system. WIOA planning requirements aim to foster effective alignment of federal investments across job training and education programs, in order to coordinate service delivery among programs for shared customers; improve efficiency; and ensure that the workforce system connects individuals with high-quality job opportunities and employers. Cross-program planning promotes a shared understanding of the workforce needs within each state. California's PY 2024-2027 Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan represents agreement among the WIOA core program and other partners and serves as the framework for the development of public policy, fiscal investment, and operation of the state workforce and education systems.

Regional Plans: In states such as California, where Governors have established workforce planning regions encompassing one or more LWDBs, regional plans are required. Local WDBs within the region participate in a planning process that describes elements such as: analysis of regional labor market data, development and implementation of sector initiatives for targeted industries and in-demand occupations; coordination of workforce services with regional economic development services and providers; and establishment of regional service strategies, including use of cooperative service delivery agreements. The SJVAC RPU is one of California's fifteen workforce regions.

Local Plans: The local plan is intended to serve as a four-year action plan to develop, align, and integrate the local area's job-driven workforce development systems and provide a platform to achieve the local area's vision and strategic and operational goals. Features of the local plan include: coordination among economic development, education, and workforce partners to build a skilled workforce through innovation in, and alignment of, employment, training and education programs; implementation of job-driven strategies and services through the local career center system; and delivery of education and training to ensure that individuals, including youth and individuals with barriers to employment, have skills necessary to compete in the job market and that employers have a ready supply of skilled workers.

WIOA requires that Local Plans be incorporated into the Regional Plan. Therefore, the PY 2025-28 SJVAC RPU Regional Plan includes the PY 2025-28 Local Plans developed by the region's eight local WDBs.

C. California's Strategic Workforce Priorities

California's Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan describes the state's priorities for the public workforce system. Under the leadership of the Governor and the Secretary of the Labor and Workforce Development Agency, California's vision for the future of workforce development is centered on the establishment and growth of a workforce system that promotes opportunity, job quality, and environmental sustainability for all Californians. The state is committed to developing a workforce system that enables economic growth and shared prosperity for employers and employees, especially those

with barriers to employment, by investing in industry partnerships, job quality, and meaningful skills attainment. One area in which the California Workforce Development Board (CWDB) pursues these aims is through its “High Road” programming. High Road refers to a “family of strategies” for achieving a participatory economy and society by aligning workforce, economic policy, and different interests with long-term goals of environmental sustainability, high-quality jobs, and a resilient economy. High Road emphasizes the complementary nature of these aims over the long term. In practice, High Road policy builds upon areas where the interest of employers (in trained and productive workers), workers and jobseekers (in good quality and accessible jobs), and environmental protection (for a sustainable future for all) overlap to create pathways to high-quality jobs while raising the profile of existing ones.

In consideration of the practical implementation of High Road principles in workforce development policy, the CWDB describes in the current State Plan four distinct “flavors” or styles of intervention. These interventions are directly relevant to High Road projects but also inform, to a greater or lesser extent, all of CWDB’s workforce efforts. They include: (1) lifting all workers to the “High Road;” (2) professionalizing precarious work (i.e., employment that is temporary, non-standard, and insecure, often with poor pay and no protection); (3) democratizing access to high-quality, middle-skill jobs; and (4) participatory planning for a low-carbon economy.

In accordance with the requirements of WIOA, both the SJVAC RPU Regional Plan Local Plan and the eight associated Local Plans support the State Plan priorities by:

- Maintaining a dual focus on providing programs and services that meet the needs and support the goals of businesses and job seekers/workers.
- Concentrating on industry sectors which drive growth and prosperity within local labor markets and regional economies.
- Targeting jobs that offer career advancement opportunities and that lead to positions that pay family-sustaining wages and provide pathways to self-sufficiency and the middle class.
- Committing to the adoption and implementation of strategies and processes that support environmental sustainability and climate resilience through workforce development.

D. Overview of the SJVAC RPU and the Region

The parties to the Regional Plan are the eight local workforce development boards within the RPU, which include seven boards representing single counties (Fresno, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Tulare) and one consortium board representing three counties (Kern, Inyo and Mono). Through their Central California Workforce Collaborative (CCWC) network, the WBDs were all actively involved in the regional planning process by reviewing State guidance; engaging external expertise to assist in the process; providing resource documents; organizing regional forums; and meeting as a group to share insights, make decisions, and establish priorities for regional

coordination. As the designated lead for the RPU, development of the PY 2025-28 Regional Plan was managed by the Stanislaus County WDB.

The boundaries of the RPU are those defined by the ten counties referred to above. The area comprises approximately 40,760 square miles, roughly 25% of California. With approximately 4.3 million residents, the region is more populous than 25 states.

E. Guiding Principles

In addition to support for the State Plan, the SJVAC RPU Regional Plan is built upon five principles, which represent the values, vision, and commitment of the Central Valley's workforce stakeholders. They include:

The Workforce System is Demand-Driven: Industry drives job demand and businesses define skills needed for jobs. It is the obligation of the workforce system to train candidates in these skills, preparing them for careers.

Regional Sector Pathways are an Effective Approach to Meeting Demand: Structured, high-quality education, training, and support programs offer opportunities for success for everyone who is preparing for a career.

The Workforce System Encompasses All Stakeholders: The system is not merely WIOA programs. Rather, it is comprised of the work, resources, and unique capabilities of all organizations and individuals with a stake in building and maintaining a prosperous, competitive economy.

Long-Term Regional Collaboration: The Central California Workforce Collaborative (CCWC) is a manifestation of a partnership that has existed for 40 years. Through the joint efforts of the eight WDBs, this collaboration has yielded many benefits.

Climate Resilience and Environmental Sustainability Are Critical to the Regional Economy: Every occupation and industry is affected by climate change and/or influences the environment to varying degrees. As California moves toward a carbon-neutral economy, entire industries are changing, along with the jobs, knowledge, and skills needed within those sectors.

F. Approach to and Context for Plan Development

To support development of the PY 2025-28 Plan, the region contracted with experienced workforce and economic development subject matter experts to design the stakeholder engagement process, analyze labor market and workforce data, facilitate community forums, and craft the language of the plan. Local board directors, managers, and staff were active during every stage of the plan development. The content of the Plan contemplates myriad opportunities and challenges that are expected to persist over its four-year span. Among these are:

Potential Challenges

An Aging Workforce: A large number of baby boomers and even later generations are retiring, creating a potential gap in experienced workers.

Skill Shortages Resulting from Automation: Rapid technological advancements, including artificial intelligence and robotics, may render certain skills obsolete, requiring significant workforce upskilling.

Attracting and Retaining Talent: Competition for skilled workers is expected to intensify, making it challenging to attract and retain talent.

A Multigenerational Workforce: Managing diverse generations with different expectations and work styles within the same workplace.

Work-Life Balance and Flexibility: Balancing employee demands for flexible work arrangements with the need for productivity and performance.

Funding for the Workforce System: Managing costs that continue to rise and the increasingly complex needs of customers, while funding for the system has not kept pace.

Key Opportunities

Leveraging artificial intelligence in recruitment: Utilizing these tools to analyze candidate data and efficiently identify talent matches.

Upskilling and reskilling initiatives: Investing in training programs to equip current employees with the skills needed for emerging technologies.

Focus on employee experience: Prioritizing employee well-being, engagement, and career development to improve retention.

Remote work and hybrid models: Offering flexible work arrangements to cater to diverse employee needs.

Data-driven decision making: Utilizing data analytics to inform workforce strategies and talent management.

Building a learning culture: Encouraging continuous learning and adaptability to keep pace with technological advancement.

G. Program Year 2025-28 Regional System Priorities

During the process used to develop the PY 2025-28 Regional Plan, business and industry leaders, community members, regional stakeholders, and system partners were invited to participate in a series of discussions regarding the direction of the local workforce system over the next four years. As a result of these discussions, the following priorities have been identified:

- Focus on key industries
- Support businesses in managing change
- Engage businesses in the design and delivery of training
- Address climate impacts on economy and work
- Identify and train the workforce in core employability skills
- Prepare youth and young adults for careers
- Recognize changes in worker priorities
- Leverage under-resourced workers
- Bring services to communities
- Expand collaboration

Section IX of this plan summarizes these and other regional issues, strategies, approaches, and key considerations that workforce system leadership and system partners will examine over the four-year course of this plan.

II. ANALYTICAL OVERVIEW OF THE REGION

The Regional Plan for the Central Valley provides an overview of the region's economy and workforce environment and describes collaborative strategies across the eight local workforce development areas. Leveraging a broad range of expertise and resources, the SJVAC RPU has completed an analysis of labor market data, as well as economic conditions and trends in the region, and analysis of the educational attainment of the current workforce.

As the lead organization for the SJVAC RPU, Stanislaus County WDB engaged the Tulare County WIB to complete data analysis required for the Plan. In January 2025, Tulare County published the results of this analysis in a report titled "[San Joaquin Valley Regional Planning Unit: Data Analysis for Regional Plan PY 2025-28.](#)" The analysis is accessible in its entirety through the preceding hyperlink.

Data Analysis Methodology

The data presented by Tulare County WIB representatives (hereafter "the analysts") supports regional planning objectives linked to the labor market and workforce. The analysts used publicly available data from several federal agencies, including the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bureau of Economic Analysis, and the Census Bureau, as well as from Lightcast, a private data analytics service that conducts additional analysis using public data sets, private sources, and proprietary data analytics.

Aside from Decennial Census data, which this report only contains embedded in survey benchmarks and other data smoothing methods, all data analysis is based on survey methods and derivations of those outputs. The main survey used is U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS). This is a yearly survey on a wide-reaching array of economic, social, demographic, and employment topics. Survey results are presented in 1-year estimates (ACS 1-year) and 5-year estimates (ACS 5-year). Generally, the report relies on ACS 2023 1-year data, as it presents the most current available data. In some instances ACS 5-year estimates are presented. ACS 5-year estimates cannot and should not be directly compared with ACS 1-year estimates.

In addition, the analysts make use of Industry and Occupational data that was prepared by the California Employment Development Department (EDD) for Unemployment and industry level analysis. These EDD reports also use a combination of the U.S. Department of Labor's Current Population Survey (CPS) and Current Employment Statistics (CES). EDD generally rounds figures to the nearest -100, and the estimates presented should not be interpreted as a census of workers.

Projections of employment or industry activity are derived using myriad methods. No single method, combination of methods, or algorithm can be used to predict the future. However major industry trends should be considered when devising workforce development strategies.

Lightcast shares its methodology publicly and it is available for review at no cost. A non-comprehensive list of resources is attached to the Regional Plan Data Analysis report for readers to use to further examine data.

Overview

Data analysis conducted to support the SJVAC RPU's PY 2025-28 Regional Plan serves as a critical tool to support workforce planning and strategic decision-making aimed at fostering economic growth and addressing workforce challenges within the region, including the development of career pathways linked to growth industries and other strategic and promising sectors. This comprehensive analysis of the region's labor market and economic trends will inform workforce development strategies for the coming years.

The report on which data in this section of the Plan is based highlights resilience in recovery from the pandemic, showcasing significant job growth and economic gains across key sectors and industries. Between 2019 and 2024, total nonfarm employment grew by 9.67%, with sectors like Educational and Health Services (+19.55%) and Trade, Transportation, and Utilities (+12.77%) leading this expansion. However, the region continues to see weakness relative to the rest of the state when it comes to high wage employment in sectors such as technology, media, and other higher end service and manufacturing jobs.

The San Joaquin Valley has taken advantage of its geographic endowments to support the emerging logistics and e-commerce economy. Affordable land and the central location of the region relative to the rest of the state have led to strong job growth in associated industries. These growth sectors are driven by increased consumer demand for healthcare and logistics services, positioning the Central Valley as a critical hub for e-commerce and community services. Conversely, traditional sectors like agriculture experienced job losses, with Crop Production declining by 7,531 jobs (-12%). This trend reflects broader challenges such as water scarcity, advancements in automation used in agriculture, and Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) related water conservation, which all underscore the importance of adapting workforce strategies to these economic shifts.

Despite these advancements, challenges remain in addressing structural employment disparities and workforce skill gaps. The region is undereducated and earns less relative to the rest of the state. Addressing these educational and skill deficits is critical to unlocking the full potential of the region's workforce. By investing in targeted training programs and educational initiatives, the region can bridge these gaps, ensuring sustained economic growth and a more equitable labor market.

A. Analysis of Employment and Unemployment Data

Generally, unemployment rates in the counties that comprise the SJVAC RPU can be several percentage points higher than the statewide average. Much of this discrepancy is due to the high share of farm jobs relative to the rest of the economy, as well lower

skilled employment that can lead to lower perceived or real job security. Table 1 shows that the overall unemployment rate is higher than it was five years ago, but this does not necessarily reflect a weakening of the overall labor market which continues to show expansion. A larger share of the population entering the workforce and searching for jobs, as well as persons switching careers or positions looking for higher pay or better opportunities, can also explain this rise.

In comparison to the whole of California, the SJVAC RPU has a slightly higher base unemployment rate, but largely mirrors statewide changes over a 5-year period.

TABLE 1
Unemployment Rates in SJVAC RPU
September 2024: Not Seasonally Adjusted Data

Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA)	September 2019	September 2023	September 2024	Sept. 2019-Sept. 2024 Change	Year-Over Change (Sept. 23-Sept. 24)
California	4.0%	5.0%	5.3%	1.3%	0.3%
SJV RPU	5.87%	6.68%	7.14%	1.27%	0.46%
<u>LWDAs</u>					
San Joaquin	5.0%	5.8%	6.2%	1.2%	0.4%
Stanislaus	4.9%	5.8%	6.3%	1.4%	0.5%
Merced	5.9%	7.5%	7.8%	1.9%	0.3%
Madera	5.3%	6.2%	6.7%	1.4%	0.5%
Fresno	5.7%	6.3%	6.9%	1.2%	0.6%
Kings	6.1%	6.9%	7.3%	1.2%	0.4%
Tulare	8.2%	8.9%	9.3%	1.1%	0.4%
Kern/Inyo/Mono ¹	6.2%	7.0%	7.5%	1.3%	0.5%

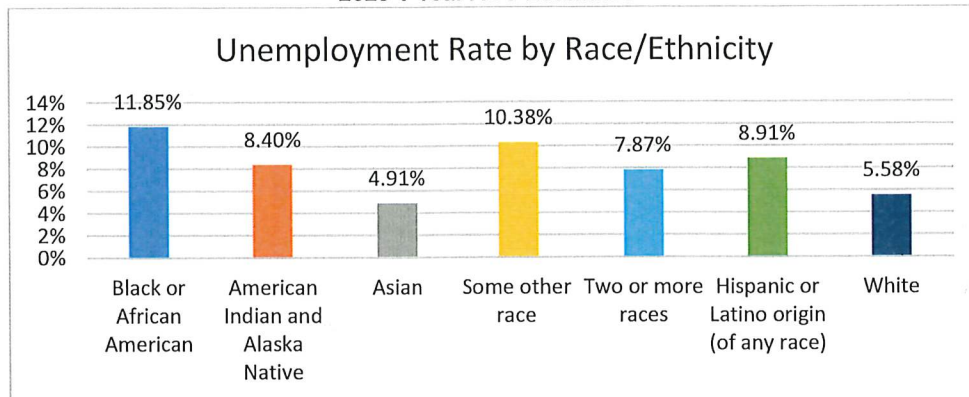
Source: Employment Development Department

¹Kern, Inyo, and Mono counties are combined into a single Local Workforce Development Area

A Closer Look at Unemployment Rates – Race/Ethnicity

The following graph uses ACS 1-Year data to examine differences in unemployment status among self-reported racial and ethnic groups. White and Asian subgroups performed best, with other minorities or self-identified racial groups having higher rates of unemployment. Black, American Indian, and Hispanic/Latino (see note below) showed much higher rates of unemployment. These systemic challenges can be tied to factors such as educational attainment, language barriers, and their over-representation in low-wage, high turnover industries. Workforce development boards and educational institutions will need to continue targeted outreach and investments into these communities to continue closing the gap.

Graph 1
SJCAV RPU Estimated Unemployment Rates by Race/Ethnicity
2023 1-Year ACS Estimates



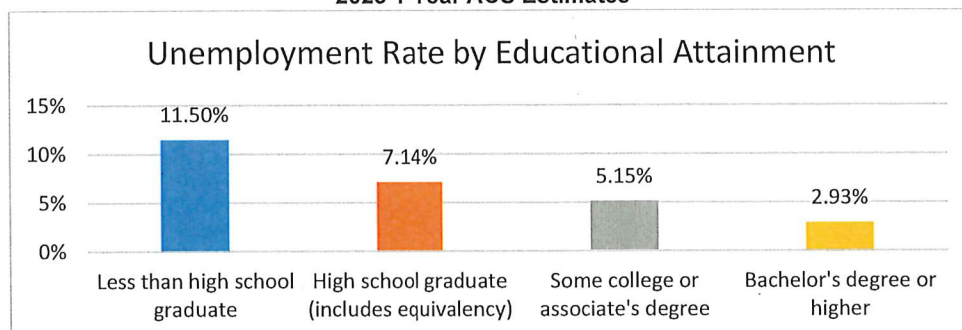
Source: ACS 1-Year Estimates, S2301 Employment Status. Does not include Mono/Inyo counties. County populations are too small to have accurate estimates for 1-Year Estimates

A Note on Race and Ethnicity: The large number of people who identify as some other race reflects a survey method decision in the way the U.S. Census Bureau classifies individuals by race. The Bureau classifies Hispanics/Latinos as an ethnic group instead of a racial group and considers ethnicity and race not to be mutually exclusive. As such, one can be Hispanic ethnically and White or Black simultaneously and the Census has different variables to reflect this. However, this ethnicity and race distinction appears to be blurred among ACS respondents. The Census Bureau reports that the vast majority of respondents who identify as some other race were Hispanics/Latinos. This same blurring of race and ethnicity may also inflate the two or more race count.

A Closer Look at Unemployment Rates – Educational Attainment

Below, Graph 2 illustrates the power that progressive levels of education play in providing job security and lower rates of unemployment. The types of occupations that higher educational attainment allow stabilizes and otherwise provides job security in a way that those without a high school degree do not experience.

Graph 2
SJVAC RPU Estimated Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment -
2023 1-Year ACS Estimates



Source: ACS 1-Year Estimates, S2301 Employment Status

Labor Force Participation

Labor Force Participation is a measure of the population of those working or seeking work as a ratio to the full population size of a given area. The United States experienced a severe dip in Labor Force Participation during the pandemic, but it has largely recovered to previous trendlines, last estimated at 63.8%. According to those same estimates, the State of California recorded a Labor Force Participation of 64.3% and the SJVAC RPU, in the same snapshot, stood at 61.3%.

Table 3
Labor Force Participation - ACS 1-Year Estimates

	2021	2022	2023
United States	63.00%	63.50%	63.80%
California	63.40%	63.90%	64.30%
SVU RPU	59.38%	61.17%	61.30%

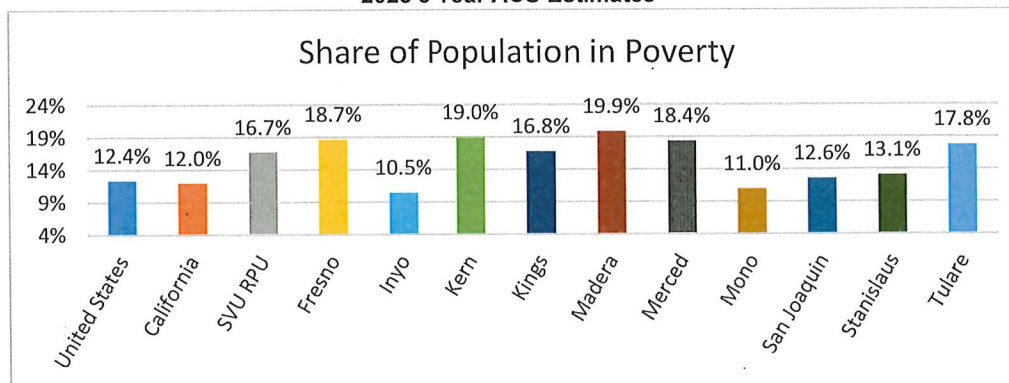
Source: 2023 ACS 1-Year estimates, S2301 Employment Status

While the region has generally lagged behind in Labor Force Participation rates, this should be viewed within the context of historical baselines and the growth in population that the SJVAC RPU has experienced relative to both the state and the rest of the nation. The total labor force is growing and remains robust, despite high baseline unemployment.

Poverty in the Region

Poverty rates in the SJVAC RPU, as one might expect based on the median earnings, are higher than in California as a whole. Interestingly, poverty measures are higher in the southern portion of the region than in the North. This may be due to the proximity to the greater Bay Area and Sacramento economies that they share. However, there are likely other underlying factors. Poverty rates have been declining for most of the region over the last several years due to a number of economic and policy factors including the post-pandemic labor shortage, changes in minimum wage, and farmworker pay structures.

Graph 3
Share of Population in Poverty - Nation, State, SJVAC RPU, and Counties
2023 5-Year ACS Estimates

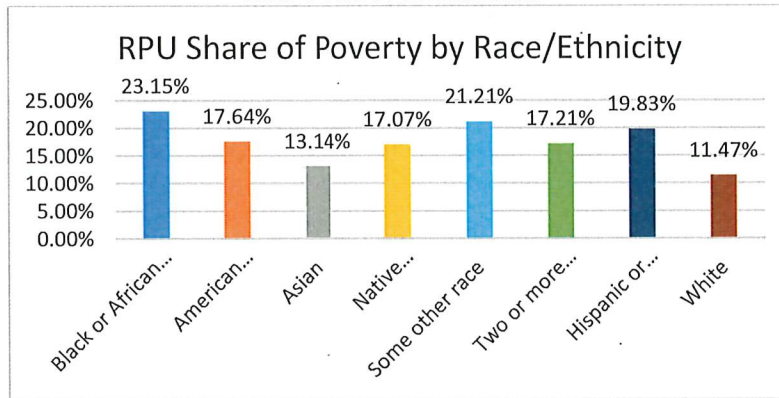


Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, S1701 Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months

A Closer Look at Poverty – Race/Ethnicity

As one might expect, the racial makeup of poverty is not evenly experienced. White, non-Hispanic, populations outperform all other recorded ethnic or race categories collected by the American Community Survey with the lowest estimated poverty rates. This tracks largely with educational attainment and unemployment statistics across the different ethnic and race groups.

Graph 4
Share of Population in Poverty, by Race/Ethnicity - San Joaquin Valley RPU
2023 1-Year ACS Estimates

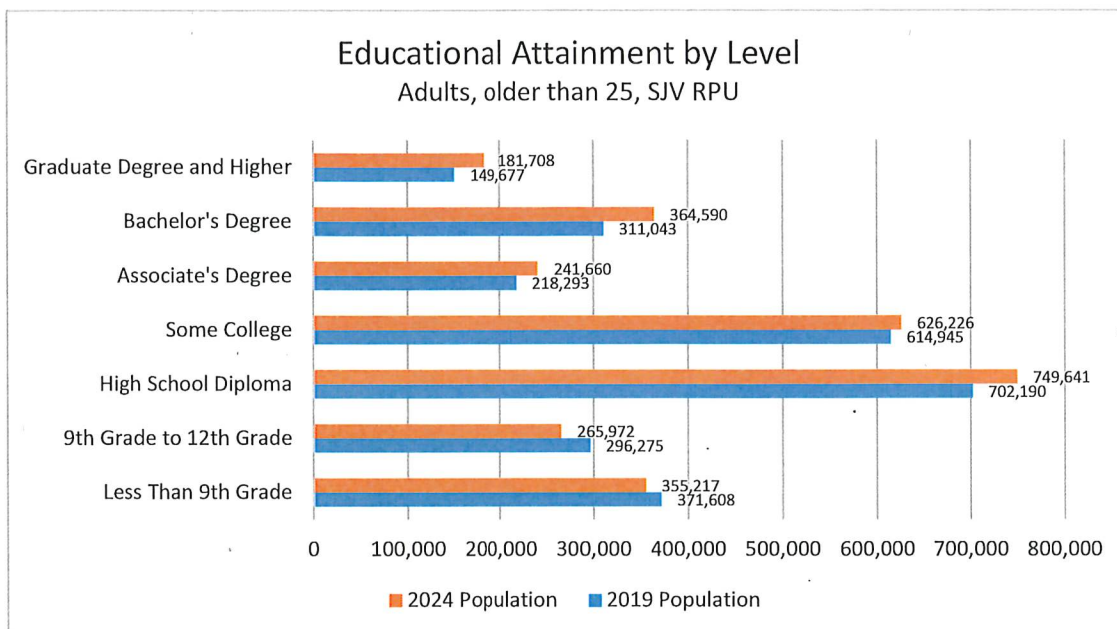


Source: ACS 1-Year Estimates, S1701 Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months

B. Analysis of the Educational and Skill Levels of the Workforce

Overall, Educational Attainment has improved for the RPU over the last five years. As seen in the following graph 5, high school diplomas, those attending college, and college degrees all increased, while those with less than a high school education decreased. With continuing emphasis on high school graduation and alternative technical pathways programs, trends seen here should continue.

Graph 5
SJVAC RPU Educational Attainment by Level Adults older than 25
2023 1-Year ACS Estimates



Source: ACS 2023 1-Year Data, EDD RPU Data Portal

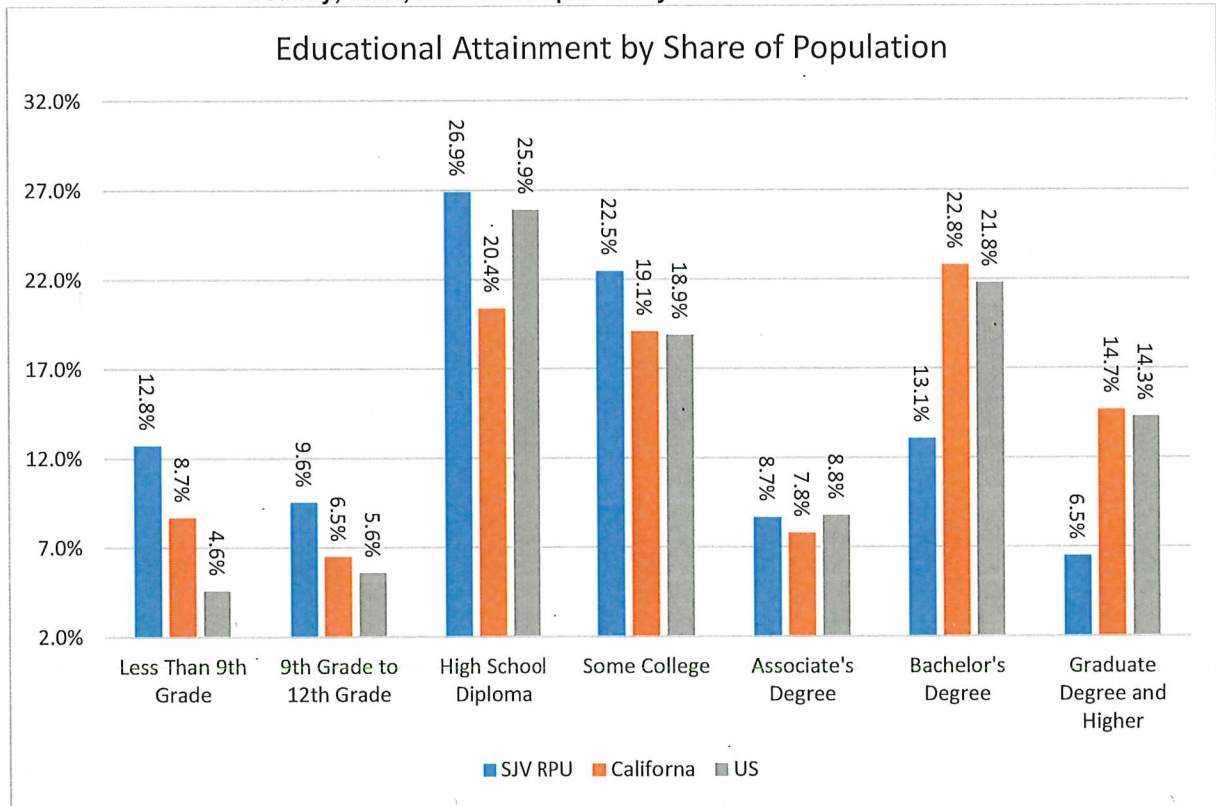
Educational Attainment – Missed Opportunities

Despite educational gains, the SJVAC RPU still lags behind the rest of the state and the nation in overall education levels. One major weakness in the region is the lack of post-secondary education options. Currently, the region is served by three California State University campuses (Stanislaus, Fresno, and Bakersfield) and one University of California campus (Merced). There are no public, 4-year degree offering institutions in 6 of the SJV RPU's 10 counties.

There is a robust community college system that has increasingly taken a leading role in post-secondary education and licensing, but those seeking bachelor's and graduate degrees are continually underserved and often seek education outside of the region, contributing to the loss of human capital in the Valley.

Additionally, rural communities often face barriers like long travel distances to colleges, fewer advanced placement courses, and lower internet connectivity, all of which can hinder educational progress. These disparities are critical, as they limit workforce opportunities and economic development in rural California, perpetuating cycles of lower income and reduced mobility. Addressing these challenges requires targeted investments in educational infrastructure, digital access, and community support programs to ensure rural residents can compete on an equal footing with their urban counterparts.

Graph 6
Educational Attainment by Share of Population
Country, State, and San Joaquin Valley RPU Adults Older Than 25



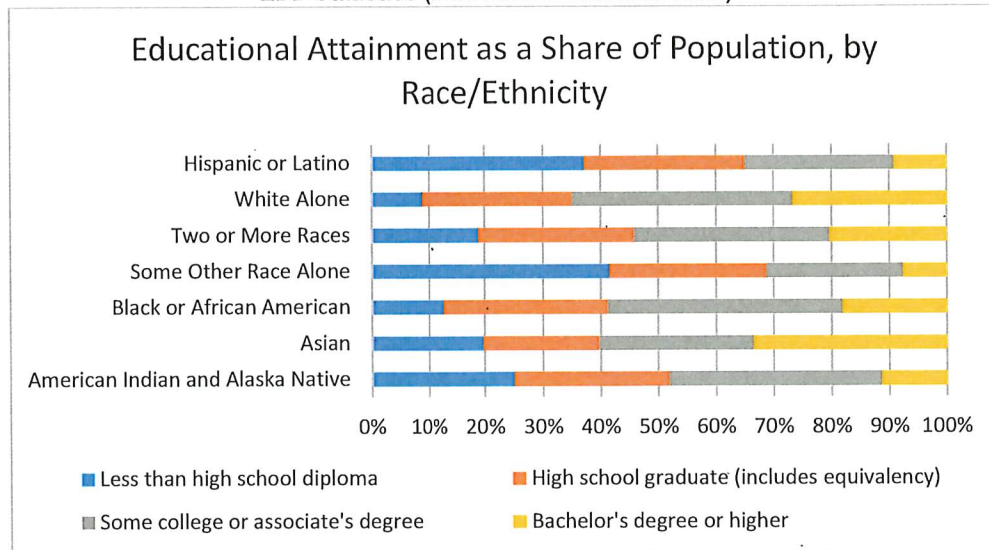
Source: EDD RPU Data Portal, Educational Attainment

A Closer Look at Educational Attainment – Race/Ethnicity

The stacked bar chart below compares the differences in educational attainment between race/ethnic groups as a ratio. Overall, this reveals that those identifying as Hispanic or Latino have the largest share of their population not possessing a high school diploma or equivalency. This may be due to the large relative share of foreign-born population that come to the U.S. as adults. However, at the other end of the educational attainment spectrum, they are also one of the demographic groups most underrepresented with higher levels of education attainment, such as bachelor's or graduate/professional degrees.

Graph 7

Educational Attainment as a share of population, by Race/Ethnicity
EDD Statistics (from ACS 5-Year Data 2022)



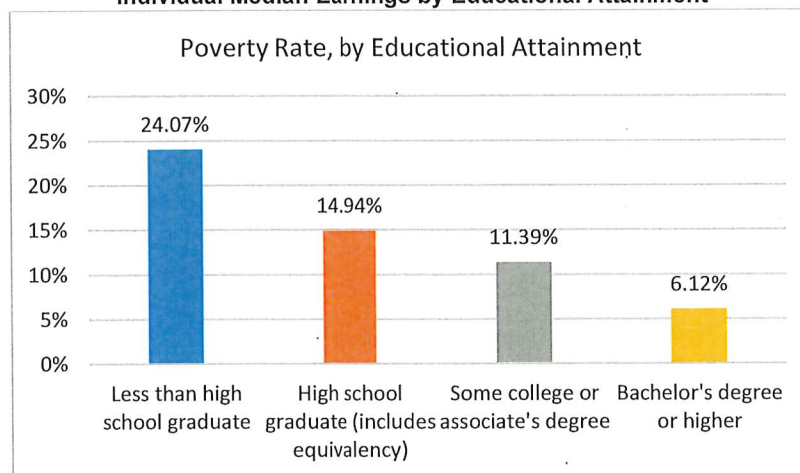
Source: EDD RPU Data Portal, Race/Ethnicity

A Closer Look at Educational Attainment – The Key Antipoverty Program

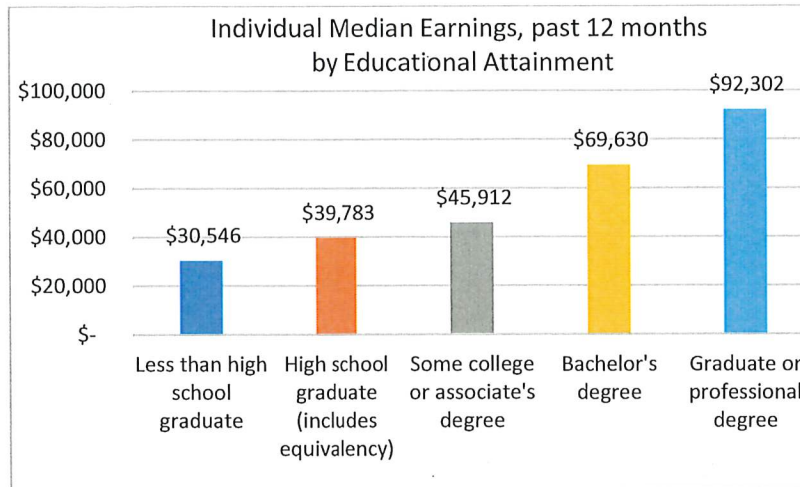
Educational Attainment significantly increase access to better-paying and more stable job opportunities. Individuals with a high school diploma are more likely to secure employment with benefits, while those with college degrees often access higher-paying professions in industries like healthcare, technology, and finance. Education also provides critical skills such as problem-solving, communication, and adaptability, which are increasingly valued in today's economy.

Graph 8 and 9

SJVAC RPU Poverty Rate by Educational Attainment
Individual Median Earnings by Educational Attainment



ACS 1-Year Data (2023)



Source, both graphs: ACS 2023 1-Year Data, San Joaquin Valley RPU Weighted Averages

C. Analysis of Industries and Occupations with Existing and Emerging Demand

This analysis takes into account both existing industry and occupational demand and demand that is emerging throughout the region. The regional Plan Data Analytics report may be viewed here: [SJVAC-Data-Analysis-Report-2025-2028](#).

Industry Sector Growth

Looking at industries that gained jobs in the last five years, the following list and analysis of growth industries filters out those with fewer than 1,000 jobs and 5-year growth of less than 7%. This removes small industries that can skew data analysis.

Transportation, Warehousing, Logistics: This collection of industries displayed strong growth in the region and appeared at or near the top of both largest and fastest growth. This is a continuing development in the economy that does not show signs of relenting, although it may slow as markets become more saturated.

Healthcare and Social Services: Hospitals, doctors offices, social services, and other public health and social services are large and important employers. This industry, especially with skilled nursing, offers the most direct path to high wages and social mobility

Construction and Related Industries: While representing a smaller portion of the labor market, this is an important sector to invest in and keep a close eye on, given its status as a leading economic indicator as well as offering high wages for skilled trade work.

Education and other Public Sectors: In many areas of the region, especially in rural towns, this sector is the highest paying and requires the most education. Teachers, public administrators, and public safety are vital skills and resources to the region's communities and a lack of investment can risk atrophying already stressed public entities.

Restaurants and Recreation: While not an industry that is seen as a lynchpin of economic activity, it does suggest a robust economy with spending money that can support and expand these offerings. Another contributing factor can be found in an increase in outdoor tourism driven by the pandemic and supported by the many public lands, national parks, and other natural outdoor tourism activities in the SJVAC RPU.

Manufacturing: Manufacturing, outside of post-harvest processing, remains a niche industry with low demand. It remains to be seen what public investments from federal and state levels as well as an increased emphasis on domestic manufacturing can manifest within the region.

Within the PY 2025-28 Regional Plan Data Analysis report, Table 5 illustrates industries (using 4-digit NAICS coding) that have gained jobs over the past 5 years. The left column organizes industries based on estimated total jobs gained and the right column organizes industries based on a percent change to attempt to capture industries that are quickly expanding. >

TABLE 5

Real Gross Domestic Product, by County (2019-2023)

Thousands of chained (2017) dollars

Counties in RPU	2019	2022	2023	2019-2023 Economic Growth (5-year)	2023 Economic Growth (1 year)
California	2,969,609,000	3,184,007,800	3,248,656,600	9.3%	2.0%
SJV RPU ¹	187,698,433	190,837,086	195,682,118	4.25%	2.54%
<u>Counties¹</u>					
San Joaquin	31,274,535	33,301,759	33,097,405	5.83%	-0.6%
Stanislaus	23,329,680	23,803,366	24,067,824	3.16%	1.1%
Merced	9,251,024	9,511,320	9,548,937	3.22%	0.4%
Madera	6,222,075	6,043,485	6,226,914	0.08%	3.0%
Fresno	45,018,790	46,107,283	47,612,742	5.76%	3.3%
Kings	6,457,601	6,868,202	7,041,297	9.04%	2.5%
Tulare	18,480,075	18,399,182	18,824,792	1.87%	2.3%
Kern	45,410,206	44,626,843	46,941,848	3.37%	5.2%
Inyo	1,223,022	1,089,927	1,141,849	-6.64%	4.8%
Mono	1,031,425	1,085,719	1,178,510	14.26%	8.5%

¹ Bureau of Economic Analysis data is collected and presented by county. For this section we have broken out the different counties in the Kern/Inyo/Mono LDWA consortium. Figures for the RPU were developed from BEA county-level data.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

Industry Sector Losses

The following analysis of industry losses removes industries with job changes over 5 years that were higher than -2%

Agriculture: The largest employer for most of the region is the agricultural industry and it continues to show a decline in employment. Despite these job losses, agricultural output has remained steady which suggests an improvement in labor productivity. The industry continues to take advantage of automation innovations, as well as shifts in crop planting. These factors, along with uncertainty and expected contraction in farmed area due to climate change and public policy (namely SGMA), may lead to a further contraction in the farm labor market.

Retail and Related In-Person Commerce: While logistics, home delivery, and transportation have expanded in the SJVAC RPU, in-person commerce and retail establishments have shown large declines. Some of this can be attributed to the direct competition e-commerce offers, other automation activities can also be factors.

Federal and State Government: In comparison to the expansion and immediate requirements of local government employment, certain state and federal employment has been pulled back in the past 5 years. This may be a shift of certain public administration from those authorities down to the local level as well as efficiency gains made by state and federal officials, but it is a cautionary sign of reduced public investment into the region.

Within the PY 2025-28 Regional Plan Data Analysis report, Table 8 illustrates industries (using 4-digit NAICS coding) that have lost jobs over the past 5 years. The left column organizes industries based on estimated total jobs lost and the right column organizes industries based on a percent change to attempt to capture industries that are quickly expanding.

TABLE 8

2019-2024 Losses for Industry Sector Jobs in San Joaquin RPU

Lightcast database analysis using QCEW, ACS, BEA, and other publicly available data. 4-digit NAICS classification

<u>Industries That Lost the Most Jobs</u> (2019-2024 Change in Number)	<u>Jobs Lost</u>	<u>Industries That Declined Fastest</u> (2019-2024 Change in Percent)	<u>Percent Change</u>
Crop Production	(7,531)	Business Support Services	(57%)
Support Activities for Crop Production	(3,948)	Insurance Carriers	(50%)
Business Support Services	(3,345)	Facilities Support Services	(39%)
Insurance Carriers	(2,804)	Vocational Rehabilitation Services	(33%)
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Retailers	(2,588)	Furniture and Home Furnishings Retailers	(25%)

Employment Services	(2,534)	Clothing and Clothing Accessories Retailers	(23%)
Private Households	(2,100)	Wired and Wireless Telecommunications (except Satellite)	(23%)
State Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals	(1,700)	Support Activities for Air Transportation	(20%)
Vocational Rehabilitation Services	(1,531)	Private Households	(19%)
Depository Credit Intermediation	(1,221)	Support Activities for Mining	(19%)
Support Activities for Mining	(1,206)	Nondepository Credit Intermediation	(17%)
Animal Production	(1,139)	Printing and Related Support Activities	(16%)
Utility System Construction	(1,084)	Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools	(15%)
Furniture and Home Furnishings Retailers	(946)	Depository Credit Intermediation	(14%)
Facilities Support Services	(928)	Utility System Construction	(14%)
Wired and Wireless Telecommunications (except Satellite)	(819)	Crop Production	(12%)
Education and Hospitals (State Government)	(816)	Employment Services	(9%)
Grocery and Related Product Merchant Wholesalers	(810)	Taxi and Limousine Service	(9%)
Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools	(790)	Beer, Wine, and Distilled Alcoholic Beverage Merchant Wholesalers	(7%)
Department Stores	(730)	Department Stores	(7%)
Federal Government, Civilian	(677)	Grocery and Related Product Merchant Wholesalers	(6%)
Support Activities for Air Transportation	(477)	Education and Hospitals (State Government)	(6%)
Management of Companies and Enterprises	(437)	State Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals	(5%)
Child Day Care Services	(427)	Highway, Street, and Bridge Construction	(5%)
Printing and Related Support Activities	(427)	Animal Production	(5%)
Nondepository Credit Intermediation	(390)	Miscellaneous Nondurable Goods Merchant Wholesalers	(4%)
Religious Organizations	(279)	Child Day Care Services	(4%)
Miscellaneous Nondurable Goods Merchant Wholesalers	(201)	Management of Companies and Enterprises	(4%)
Taxi and Limousine Service	(181)	Sporting Goods, Hobby, and Musical Instrument Retailers	(3%)
Beer, Wine, and Distilled Alcoholic Beverage Merchant Wholesalers	(171)	Support Activities for Crop Production	(3%)
Sporting Goods, Hobby, and Musical Instrument Retailers	(169)	Specialty Food Stores	(2%)
Highway, Street, and Bridge Construction	(119)	Federal Government, Civilian	(2%)
Other Wood Product Manufacturing	(74)	Other Wood Product Manufacturing	(2%)
Specialty Food Stores	(72)	Religious Organizations	(2%)

Source: Lightcast Industry Table, SJV RPU, 4 Digit NAICS