

**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
Local Plan
July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2024 (2022-2024 revision)**

Local Area:

Midlands

Counties within the Local Area:

Fairfield, Lexington, and Richland

Local Area Administrator and Contact Information:

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Attachment B: Local Plan Requirements

The local plan serves as a four-year action plan to develop, align, and integrate local area service delivery strategies with those that support the state’s strategic and operational goals. In partnership with the chief elected officials, each local board must develop and submit a local plan to identify and describe the policies, procedures, and activities that are carried out in the local area, consistent with the strategic vision and goals outlined in the State Plan and the respective regional plan. The following guiding principles should be considered priorities and included in responses throughout the document:

- Partnership and collaboration
- Increased access to resources and services through the use of technology
- The impact of COVID-19 on the local area’s workforce and strategies to facilitate rapid reemployment
- Innovation and cost efficiencies

The local plan must include:

Section I:	Workforce and Economic Analysis
Section II:	Strategic Vision and Goals
Section III:	Local Area Partnerships and Investment Strategies
Section IV:	Program Design and Evaluation
Section V:	Operations and Compliance

Section I: Workforce and Economic Analysis

An analysis of regional labor market data and economic conditions, to include existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations, and the employment needs of employers in those existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations. The analysis shall include:

- The knowledge and skills necessary to meet the employment needs of the employers in the region, including those in in-demand industry sectors and occupations;
- An analysis of the current workforce in the region, including employment and unemployment data, labor market trends, and the educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment; and
- An analysis of workforce development activities in the region, including available education and training opportunities. This analysis must indicate the strengths and weaknesses of workforce development activities necessary to address the education and skill needs of job seekers, including individuals with barriers to employment, and the employment needs of employers in the region.

Workforce data has driven the planning processes for the Midlands Area for many years - prior to both WIOA and WIA. The Midlands Area's five year priorities, goals and plans focus around an analysis of the current and emerging trends that will shape the needs of employers. For the purposes of updating our planning we have evaluated and considered refreshed data both as a Local Workforce Development Area and as a member of the Central Region. 2020 is both a challenging and opportunity-rich time for planning related to workforce development. We review the current data knowing that there is a lag in reporting processes; while the historic information is helpful in identifying trends, we also recognize the turmoil of the COVID-19 era. Depending upon the source, indicators point in multiple directions (conflicting), about the current and long term impacts of the virus as well as the response.

Of note is the fact that the COVID-19 situation is ongoing and the impacts continue to develop each day in the Midlands and in South Carolina. As a result, the weight, impacts and duration of this crisis has not been fully realized yet; therefore, our plans, analysis, and actions will reflect this.

Areas of data examination include existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations; employment needs (of employers); knowledge and skills necessary to meet employment needs; current workforce of the area and region; and the education and training providers/opportunities. The tables and analysis were created from data published or available in June and July 2020. Additionally, informal information sources that provide real-time intelligence are utilized when possible (Rapid Response Notifications, Economic Development Communications, local media, etc.) or relevant. Data sources include SCDEW Labor Market Information, JobsEQ (Chmura), Central SC Alliance.

- **The knowledge and skills necessary to meet the employment needs of the employers in the region, including those in in-demand industry sectors and occupations;**

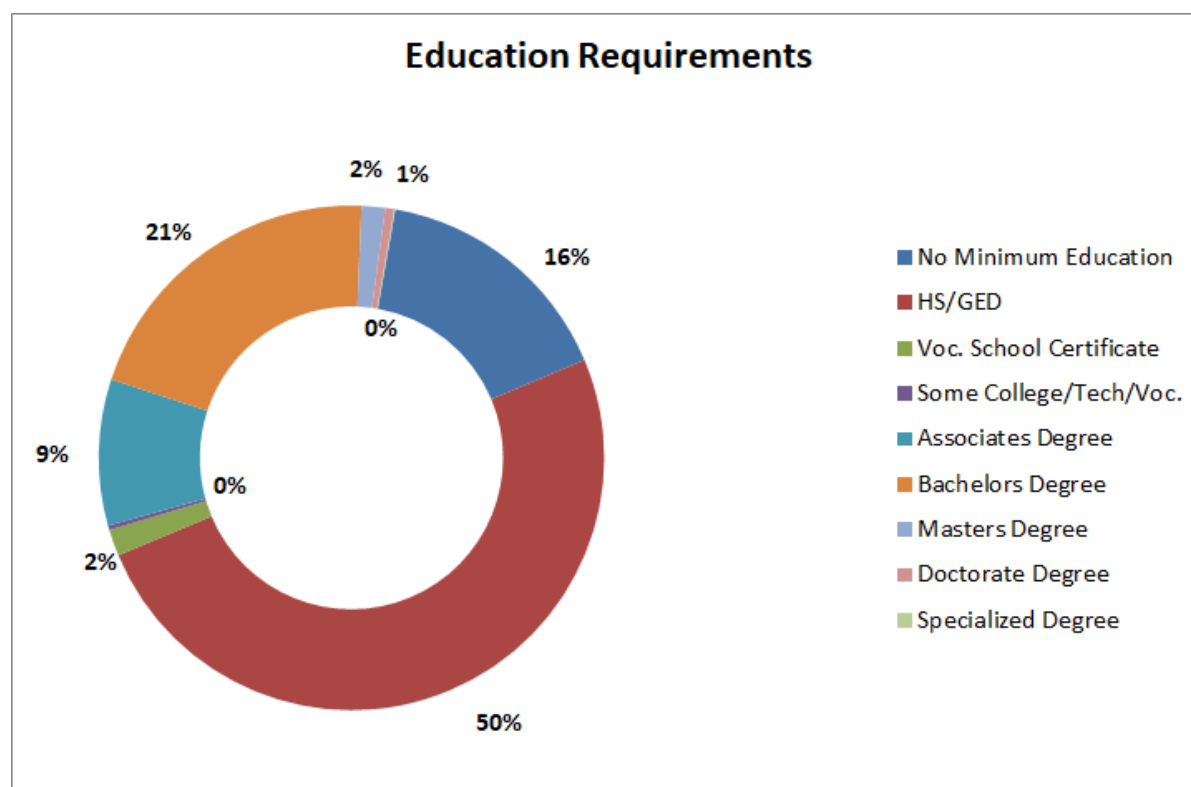
The review and analysis for the knowledge and skills in the area as related to the employment needs of the region follows the same format and data use from prior plans; however in the current situation, we are looking for shifts and any indicators of change.

Data evaluation indicates that the Midlands trends have remained consistent over the last few years in terms of employment and in-demand occupations. The Area evaluates alignment to ensure that the WIOA program and resources are connected to proper priority sectors.

There are numerous educational institutions and training providers available in the Midlands Area. This includes the University of South Carolina's primary campus, a strong technical college system and private providers. The education and training availability in the Midlands is poised to continue meeting the area skill demands, as well as other areas around that state. Increasing interest in training geared toward critical growth industries can still be a bit challenging as opposed to increasing training opportunities.

	Percent			Value		
	Columbia, SC MSA	South Carolina	USA	Columbia, SC MSA	South Carolina	USA
Educational Attainment, Age 25-64 (Source: JobsEQ; American Community Survey data for 2014-2018)						
No High School Diploma	9.3%	11.4%	11.2%	39,230	290,983	18,885,967
High School Graduate	26.1%	28.8%	25.8%	110,451	737,171	43,699,272
Some College, No Degree	22.1%	21.3%	21.0%	93,546	545,103	35,525,113
Associate's Degree	9.3%	10.4%	9.1%	39,499	264,807	15,389,737
Bachelor's Degree	20.8%	18.4%	20.8%	87,871	470,570	35,261,652
Postgraduate Degree	12.3%	9.7%	12.1%	51,964	247,285	20,445,749

Data from JobsEQ show the Midlands Area educational rate as a positive attribute. The Area meets or exceeds the national averages in all attainment rates evaluated. Additionally, commuting patterns reported for the Area show a Live in/Work in Rate of 83.8%, with In-commuters at 11.3%.



Source: SCWOS, Education Requirements on Advertised Jobs in South Carolina in July, 2020

The job opening data from July 2020 indicates that of the jobs currently available (in SC), a candidate with a high school diploma or GED would qualify for 66% of openings (HS/GED required for 50%, and 16% with no minimum education requirements). An additional 9% require an Associate Degree, and 21% list a Bachelor's Degree. While this is only a snapshot in time, and SCWOS listings, the education levels in the Midlands are aligned with the realities of employment requirements.

Additionally, the response to COVID-19 has accelerated the use of technology as it relates to training and education in a short period of time. In our estimation, this quick adaptation will make distance education more prevalent and perhaps the new normal over in-person instruction. The benefits include connecting those in rural areas, reducing transportation costs, childcare needs, and increasing overall flexibility. The platforms and some aspects of the virtual delivery will need to be refined, however this appears to be an opportunity that increases the skill based and talent for in-demand careers.

The skills necessary for jobs in the three county area according to a 2020 JobsEQ Real-Time Intelligence (RTI) data set is based upon the information from actual jobs posted. The top 10 elements are reviewed from categories include hard skills, soft skills, and certifications. This RTI from actual jobs posted gives a unique look into what employers are looking for when screening and selecting candidates.

Openings by Hard Skills

Hard Skills	
Skill Name	Total Ads
Microsoft Office	7,734
Microsoft Excel	7,192
Ability to Lift 51-100 lbs.	5,519
Ability to Lift 41-50 lbs.	4,768
Sales	3,633
Retail Sales	3,448
Ability to Lift 21-30 lbs.	3,346
Cash Handling	2,929
Microsoft Outlook	2,724
Microsoft Word	2,701

Openings by Soft Skills

	Soft Skills	Total Ads
Skill Name		
Communication (Verbal and written skills)		43,267
Customer Service		22,347
Cooperative/Team Player		19,897
Self-Motivated/Ability to Work Independently/Self Leadership		14,038
Organization		12,345
Adaptability/Flexibility/Tolerance of Change and Uncertainty		12,110
Detail Oriented/Meticulous		11,253
Supervision/Management		9,787
Accountable/Responsible/Reliable/Dependable/Trustworthy		9,014
Problem Solving		8,137

Openings by Certifications

Certifications	
Certificate Name	Total Ads
Driver's License	2,980
Registered Nurse (RN)	2,021
Certification in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)	1,550
Basic Life Support (BLS)	1,185
Advanced Cardiac Life Support Certification (ACLS)	782
Class A Commercial Driver's License (CDL-A)	750
Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)	672
Commercial Driver's License (CDL)	662
First Aid Certification	494
Certified Public Accountant (CPA)	391

In 2022, the top skills have largely remained the same but the priority order has shifted according to the JobsEQ Real-Time Intelligence (RTI) data set is based upon the information from actual jobs posted. The top 10 elements are reviewed from categories include hard skills, soft skills, and certifications. This RTI from actual jobs posted gives a unique look into what employers are looking for when screening and selecting candidates.

Openings by Hard Skill

Hard Skills		Active Job Ads
Skill Name		
Microsoft Office	11,396	
Microsoft Excel	10,414	
Ability to Lift 41-50 lbs.	5,923	
Ability to Lift 51-100 lbs.	5,265	
Sales	4,463	
JavaScript	4,209	
Microsoft PowerPoint	4,148	
Mathematics	4,046	
Microsoft Outlook	3,857	
Microsoft Word	3,562	

Openings by Soft Skills

Soft Skills		Active Job Ads
Skill Name		
Communication (Verbal and written skills)	58,276	
Cooperative/Team Player	29,205	
Customer Service	25,602	
Organization	15,632	
Supervision/Management	13,898	
Detail Oriented/Meticulous	13,255	
Adaptability/Flexibility/Tolerance of Change and Uncertainty	13,009	
Problem Solving	12,944	
Self-Motivated/Ability to Work Independently/Self Leadership	12,603	
Ability to Work in a Fast Paced Environment	11,508	

Openings by Certification

Certifications	
Certificate Name	Active Job Ads
Driver's License	3,462
Registered Nurse (RN)	2,316
Certification in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)	1,961
Basic Life Support (BLS)	1,588
Commercial Driver's License (CDL)	1,102
Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)	817
Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)	705
Class A Commercial Driver's License (CDL-A)	652
Advanced Cardiac Life Support Certification (ACLS)	587
Project Management Professional (PMP)	464

The hard skills data from job posts points to a continued need for computer literacy. From the list of basic Microsoft software suites, it is implied that a basic understanding of PCs and operation are required for many jobs. Much like soft skills, these overlay to nearly any career or industry. There is a high likelihood that these digital literacy skill needs will continue to increase both as technology continues to be integrated into all aspects of workplaces, but also as increased needs related to virtual services and telework environments in the post-pandemic job market. The updated list of hard skills are indicative of the changing labor market with retail, cash handling and lighter lifting coming off the list with Javascript, PowerPoint and Math emerging on the list. As the labor market responds to changes in shopper habits, the needs of the retail industry will shift. All three skills leaving the list were traditional needs of retail. As buyers shift to more online shopping and cashless payment, higher skills are needed and other industries occupy a larger cross section of the open positions. The skills new to the list require a more advanced savvy job seeker.

Soft, or essential, skills are clearly a critical need across all workforce sectors. This has been a consistent trend for many years. There are numerous vendors, providers and software packages that target this need, however there is not one simple solution to closing the gaps that employers are facing. The concept of a statewide recognized soft skills certificate is one that we will track closely, and hope this is something that employers will assist in the development and its recognition. The top four categories of needed soft skills remain, but changes in the bottom indicate a shift in workplace priorities. Accountable/Responsible/Trustworthy have been replaced with a self-motivated, independent worker who has an ability to work in a fast paced environment. Changes since COVID have created a need for more independent and efficient workers.

Certifications and credentials are a different element all together, as the Midlands economy and business landscape is quite diverse. This list gives a 50,000 foot overview – providing

information that may be overlooked when preparing someone with barriers to employment. A Driver's License rates as the most needed; while the rest of the list is tailored directly to the jobs or industry (i.e. RN, LPN, CPA). These credential requirements indicate demand sectors – healthcare, Distribution Logistics – and that there are career ladder or lattice opportunities. Top requested certification remains the same but the updates show a shift with advanced cardiac skills dropping to near the bottom of the list and CPA dropping off altogether. It was replaced with PMP certification which is quickly growing across multiple industries in our new more efficient and fast paced environment.

- An analysis of the current workforce in the region, including employment and unemployment data, labor market trends, and the educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment; and

This 2020 analysis is based on data and information collected and compiled prior to the pandemic. This proviso is included as an acknowledgement that the Midlands and the State situation, workforce and economy may begin to take a different turn as skills and industries adapt. As a result, the Midlands will continue to monitor situations through all available information sources.

The employment trend for Midlands prior to Q2 2020 had been one of workers needed. Consistently, the number of job openings outpaced the number of unemployed by several thousand. In an immediate reverse of this trend, Q3 began a period of unemployment that essentially tripled. However, the number of job openings dropped approximately 20-22%. This indicates that despite state and local emergency orders, industry shutdowns, and altered operations, the Midlands job outlook and economy are strong. Using historic trends, and current data related to industry demand, we note that the top ten for the Midlands is generally consistent, with a few shifts in ranking. Manufacturing is of specific interest, as it has risen consistently, as a sector, in demand over the last five years. We do note that while looking at individual occupational data, Production jobs individually do not necessarily show a rate of growth. However, the growth of the sector is linked to positions that may not be directly thought of as "manufacturing," to include IT, maintenance, management and construction. As the industry and the processes evolve, so do the jobs and skills.

This trend supports the determination of the Region to focus on Manufacturing initially through Sector Strategy work. The general snapshot of occupations with projected growth continues to support the Midlands focus on Business, Information Technology, Manufacturing, Healthcare, Distribution/Logistics and Construction.

SOC	Occupation	Current				3-Year History				5-Year Forecast			
		Empl	Avg Ann Wages ²	LQ	Unempl	Unempl Rate	Online Job Ads ³	Empl Change	Ann %	Total Demand	Transfers	Empl Growth	Ann % Growth
31-0000	Healthcare Support	16,730	\$27,700	0.94	392	2.40%	574	1,306	2.70%	13,045	5,900	1,854	2.10%
33-0000	Protective Service	13,741	\$39,000	1.56	246	1.90%	250	990	2.50%	7,519	4,357	183	0.30%
39-0000	Personal Care and Service	10,467	\$27,600	0.91	324	3.00%	318	709	2.40%	9,028	4,671	553	1.00%
15-0000	Computer and Mathematical	9,185	\$74,600	0.76	146	1.60%	1,134	471	1.80%	4,160	2,755	579	1.20%
35-0000	Food Preparation/Serving Related	36,485	\$22,200	1.05	1,533	4.20%	1,858	1,809	1.70%	35,538	19,716	2,370	1.30%
13-0000	Business and Financial Operations	18,960	\$64,500	0.85	326	1.60%	810	894	1.60%	10,064	6,552	795	0.80%
11-0000	Management	21,713	\$106,100	0.83	257	1.10%	999	953	1.50%	10,439	6,556	973	0.90%
19-0000	Life, Physical, and Social Science	2,907	\$61,600	0.83	43	1.40%	121	128	1.50%	1,419	1,027	90	0.60%
23-0000	Legal	4,487	\$88,900	1.31	38	0.90%	120	124	0.90%	1,728	990	149	0.70%
21-0000	Community and Social Service	9,275	\$44,000	1.34	126	1.30%	599	159	0.60%	5,723	3,447	518	1.10%
37-0000	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	13,453	\$26,400	0.97	491	3.70%	619	256	0.60%	9,735	5,264	601	0.90%
29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	27,124	\$73,300	1.17	278	1.00%	1,795	403	0.50%	9,704	4,337	1,599	1.20%
27-0000	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	5,758	\$51,100	0.78	146	2.30%	177	79	0.50%	3,429	2,087	151	0.50%
49-0000	Installation, Maintenance, & Repair	17,106	\$46,700	1.1	290	1.80%	894	100	0.20%	9,110	5,804	556	0.60%
53-0000	Transportation & Material Moving	31,861	\$32,500	0.95	1,203	3.70%	1,594	56	0.10%	22,036	13,422	1,084	0.70%
41-0000	Sales and Related	41,591	\$38,800	1.05	1,299	3.00%	3,314	132	0.10%	30,021	17,777	583	0.30%
45-0000	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	2,109	\$31,100	0.82	124	5.90%	33	1	0.00%	1,777	1,312	41	0.40%
43-0000	Office and Administrative Support	56,140	\$37,000	1.09	1,264	2.30%	1,492	-172	-0.10%	32,141	19,108	-350	-0.10%
25-0000	Educational Instruction and Library	22,272	\$50,400	0.97	438	2.00%	751	-215	-0.30%	10,903	5,536	705	0.60%
51-0000	Production	23,972	\$40,300	1	737	3.00%	556	-183	-0.30%	13,401	9,114	-285	-0.20%
47-0000	Construction and Extraction	15,854	\$43,000	0.84	571	3.60%	322	-187	-0.40%	10,233	6,575	985	1.20%
17-0000	Architecture and Engineering	6,218	\$75,600	0.9	88	1.30%	158	-155	-0.80%	2,618	1,727	144	0.50%
	Total - All Occupations	407,407	\$46,100	1	10,360	2.50%	18,488	7,657	0.60%	253,937	148,031	14,044	0.70%

(Source: JobsEQ® Data as of 2020Q1 unless noted otherwise)

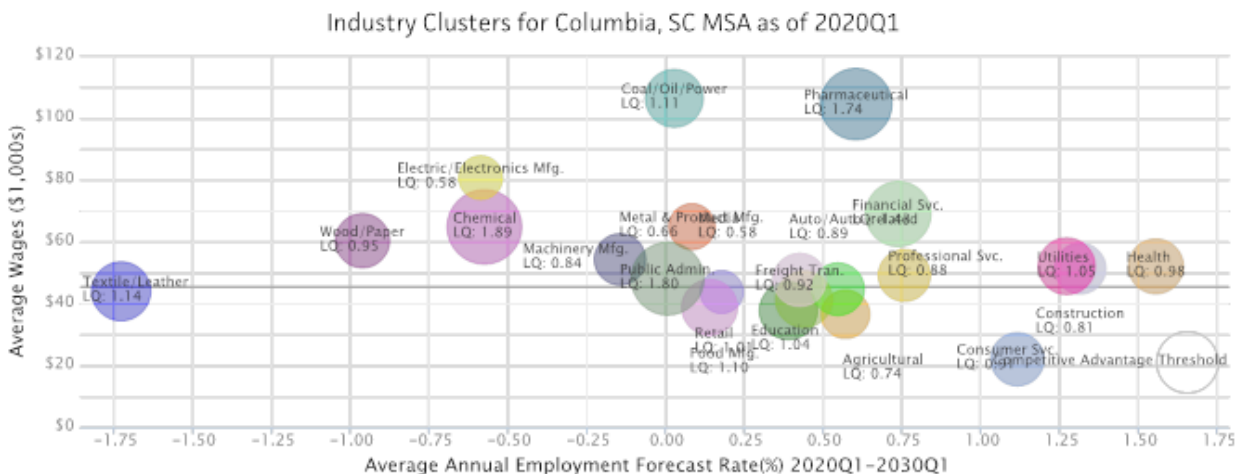
Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding.

1. Data based on a four-quarter moving average unless noted otherwise.

2. Wage data are as of 2019 and represent the average for all Covered Employment

3. Data represent found online ads active within the last thirty days in the selected region; data represents a sampling rather than the complete universe of postings. Ads lacking zip code information but designating a place (city, town, etc.) may be assigned to the zip code with greatest employment in that place for queries in this analytic. Due to alternative county-assignment algorithms, ad counts in this analytic may not match that shown in RTI (nor in the popup window ad list).

Occupation employment data are estimated via industry employment data and the estimated industry/occupation mix. Industry employment data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and currently updated through 2019Q3, imputed where necessary with preliminary estimates updated to 2020Q1. Wages by occupation are as of 2019 provided by the BLS and imputed where necessary. Forecast employment growth uses national projections from the Bureau of Labor Statistics adapted for regional growth patterns.)



Source: JobsEQ® Data as of 2020Q1

(Source: JobsEQ. Location quotient and average wage data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, imputed where necessary, and updated through 2019Q3 with preliminary estimates updated to 2020Q1. Forecast employment growth uses national projections from the Bureau of Labor Statistics adapted for regional growth patterns.)

The alignment of industry sectors and occupations between the Midlands Area and Central Region is also beneficial for our planning. This close correlation has meant that our work (as a Workforce Area) toward a strategy for regional alignment has been in sync with local priorities. Employment needs and growth opportunities match, as do those industries which show a decline in worker needs. Overall, the Midlands Area represents the largest portion and percentage of the Central area which is to be expected given population and business size.

Prior to April 2020, the Midlands had experienced historic low unemployment rates, trending below the state and national averages. Since then, that trend has reversed to spike sharply in a record rise. Fortunately, as has historically been the Midlands trend, we average below state and US rates. We continue to track the weekly UI initial claims data as available: by county, industry, job attached status, etc. While noting that there are consistently high weekly initial claims, compared to the last five years, we believe this trend will be temporary, speaking to the strength of the Midland economy. Additionally, we are monitoring our center traffic in coordination with anticipated exhaustion dates for unemployment. Using these indicators allows us to plan for service demands as claimants seek WIOA and partners services to return to work. It is a fair presumption that this long-term unemployed segment of our customers will likely need training - either as a result of skill gaps or needing new marketable skills to return to work.

Data for skill levels of the area workforce as it relates to employment and occupations must be developed and analyzed from multiple sources, as one report does not adequately address this. JobsEQ data reports compiled using the parameters of the prior 2 years, and with a projection of 5 years out, indicate skills need areas (Sectors/"Occupation Groups" with high growth) around:

Office and Administrative Support Occupations (largest major occupation group in the Columbia, SC MSA – this followed by Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations). Generally, skills sets needed around Office and Administrative Support can be group into short-term training, credential attainment, and addressed by OJT. Transportation/Material moving positions also ranked highly in number of job openings posted (JobsEq, and Midlands LMI Community Profile), as well as positive projected growth. Over the next 5 years, the predicted fastest growing skill need group in the Area is expected to be Healthcare – to include Support Occupations, personal care, and practitioners/technicians.

Skill Level needs are related to, but not always directly linked to traditional educational level attainments. To support the workforce and the growth needs in all industries in the area, certifications, credentials, and hands-on/work-based learning experience assistance appear to continue to be the solution the Midlands area is in the best position to support. Food Preparation and Serving occupations rank high currently as far as occupational openings, and in a 5 year growth projection. The Area does recognize this, and will continue to evaluate data to determine if skills or other support will lead to positive impacts for participants and

employers.

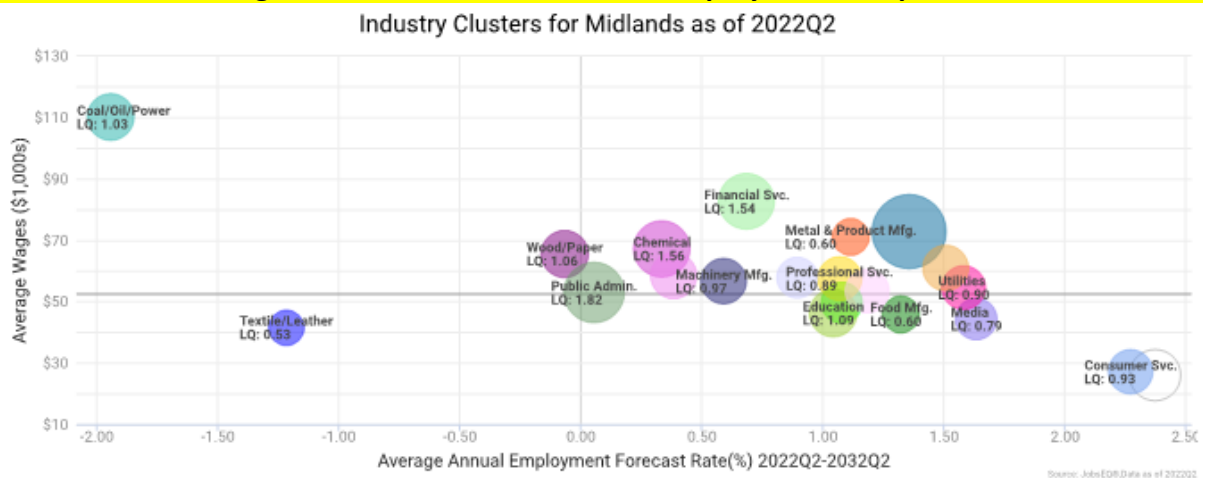
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				LQ	Unempl	Unempl Rate	Online Job Ads ³	Empl Change	Ann %	Total Demand	Exits	Transfers	Empl Growth	Ann % Growth
4300000	Office and Administrative Support	304,311	\$38,300	1.07	9,136	3.0%	7,710	-1,926	0.2%	177,215	73,941	97,771	5,503	0.4%
4100000	Sales and Related	233,217	\$38,900	1.07	9,852	4.1%	16,457	1,558	0.2%	164,586	62,661	94,834	7,090	0.6%
5300000	Transportation and Material Moving	213,964	\$36,100	1.06	11,031	5.0%	9,809	12,402	2.0%	158,674	51,869	91,409	15,396	1.4%
3500000	Food Preparation and Serving Related	210,708	\$25,100	1.16	14,071	6.2%	11,624	7,159	1.1%	234,742	86,816	119,217	28,710	2.6%
5100000	Production	182,320	\$41,400	1.39	7,528	4.0%	3,692	4,660	0.8%	107,720	35,212	67,429	5,078	0.6%
1100000	Management	139,278	\$101,000	0.88	2,406	1.8%	10,143	10,281	2.6%	71,634	18,475	41,693	11,466	1.6%
2900000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	132,093	\$83,500	0.98	1,293	1.0%	18,423	5,205	1.3%	48,439	17,792	20,927	9,719	1.4%
1300000	Business and Financial Operations	110,086	\$72,100	0.74	1,944	1.8%	5,799	11,861	3.9%	59,843	15,808	35,189	8,846	1.6%
2500000	Educational Instruction and Library	109,791	\$50,700	0.89	2,303	2.1%	4,438	507	0.2%	58,851	23,845	26,892	8,114	1.4%
4700000	Construction and Extraction	101,534	\$44,000	0.97	4,938	4.7%	2,056	622	0.2%	58,969	16,023	36,511	6,436	1.2%
4900000	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	97,364	\$47,000	1.09	2,204	2.2%	5,434	402	0.1%	55,755	16,337	32,552	6,866	1.4%
3100000	Healthcare Support	84,407	\$29,600	0.83	2,952	3.3%	5,029	2,596	1.0%	69,006	27,994	30,653	10,359	2.3%
3700000	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	83,558	\$28,500	1.09	3,872	4.4%	3,565	3,270	1.3%	63,675	24,593	32,945	6,138	1.4%
3900000	Personal Care and Service	56,642	\$28,300	1.01	3,504	5.8%	1,800	1,182	0.7%	53,205	19,913	25,317	7,975	2.7%
1500000	Computer and Mathematical	53,050	\$85,200	0.67	593	1.2%	6,926	8,619	6.1%	25,573	5,934	14,346	5,293	1.9%
3300000	Protective Service	44,851	\$40,900	0.91	1,125	2.4%	1,670	1,460	1.1%	28,488	10,571	14,919	3,007	1.3%
2100000	Community and Social Service	44,004	\$46,500	1.07	721	1.6%	2,486	-1,022	0.8%	27,780	8,523	15,493	3,763	1.7%
1700000	Architecture and	40,852	\$81,400	1.08	602	1.5%	2,926	254	0.2%	18,385	5,177	10,470	2,738	1.3%

Engineering														
2710000	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	32,791	\$50,000	0.80	1,286	4.0%	1,341	193	0.2%	21,473	6,950	11,223	3,300	1.9%
2310000	Legal	17,156	\$84,700	0.86	238	1.4%	463	870	1.7%	7,450	2,563	3,638	1,249	1.4%
1910000	Life, Physical, and Social Science	13,584	\$68,300	0.67	292	2.2%	1,131	804	2.1%	7,217	1,528	4,873	816	1.2%
4510000	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	8,245	\$35,300	0.55	563	6.1%	47	187	0.7%	6,878	1,745	4,797	336	0.8%
Total - All Occupations		2,313,805	\$48,200	1.00	82,455	3.5%	122,970	32,542	0.5%	1,527,014	534,270	833,098	159,645	1.3%

Source: [JobsEQ®](#)
 Data as of 2022Q2 unless noted otherwise.
 Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding.
 1. Data based on a four-quarter moving average unless noted otherwise.
 2. Wage data are as of 2021 and represent the average for all covered employment.
 3. Data represent found online ads active within the last thirty days in the selected region; data represents a sampling rather than the complete universe of postings. Ads lacking zip code information but designating a place (city, town, etc.) may be assigned to the zip code with greatest employment in that place for queries in this analytic. Due to alternative county-assignment algorithms, ad counts in this analytic may not match that shown in RTI (see in the popup window ad list).
 Occupation employment data are estimated via industry employment data and the estimated industry/occupation mix. Industry employment data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and currently updated through 2022Q1, imputed where necessary with preliminary estimates updated to 2022Q2. Wages by occupation are as of 2021 provided by the BLS and imputed where necessary. Forecast employment growth uses national projections from the Bureau of Labor Statistics adapted for regional growth patterns.

The updated employment projected chart above indicates major shifts in employment as we transition into the post-pandemic era. The area remains a strong employment market for healthcare workers, government and social service employment and personal care workers.

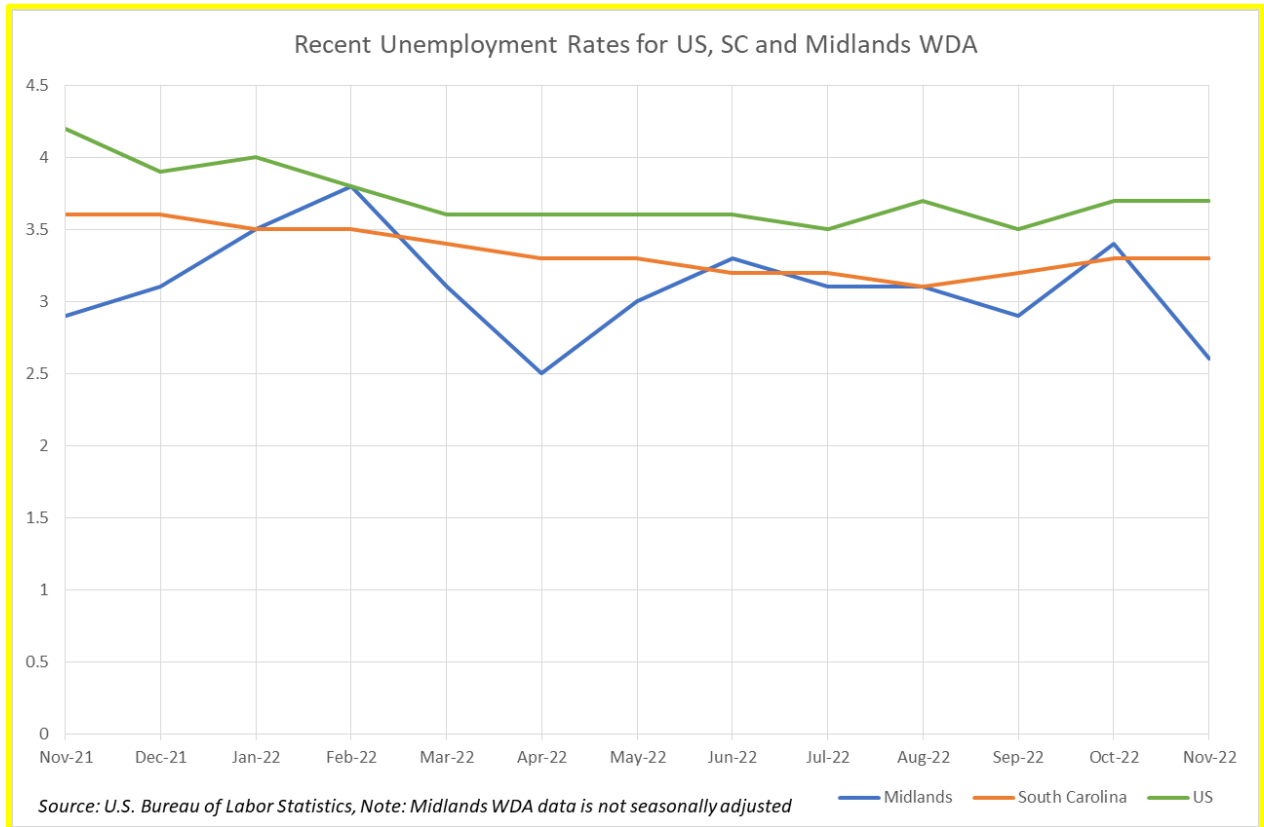
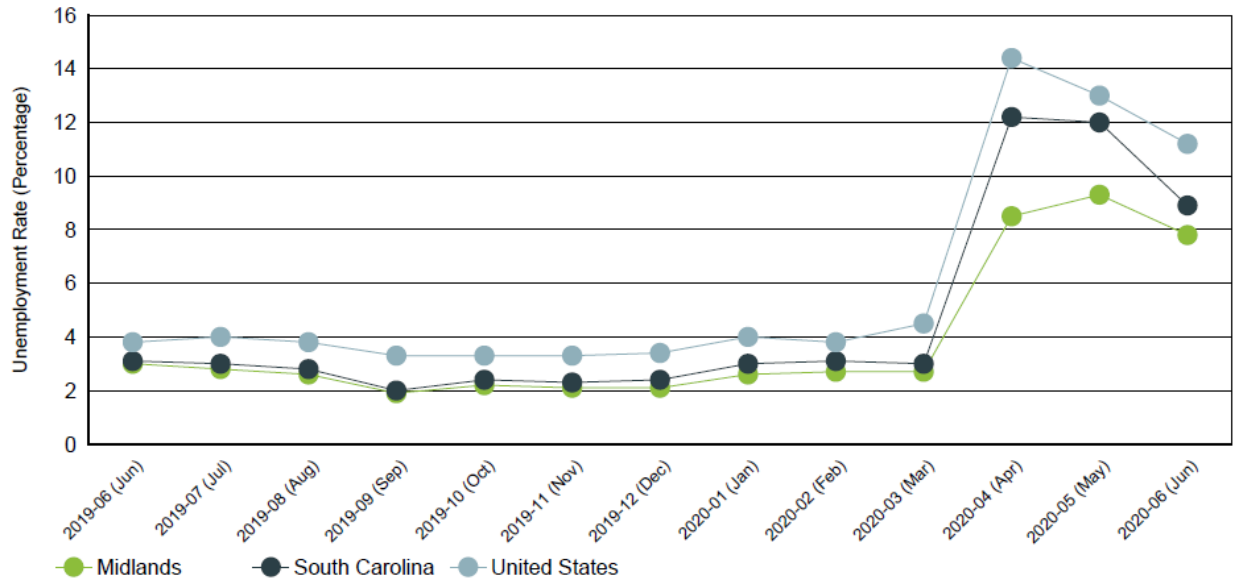


Location quotient and average wage data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, imputed where necessary, and updated through 2022Q1 with preliminary estimates updated to 2022Q2. Forecast employment growth uses national projections from the Bureau of Labor Statistics adapted for regional growth patterns.

Updates to the Industry Clusters in the chart above indicate a strong presence of Pharmaceutical in both overall growth and wages. This is evidenced with the variety of pharmaceutical companies present in the area, their engagement in the area's engagement into the educational infrastructure and investments of expanded business. As the area enters the post-pandemic era, pharmaceutical manufacturing remains strong with additional industry investments.

Monthly Unemployment Rate (Unadjusted)

Past 13 Months



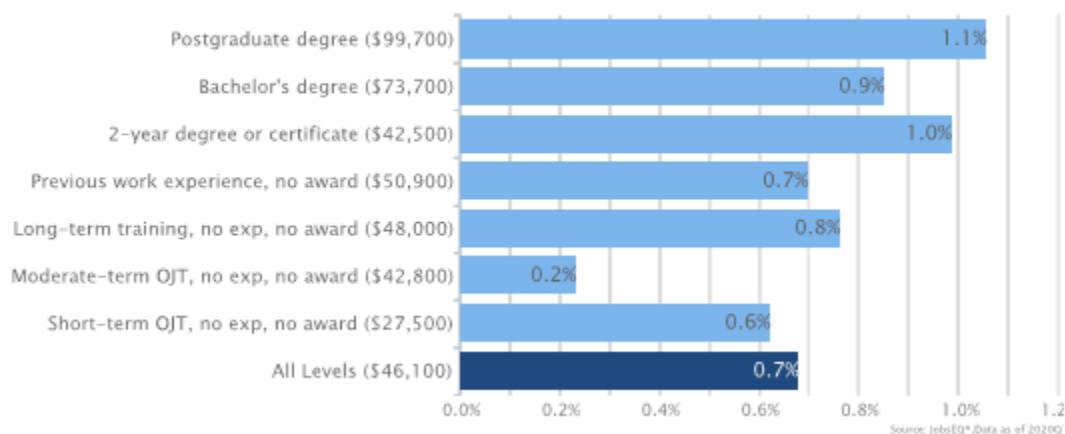
While the Unemployment Rates have changed since the initial Plan, South Carolina continues to enjoy an Unemployment Rate below the United States. Additionally, the Midlands area has

experienced a more volatile pattern of unemployment, we have maintained below the South Carolina rate for most of the last thirteen months. While we all saw a spike in unemployment during the height of the pandemic, by November 2021 we had returned to the unemployment rate levels leading into the pandemic.

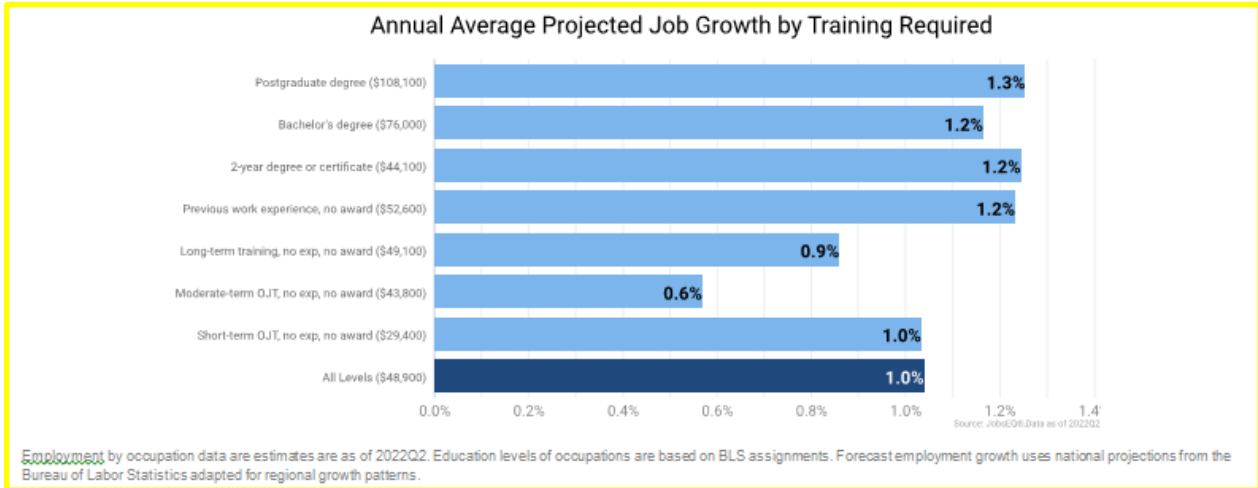
Expanding upon the skills and talent levels referenced above (Educational Attainment, JobsEQ), overall, education in the Midlands Area is on the rise. According to Central SC Alliance, 31.7% of the 25+ year old population in the Columbia MSA hold a Bachelor's degree or higher. This is a bit lower than the national average (36%, 2019 according to the US Census bureau), however this makes the Midlands area a part of the highest educated MSAs in South Carolina. Data from JobsEQ projects that the 10-year employment growth average of all industries in the Midlands will be around .9%. Of this 10-year projection, occupations requiring a postgraduate degree are expected to grow 1.3% per year, those requiring a bachelor's degree are forecast to grow 1.0% per year, and occupations typically needing a 2-year degree or certificate are expected to grow 1.2% per year. The gro

To support the trend of increasing educational levels, there are numerous established educational institutions and career training providers in the Midlands Area. This includes the University of South Carolina's primary campus, a technical college system with robust curriculum and an abundance of private providers. Education and training availability in the Midlands is poised to continue meeting the area demands, as well as other areas around that state. Increasing interest in training geared toward critical growth industries is the primary challenge as opposed to increasing training opportunities. The increased use and necessity of distributed/distance/e-learning, etc. add much more potential for candidates and job seekers to remain competitive in the job market.

Annual Average Projected Job Growth by Training Required for Columbia, SC MSA



(Source: JobsEQ. Employment by occupation data are estimates as of 2020Q1. Education levels of occupations are based on BLS assignments. Forecast employment growth uses national projections from the Bureau of Labor Statistics adapted for regional growth patterns.)



While there are no wholesale changes in the required education levels indicated on the updated chart above, it is interesting to note the increase in training required across the board at the same time that employers are struggling to find the workforce to fill the open positions.

Individuals with barriers to employment is a broad and diverse topic. Service to individuals with barriers is a priority in the Midlands and an area that is evolving. Additionally, the definition of a barrier can also vary. From a data analysis stand point, the available data focuses on demographics that can be clearly identified. Using the JobsEQ RTI system, a report of the Demographics Profile for the 3-county area and focusing on social elements, the Midlands Area, SC, and US data show:

Element	Average	SC	US
Poverty Level (of all people)	17.3%	16.00%	14.10%
Households Receiving Food Stamps/SNAP	14.3%	13.20%	12.10%
With Disability, Age 18-64	14.0%	12.60%	10.30%
With Disability, Age 18-64, Labor Force Participation Rate & Size	41.4%	37.00%	41.60%

The poverty level, and connected figures for SNAP recipient households for the Midlands Area trends above state and national averages by several percentage points. The rate of individuals that report identifying as having a disability is also higher, though so is by a similar rate the labor force participation of this population. A review of PY19 WIOA EEO reports allows us to analyze the rate of service to individuals that self-identify as having a disability. The Adult/DW program figures show that about 5% of participants and 10% of Youth report a disability. The variance between the programs may be the result of several factors such as reluctance to report or a training opportunity for staff to encourage the reporting in a different manner. The data does show that there is opportunity to increase engagement for this population, as our rates do trend a little below the area population average.

As stated, this analysis is based upon available data. We seek to engage with partners that allow us to reach and service individuals that have additional barriers such as returning citizens with a background, those with transportation issues, and childcare. As an overall note, in many instances barriers to employment overlap and exist in multiple numbers for individuals. By prioritizing the service to individuals with barriers, we are likely able to impact more than one of the many and connected categories.

Other barriers can be more difficult to quantify, such as returning citizen rates; however focusing on those with barriers and most in need of WIOA service continues to be a priority of our service strategy and integral to our partnerships. Issues such as homeless or mental illness recovery for example are approached through community partners such as Fast Forward, MERCI, and Transitions.

- An analysis of workforce development activities in the region, including available education and training opportunities. This analysis must indicate the strengths and weaknesses of workforce development activities necessary to address the education and skill needs of job seekers, including individuals with barriers to employment, and the employment needs of employers in the region.

The region benefits greatly from Columbia being the hub of (state) government, and a multitude of businesses and sectors that support and thrive around this economy. Business, Technology, Healthcare and Distribution Logistics have gained even more significance as individual sectors, but also in an overlapping relationship resulting from the current health pandemic. Innovation and collaboration have kept business moving in the Midlands and provided additional opportunities. A few emerging and ongoing initiatives that show a great deal of promise include:

- **Building Occupational Opportunities in the Midlands (BOOM) is a construction**
 - **job-training program for high school students with disabilities. The program provides an innovative pathway for students with disabilities to learn skills while still in high school and find employment with local homebuilders. BOOM is now partially funded through Apprenticeship Carolina as a pre employment program for citizens with disabilities. This covers approximately 80% of the class costs which includes earning OSHA certification and basic skills training in the area of construction. BOOM also supports job readiness to include resume writing, interview skills, and career communications. The project wraps up with students meeting with employer interviews striving for completing students with at least one employment offer.**
- **Apprenticeship Carolina™ has developed a work group to determine resources to provide employers to assist with hiring individuals with disabilities into new or existing United States Department of Labor Registered Apprenticeship Programs**

(RAPs). Thanks to a 2021 award of \$7.71 million in State Apprenticeship Expansion, Equity, and Innovation (SAEEI) funding, there are plans to allocate a portion of those funds to this initiative. Stakeholders in the initiative project include Midlands Technical College and AbleSC. Apprenticeship Carolina is also investigating ways grant funds can be used to provide financial support, both tuition assistance and supportive service stipends, to individuals with disabilities to ensure they are successful in their RAP.

- **Apprenticeship grant opportunities through Midlands Technical College allow students and job seekers to leverage resources within the healthcare industry to earn wages and valuable experience while enhancing their professional knowledge to advance their careers. EMT Apprentices have opportunities with First Priority Academy and Vital Care EMS. Additionally, students who have completed CNA, EKG, Phlebotomy, or Cardiac Care Technician courses are invited to apply for the Pre-Apprenticeship for Entry Level Healthcare program. Apprentices go through a one week course blending job search skills, soft skills and training in electronic health records before being connected to employers to continue their training.**
- **Central SC Alliance is a public/private alliance that focuses resources and
 - energy on leveraging our people, resources, and assets to attract the
 - businesses, entrepreneurs, and organizations that share a collective desire
 - to cultivate and nurture the prosperity of the region.**
- **Columbia Metro Region Economic Development Action Plan is a developing a strategy to increase and then maintain higher levels of investment in knowledge-based enterprise operations. Primary targeting is to increase the attraction of knowledge-based enterprise activities like IT, R&D, and specialized business processes in fields like FinTech, Cybersecurity, AI, Data Analytics, etc.**
- **Create Opportunity is a private/public partnership that seeks to develop
 - software engineers from untapped markets and non-traditional locations.
 - Using artificial intelligence as an aptitude and success predictor, the
 - opportunity blends classroom training on the front end, with a Registered
 - Apprenticeship.**
- **I-77 Alliance The South Carolina I-77 Alliance is a county-driven nonprofit
 - economic development organization dedicated to positioning and marketing
 - the five counties as a world-class business location to attract capital investment
 - and high-quality jobs to the region.**
- **I-77 International Mega Site is a Fairfield County Economic Development
 - initiative/partnership in conjunction with the SC Department of Commerce.**

- **Midlands Tech BOOST (Better Occupational Outcomes with Simulation Training)**
 - grant created three short-term, stackable certificates in healthcare that take
 - less than one year to complete utilizing high tech simulators, 3D/virtual reality
 - technology and online course materials and demonstrations. MTC
 - consulted directly with major healthcare employers, who expressed the need
 - for significantly more entry-level workers.

- **Midlands Youth Apprenticeship Program is a partnership between the**
 - Columbia Chamber, Midlands Technical College and participating school
 - districts. MYA is a career-education pathway that helps build a viable, local
 - workforce for high-demand, hard-to-fill positions. It provides high school
 - juniors and seniors have the opportunity to get paid to learn as youth
 - apprentices.
 - Youth apprentices receive paid on-the-job training along with job-related
 - education at MTC. The MYA Program also provides businesses and
 - organizations the unique chance to meet qualified high-school students from a
 - variety of fields and backgrounds who are already achieving at a high-level.

- **Midlands Registered Apprenticeship (Midlands Technical College/**
 - Apprenticeship Carolina).

- **REEMERGE is a 6-12 month reintegration program that uses employment,**
 - coaching, education and entrepreneurship. Program participants receive a
 - curriculum of study in HVAC, industrial electrical, landscaping or carpentry, as
 - well as real work experience, classroom study, and professional coaching.
 - Participants will learn life-long skills that will provide them with new and
 - exciting opportunities allowing them to provide for their families and, equally
 - important, keeping them from returning to prison.

- **Life Launch & Pathway Home are two DOL grant funded projects in the Midlands area launching in 2022 through Goodwill Industries of Upstate/Midlands SC. Life Launch serves past justice involved job seekers aged 18-24 find their way through the barriers and into sustainable employment. Pathway Home is a project aimed specifically at the correctional facilities working with pre and post release clients transition into sustainable employment. Projects like these help the returning citizens transition into productive work and help to fill the employment gaps in the area with a new pool of job seekers.**

- **Richland County Economic Development Office is developing a team approach**
 - with a group of regional partners (Lexington County Economic Development, UofSC, Midlands Technical College, SC Research Authority and Central SC Alliance) to focus on building existing assets and capitalize on the growing base

of research innovation.

Additionally, the WIOA program links customers/jobseekers to employment and training opportunities. The greatest strength for workforce development programs in the Midlands area is the fact that there are this many initiatives and they tend to be collaborative in nature. The fact that workforce development is the primary focus in these organizations and initiatives is indicative of the shifts in recognition of criticality. The meshing of workforce development into education, economic and community development bolster the relevance and impacts of these investments. The result is much more effective use of resources. The collaborative nature of the projects allows the area to engage participants in similar projects if he/she is not selected for a specific opportunity and/or provide wrap-around services when needed for a funding training program. Supplies, transportation, testing and licensing fees, work-based learning supplemental instruction and barrier removal are all valuable tools to ensure that resources are maximized while upgrading the skills of job seekers. Partnerships and alignment are also strengths at the core of nearly every activity in the region. This positive shift in approach to workforce development has made the concept a genuine priority, with a potential added benefit of more resources allocated to workforce development as partnerships expand. The rise in priority of workforce development has also expanded the number of public-private partnerships that serve to address educational and skill needs since the 2015 Local Plan.

~~Additionally, the WIOA program links customers/jobseekers to employment and training opportunities. The strengths of all of these and emerging programs relate to the focus on in-demand employers and industries. This concentration has contributed to the growth of the regional economy and job development. The initiatives represent more opportunities than ever for entry into in-demand careers. If there is a weakness to these – or any such programs – it is related to a lack of connectivity and data sharing. With many program weather designed to assist job seekers or businesses, there are going to requirements or eligibility elements that must be met. While there is often overlap between customers of these programs, there remains a difficulty of connecting them seamlessly. This can be directly related to individual program performance metrics or confidentiality requirements that do not allow for direct sharing. These competing interests can lead to a perceived silo or disconnect between organizations. Consistent funding for programs can also lead to an issue of continuity, and therefore services gaps.~~

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sharing. These competing interests can lead to a perceived silo or disconnect between organizations. Consistent funding for programs can also lead to an issue of continuity, and therefore services gaps. A lack of awareness is also a weakness. While the area enjoys the multitude of opportunities detailed, the recruitment of program participants for the various opportunities, remains a best kept secret. Each partner spends significant energy on its awareness campaign to begin the recruitment process. Using the network of partners and its regularly convening meeting to share information and spread the word, it continues as a laborious process to conduct adequate community outreach.

A focus on priority populations, or those with barriers to employment, has gained notable traction within the Midlands Area, and many workforce programs carry a priority to serve these individuals. Examples above include linkages for persons with disabilities through BOOM, and REEMERGE is specifically designed to serve returning citizens. The Midlands Area WIOA program continues to seek to serve those that have barriers as a prime customer, with an emphasis on partnerships to lever the highest quality service to address or eliminate barriers.

Section II: Strategic Vision and Goals

A description of the local board's strategic vision to support regional economic growth and self-sufficiency, including:

~~The Midlands Workforce Development Board evaluates the strategic vision and goals with regularity to maintain relevance and serve the needs of the area. As necessary, changes are implemented; primarily with regard to customer engagement or through enhanced partner relationships. COVID-19 and the impacts of the area have been both a challenge, but an opportunity as well. As the changes to the economic and workforce landscape of the Midlands emerge, our vision is to use the crisis as a catalyst to modernize our system.~~

The Midlands Workforce Development Board evaluates the strategic vision and goals with regularity to maintain relevance and serve the needs of the area. As necessary, changes are implemented; primarily with regard to customer engagement or through enhanced partner relationships. COVID-19 and the impacts of the area have been both a challenge, but an opportunity as well over the last few years. As the changes to the economic and workforce landscape of the Midlands emerge, our vision is to use the crisis as a catalyst to modernize our system. The area has increased the integration of technology into our service delivery. Staff continues to utilize the option of virtual access of workshops and WIOA Orientations while adding back in person services to maximize flexibility to serve our customers. The integration of modern social media platforms to include the addition of TikTok videos continues to be a focus for the area for recruitment, service delivery and outreach. The addition of Virtual Reality career exploration equipment has expanded the capacity of hands-on exploration for the area and provided a new tool for recruitment as well. The area will

continue to seek ways to use technology to increase our footprint in the area, enhance service offerings and delivery and engage our customers in their career journey.

The MWDB has maintained the vision of a workforce system that provides employment opportunities, improves the quality of the workforce and facilitates economic development for all. The MWDB supports a workforce system in coordination with stakeholders that meets the needs of employers and job seekers by administering programs that promote economic growth and competitiveness in the Midlands. To achieve this end, the area objectives include building an integrated workforce development system that effectively pools the resources of diverse partner agencies and delivers optimal quality, customer-focused service for both customers (job seekers and employers). Dedication to the vision and these goals has been consistent and we will remain dedicated to these principles.

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WIOA Performance Measures for Program Year 2022 and 2023 are below.

WIOA TITLE I – ADULT	Program Year 2022 Goal	Program Year 2023 Goal
Employment Rate 2 nd Quarter After Exit	77.1%	77.1%
Employment Rate 4 th Quarter After Exit	79.0%	79.0%
Median Earnings in the 2 nd Quarter After Exit	\$6,600	\$6,600
Credential Attainment Rate	54.5%	54.5%
Measurable Skill Gains	55.2%	55.2%

WIOA TITLE I – DISLOCATED WORKER	Program Year 2022 Goal	Program Year 2023 Goal
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	82.8%	82.8%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	83.7%	83.7%
Median Earnings in the 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$8,258	\$8,258
Credential Attainment Rate	66.2%	66.2%
Measurable Skill Gains	57.1%	57.1%
WIOA TITLE I – YOUTH	Program Year 2022 Goal	Program Year 2023 Goal
Education or Training Activities or Employment in the 2nd Quarter After Exit	82.6%	82.6%
Education or Training Activities or Employment in the 4th Quarter After Exit	78.9%	78.9%
Median Earnings in the 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$4,241	\$4,241
Credential Attainment Rate	65.0%	65.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	52.8%	52.8%

- Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including youth and individuals with barriers to employment; and

In the realm of economic growth, the MWDB views our role as one of talent development. By partnering with area and regional stakeholders, we equip job seekers with the skills (technical and soft) required to meet employer needs. The

creation of the Central Region planning team is a critical component to this end. Regional planning will allow us to ensure that our resources are aligned to work with the flow of business and adapt as necessary. The goals that define our vision include:

- Increases in high school diplomas/GED credential attainment, employment opportunities and
 - Reduction of the number of unfilled/vacant Jobs & unemployment/joblessness;
 - Registered Apprenticeship (RA) opportunities - sponsored Apprenticeships & hired apprentices;
 - A focus on the priority clusters for virtual classroom training combined with increased opportunities of RA and On-the-Job Training will help the area strengthen and build the Talent Pipeline. The variety of training options will allow the Midlands to make training accessible, available and attractive to the wide array of job seekers including youth and individuals with barriers to employment.
- A description of how the local board will work with core and required partners to align local resources to achieve the strategic vision and goals referenced above.

The (MWDB) prioritizes partnerships with critical stakeholders and contributors - both within and outside of our local area. This strategy remains a core focus for our service delivery model and in aligning the available local resources.

This includes continuing to coordinate the activities of partners through monthly meetings of the Midlands Business Services Team, led by MWDB staff. The team consists of representatives from Adult Education, SCVR, SCDSS, SCDEW, Apprenticeship Carolina, **Telamon Migrant Seasonal Farmworker program, WIOA service providers and Community-based organizations. The cohesive team approach affords these partners the opportunity to share information regarding services planned or provided, thereby eliminating duplication and increasing participation. The MWDA also maintains relationships with all WIOA required partners as mandated by the Act. Due to statewide cutbacks, some agencies are unable to maintain the level of in-person services once possible in the SC Works Centers. This has resulted in modifications to delivery methods to include virtual referrals and affiliate offices to accommodate the needs of job seekers in the area. Fortunately, the Midlands has employed the technology that has made this nearly seamless. Additionally, training remains an important component of the Midlands strategy for the workforce. A focus on the priority clusters for classroom training combined with increased opportunities for Apprenticeships and On-the-Job Training will help the area strengthen and grow the Talent Pipeline. The variety of training options will allow the Midlands to make**

training accessible, available and attractive to the wide array of job seekers including youth and individuals with barriers to employment.

The MWDA will continue to pursue opportunities with new partners and other entities that match our vision, goals and that may allow us to leverage additional resources and funds.

Section III: Local Area Partnerships and Investment Strategies

1. A description of the planning process undertaken to produce the local plan. The description must include how the chief elected officials, local board, and core and required partners were involved in the development of the plan.

For 2022 Plan Modification, the MWDB planning process followed State Instruction 21-09 and our previously used methodology with which we have previously found success, a division of labor planning around staff areas of expertise. We view this as a Subject Matter Expert approach and find it continues to be the most effective way to manage a large scale project. The individual components of the planning and plan writing were evaluated by subject area and then assigned to the most appropriate staff or team of staff members. Each section and element of the plan template was analyzed to determine the need(s), then a determination of current status and areas in need of address or revision. SC Works (Core and required) partners were engaged in the process with inclusion in Board meetings, Committee meetings, Business Services team meetings and monthly partner meetings as there are representatives from the partners in each of these groups. The planning and working draft documents were provided to all members via Google Drive with the ability to provide input and follow the development process. Additionally, partners such as Economic Developers, were engaged for input and assistance in developing the elements of the plan. Engagement with local elected county officials for the planning phase was coordinated through the Clerk's Office of each county. By providing updates, the draft documents and materials, we were able to ensure LEOs were integral to the process. A peer review model was then implemented to ensure accuracy and that all relevant input was incorporated.

A final draft of the plan and framework was presented to the Midlands Workforce Development Board, county council members, local government members and chief local elected officials with requests for direct input, and the opportunity to provide guidance and updates prior to the draft release for public comment.

2. A description of the workforce development system in the local area, including:
 - Identification of the programs that are included in the system; and
 - How the Local Board will support strategies for service alignment among the entities carrying out workforce development programs in the local area.

The workforce development system in the Midlands is built around relationships with the required WIOA partners SC Vocational Rehabilitation, SC Commission for the Blind, the local Adult Education departments, SC Department of Social Services for TANF services and Job Corps. These partners deliver services part-time in the SC Works Centers (full-time for SC DSS & Job Corps) and full-time through referrals from the Center. Additionally, all Midlands WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs, as well as the various programs delivered by the SC Department of Employment and Workforce co-locate services full-time in the SC Works Centers. The Midlands will continue to work with the partners required and others to develop and innovate the strategic delivery of the menu of services required by WIOA to increase integration and avoid duplication of services. Additionally, all of the partners will continue collaboration as an integrated Business Services Team to provide employers with a cohesive and cooperative model for accessing the talent pipeline.

The Board commits to a continuously improving process to ensure that the menu of career services is relevant, high quality, efficient, and accessible. This will be especially critical as the Midlands moves to a post-pandemic economy. Incorporating technology and improved access to career services for job seekers who have barriers to employment will help the area and region continue to build the talent pipeline. Data sharing, especially business intelligence, with the partners and making group strategic decisions on addressing the skill gaps will continue to be an integral part of these efforts. The mechanisms to align resources and the strategies will work through the board standing committees, as well as the area operator and business services lead. By using the operator and business services lead as single points of contact, and through standing meetings, we will ensure partnership and participation keep our services efficient and relevant. Lastly the Midlands Area looks forward to the rollout of updating State Workforce Development Board initiatives, innovations, and priorities.

3. A description of the strategies and services that will be used in the local are to:
 - Expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, including individuals with barriers to employment;

Within the local area and beyond, the Midlands Workforce Development Board (MWDB) has consistently prioritized establishing and growing partnerships with core programs and contributors. As the central focus in our service delivery model, this strategy is essential in expanding access to and aligning the available local resources within the community for the foreseeable future.

The demand for services by individuals seeking jobs, training, and employers seeking talent in an increasingly more competitive market has remained consistent during the last five years. Services range from staff assisted job search (job searches, resume preparation, labor market data and interviewing skills), training services (remedial education, short-term training, and career specific certifications), and On-the-Job Training placement opportunities. By aligning with similar organizations such as readySC, Apprenticeship Carolina, SC DEW, DSS, and surrounding Adult Education partners, we are able to maximize the delivery of employment related services to both job seekers and business customers. Private business and community organizations regularly volunteer to lead workshops in all of the Centers. Job searching, interviewing, basic computer instruction, career exploration, and criminal record expungement workshops are all offered in the Centers at no cost to the job seekers or the Centers. The Midlands area will continue to seek partnerships with area partners to enhance the opportunities for training and education, associated supportive services, and to enter employment.

Training is at the heart of the services that the MWDB provides. The MWDB works closely with various Adult Education and English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs in the local area as well as Midlands Technical College and other PATH eligible providers in an effort to assist adult learners with the attainment of certificates and critical basic skills needed for continued education in occupational specific postsecondary education. Utilizing various resources for training will expand the capacity to fully serve Midlands residents in receiving training services in high demand occupations, and by covering most if not all financial needs to complete the training. The Midlands is currently coordinating outreach and recruitment with Midlands Technical College's Continuing Education students with QuickJobs, which covers **more than 35 programs and other scholarship opportunities**. Using these combined funding strategies will help leverage resources for training. The variety of training options will also allow the Midlands to make training accessible, available, and attractive to the wide array of job seekers including youth and individuals with barriers to employment.

Current and planned projects include collaborative partnerships with Transitions Homeless Center, MIRCI Youth Drop-in Center, Fast Forward CTC, and SC Codes. Transitions Homeless Center operates emergency housing shelter, short-term housing, and a day center, all serving homeless individuals in the Midlands area. They are committed to moving the individuals to employment and self-sufficiency as a part of the stabilization plan. The Midlands area works closely with the Transitions to identify the customers in need of WIOA assistance to secure resources for further education and job placement. From the first year of the MIRCI's Youth drop-in Center, the Midlands WIOA program partnered with them to assist homeless youth. Similar to the collaboration with Transitions, WIOA staff works closely with the MIRCI staff to provide enhanced training and employment opportunities for customers whose housing was stabilized. Additionally, MIRCI's Youth Services Director is an integral

member of the MWDB Youth Committee to ensure continued collaboration of services. Fast Forward CTC continues to work closely with the Midlands area in serving homeless and veterans with disabilities. Their collaboration with the SC Works Centers enhances the basic computer skills, IT certifications, and direct placement into a variety of occupations of their target customer population and moves homeless and veterans with disabilities back into the workforce and on their way to self-sufficiency. **The Midlands collaboration with Create Opportunity continues to grow and provide training and employment in Information Technology for non-traditional job seekers through Apprenticeships.** The project uses artificial intelligence and web-based assessment to determine aptitude to create a more diverse gateway for priority populations (rural residents, minorities, women, marginalized individuals, etc.) to move into the IT field. Midlands staff will continue to seek opportunities beyond these examples to connect job seekers to opportunities to advance their employability into high demand jobs.

- Improve access to activities leading to a recognized post-secondary credential, including an industry-recognized certificate or certification that is portable and stackable;

The diversity of educational options and credentials are a strength of our highly decentralized system, as it creates many opportunities and serves many purposes. However, it also presents major challenges for the students, employers, workers, and policymakers using it. Weak connections among parts of this multilayered credentialing system make it difficult for learners with different levels of abilities and need to understand career pathway options and the most direct routes to learning in order to meet their goals. In today's competitive workforce, labor markets value postsecondary credentials. Business leaders desire to see more acquisition of training credentials that are stackable and portable.

The MWDA continues working closely with the various Adult Education programs in the local area, as well as Midlands Technical College, to attain stackable certificates to aid adult learners in completion of secondary education, attainment of critical basic skills, and continuing education in occupational specific postsecondary education. Portability and stacking (progressive levels of attainment) are key components of industry recognized credentials and certifications. This can also indicate an individual's ability to participate in a comprehensive program of study and that they have a structured career pathway to gainful employment. Such programs are also beneficial for non-traditional students. These courses offer many benefits to WIOA participants in the Midlands Area. Many of these courses produce a certificate that is able to be obtained in a limited amount of time. This creates a pathway to advanced jobs, offers a higher wage, and entry into middle income opportunities.

The area will improve access to post-secondary credentials by working closely with partners and stakeholders to (1) identify entry-level credentials that are prerequisite

to WIOA-approved ETPL training for recruitment and outreach for WIOA participants seeking to add the next stackable credential to their resume (2) coordinate with local educational funders to expand scholarships and grants to fund training programs outside of the WIOA program (3) coordinate with partners to co-enroll participants interesting in training opportunities before and after WIOA funded training (4) collaborate with employer apprenticeship programs to increase use of the alternate training path with WIOA funded OJT. **The Incumbent Worker Training program continues to be a valuable resource to support area employers' commitment to Apprenticeship with multiple year support in the skilled trades of Plumbing, Pipefitting and HVAC/Refrigeration.** As additional opportunities arise for the area to expand the WIOA eligible training provider list and/or expand credentialing opportunities, this will expand as a result.

- Facilitate engagement of employers in workforce development programs, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations;

To ensure that employers are engaged in the Midlands Workforce system, we intend to continue a multi-pronged approach. To ensure business use, we will provide relevant services, products, and solutions. We will achieve this starting with the Midlands BST. The BST, with its partnership approach and integration of services to support a one-knock system, helps to ensure that duplication is eliminated – thus, employers can understand system services and are not interrupted through repetitive contacts. Formally scheduled meetings are now held monthly when possible, however improvised meetings and electronic communication mean intelligence is constantly flowing through the team.

Engaging employers in the Midlands does not follow one simple format. The BST members utilize a multifaceted approach that may include cold-calls, follow up from prior contacts, face-to-face through community-based events or social media. In essence, the type of approach to engagement is tailored to the industry or business.

Utilizing technology to assist small businesses and their small or non-existent human resources staff conducting the screening and hiring process of new talent continues to grow in demand. The Brazen Virtual Job Platform has added convenience to the Center's ability to provide support to the hiring process. Recent customers include Receivable Solutions, Schneider Electrical, WellPath and Walmart.

- Support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area;

The Midlands BST has incorporated the use of data to ensure that efforts and services remain demand-driven. The information they use comes from a variety of sources and covers many categories. The specific data from the SCDEW's Business Intelligence

Division, Labor Market Information, Economic Development, etc. and the analysis of the information is an example. However, specific intelligence from the business community is also considered. Data guides the Midlands system as a way to ensure that customer service and training is focused on in demand occupations. Additionally, IWT provides a unique solution for businesses that help support the advancement of skills for existing employees, not just focusing on new hires. By providing this support for business expansion and growth, the area is able to ensure that business is served in more than one (new hire) capacity.

- Improve coordination between workforce development programs and economic development; and

The MWDB connection to local Economic Development is an area we have focused on to continue growing in recent years. The MWDB values the partnerships with Economic Development as a primary connection to LEOs and the business community. The area has prioritized Economic Development from a local, regional, and where appropriate, state level. We have found success by providing quality services that benefit and bolster the efforts of Economic Development organizations. Additionally, we have increased our engagement by maintaining economic developer participation on our BST, area committees, and other ad hoc groups. Richland County Economic Development is also represented, and engaged with the board through a county appointment.

- Strengthen linkages between the SC Works delivery system and unemployment insurance programs.

~~The departure of in-office Unemployment Insurance services has proven to be a continued challenge; especially given the 2020 spike unemployment rate spike. While the online UI system and call center service model offers some upgrades, many of our customers are not computer literate or comfortable in self-directed use. While we do our best to offer computer classes to combat this, it is not a fast solution.~~ To ensure a strong and customer focused linkage with the UI program within the SC Works System, we have considered our partnership with SCDEW to be critical. The Re-Employment Assistance (REA) UI staff in the centers provide us with the needed connection to the front line of unemployment services. Beyond the local level, the MWDB works closely with the SCDEW Area Director for our Region **to facilitate a seamless flow of services to our customers.** This relationship allows a two-way flow of information. ~~Our front-line staff has also become much more comfortable with guiding claimants through the web portal and phone system with the dramatic increase of UI claimant customer flow resulting from COVID-19.~~

4. A description of how the strategies discussed in Question 3 above will be aligned with the priorities outlined in the State Plan; specifically:

- Increasing participation in work-based (WBL) activities, including registered apprenticeship programs;

The Midlands area has long recognized the importance of work-based learning activities of all types. The area has a long history of utilizing work experience in the youth program to allow youth participants to try out careers and expand their occupational knowledge. In recent years while analyzing multiple occupational skills training programs, staff made the observation that many lacked an internship component. As a result, it was often difficult for participants to translate their recently acquired classroom skills training into unsubsidized employment. The area committed to add WIOA sponsored internships to high demand occupations for participants completing related classroom training. Consultation with our core partner, Midlands Technical College, assisted staff in quickly designing internship program paperwork meeting WIOA needs, and mirroring formats familiar in our business community. For individuals enrolled in dental assisting and front-office dental practice, local dental practices were approached to serve as internship sites. Participants in those career paths have successfully transitioned from newly enrolled participants to fully employed trained and certified staff in less than one year. For participants enrolled in the Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) program, there is a gap between the end of the training period and the licensing process. Those participants were matched with internship opportunities to allow the students to continue to practice the skills needed for the clinical licensing test, shadow licensed EMTs, and build references and connections to employers while they waited. This specific project temporarily reduces the work stress on the front line by supplying para-professionals while the students are in the internship, and ultimately helps fill the pipeline of highly qualified professionals at its conclusion. **The pandemic stalled this initiative with restrictions; however, reengaging this EMT project is a priority for PY 2022.** The Midlands area maximized work-based learning opportunities through Apprenticeship by approving a locally funded IWT project to increase the maintenance technician pipeline. **Examples of these projects include RiteDose, Nephron Pharmaceuticals, and WB Guimarin.** A few other local employers have met to explore ways to connect our job seekers to open positions they have with apprenticeships. Those conversations are in the infancy stage, but we look forward to enhancing job seeker opportunities with such excellent growth opportunities in work-based learning. **The transition of the BOOM program being recognized as a Pre-Apprenticeship and supported with Apprenticeship Carolina grant funds further enhances the apprenticeship opportunities in the area. Those projects will continue into PY 2022 as staff seeks additional opportunities to leverage resources with partners to advance the careers of the job seekers.**

- Increasing the formal assessment and provision of soft-skills training;

The Midlands area coordinates services with many of the partners identified in the State unified plan, specifically those indicated in the area of soft skills training. ~~The area offers WIN assessments, including the soft skills assessments, in the SC Works Centers. As noted in the State plan, customers taking the WIN assessment have access to the WIN instruction models, including the SoftSkills courseware. In addition to the computer based WIN courseware,~~ In absence of a statewide career readiness assessment at this time, the area offers WorkKeys and TABE assessments in the SC Works Centers. Typing skill and speed assessments are also available in the Resource Room. To expand the availability of this soft skills assessment, the area purchased additional licenses for Mavis Beacon so that all Resource Room computers now have the software availability. The software is designed as a teaching tool, and also includes an initial assessment for speed and accuracy, which has actually been required by some Midlands employers. Additionally through a recent Youth pilot projects, the area was able to access NorthStar computer skill assessments for participants through the pilot contractors, FastForward CTC and Richland Two Adult Education. With two partners with computer skills assessment, the availability for the area is expanded.

Additionally, CareerOnestop.org provides several no-cost web-based assessments such as their soft skills Skill Matcher. This assessment can help users identify their existing skills and see how they match to other careers that use those skills. As our partnerships grow and resource-sharing becomes even more important, we seek to leverage additional resources to serve all job seeking customers particularly in the area of expanding access to formal soft skills assessments.

Midlands customers have access to our Center workshops. These workshops have been available to the public for over a decade, with the topics ever evolving. Topics vary month to month but include career exploration, basic computer skills, introductory job skills, communication, and conflict resolution. As the impacts of COVID-19 were felt in SC Works Centers, the Midlands Area transitioned all workshops to a virtual format. The array of workshop topics enhances the soft-skills trainings that are available to the public. Throughout the program year, WIOA participants have access to bootcamp soft skills training. For the Youth participants, this workshop series occurs prior to the start of a work experience placement. For the Adult & Dislocated Worker participants, the workshop series is organized by a career cluster that culminates in a job fair for the successful series completers.

- Facilitating the development of career pathways and increasing co-enrollment across partner programs, as appropriate;

As WIOA resources, along with our partners' resources continue to reduce, we find it more critical than ever to strategically invest in career pathways while leveraging resources and expertise from each other when possible. We have continued our focus on work-based learning activities, with a specific interest in internships to complement classroom training. A successful example of this was pairing an Internship with Fairfield County for WIOA participants who completed the EMT training with MTC. This Internship occurred in the time between the training completion and the licensing exam. It allows the students to continue practicing the skills, make career-related contacts, and ask exam questions from subject matter experts. Our cohort experienced a 100% pass and job placement rate at the conclusion. This model offers the ideal blueprint for the area to scale to other in-demand occupations. We have also been able to co-enroll participants with youth focused programs to include Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School, and the Youth ChalleNGe Academy to expand work-based learning to complement classroom training programs. We have also experienced success with our continued partnership with Adult Education programs to continue career pathways begun with all students working on GED attainment. For PY 2022, the area is collaborating with the area high school Career Centers and the Midlands Middle College to increase career pathway knowledge and increase opportunities for area youth after graduation.

We are continuing to develop our relationship with Transitions Homeless Shelter to co-enroll their residents with stable housing to continue training goals leading to self-sufficient employment. The collaborative Business Services Team meetings across all Midlands partner programs also aid in strengthening career pipelines across multiple workforce programs, reaching a diverse audience of job seekers.

- Implement cross-program staff training to enhance service delivery to businesses and job seekers;

Every month, all partner staff in the SC Works Midlands Centers are invited to participate in a Centerwide staff meeting. The meeting includes pertinent information for Center operations but also contains a training element ranging in topics, such as commonly asked questions in the Resource Room, persons with disabilities awareness and inclusion, partner program services, and more. Additionally, the Business Services Team that includes the staff who serve local businesses meets monthly. In addition to the Center partner staff, the team also includes economic development representatives from the Department of Commerce. The meeting includes a cross-program staff training element as well as a discussion of recent employer needs. The opportunities these two

meetings provide serve as both cross-program training and collaboration. Without these coordinated opportunities, some members of these groups may not have access to each other.

In addition to the locally organized training, the area is in the midst of implementing the State developed cross-program training. A new group of partner staff has been enrolled in each cohort since the program launched.

- Streamline intake and referral processes;
The Midlands currently utilizes a dual system for streamlined partner referrals. The preferred method is utilizing the system within SCWOS for the action and tracking of referrals. Recognizing that not all of our partners utilize SCWOS, the alternate referral procedure uses the referral form that is attached to the partner MOU.

Further streamlining procedures, particularly around participant intake, is of great interest. The Midlands began this process with the introduction of the greeter kiosk in each of the SC Works Centers, as well as utilizing it as the check-in for all of our hosted career and job fairs. We have been pleased with the simplicity of the data collection and accuracy of reporting. We look forward to implementing the State's policy of a streamlined intake process when it is developed.

- Developing strategies that increase access to reliable transportation, affordable housing and access to identification and vital records;

The Midlands area stands ready to execute the State's plan for increased capacity for increased access to reliable transportation. In the meantime, we work closely with community partners such as The COMET for bus tickets, and the Cooperative Ministries for access to affordable used cars. We also provide transportation reimbursement for WIOA participants in training activities and assist WIOA participants with driver training when needed to obtain an initial driver's license to provide maximum flexibility to set the participants up for long-term independence. Additionally, we sponsor virtual workshops on a variety of topics accessible to the community that includes driver's license restoration.

Affordable housing is a nationwide problem the Midlands area is not immune to. While WIOA resources are not dedicated to this issue, there are several local organizations that focus on finding solutions. We collaborate with community partners experienced with placing people into stable housing when the participants are in need. These partners include the Columbia Housing Authority, MIRCI, Transitions, Oliver Gospel Mission, Lexington's Samaritan's

Well, Family Promise of the Midlands, Hannah’s House, and Christ Central Ministries.

Procuring and protecting access to identification and vital records is a critical component to accessing all types of services. While there are no funds dedicated to the issue, it is a daily goal to help job seekers obtain whatever information or service they need on the road to self-sufficiency including identification and vital records. We look forward to incorporating the State’s mechanism for obtaining identification and vital records to come to fruition. In the meantime, we are regularly hosting workshops regarding identification documents (Real ID and Driver License Restoration) and Center staff stand at the ready to help job seekers identify the location and process to obtain needed vital records. A partnership and location close to the SC Legal office provide another, expert resource for complex issues that may be a barrier to obtaining needed identification.

- Supporting industry-led, sector partnerships; and

The Midlands area has always supported partnerships with local businesses to enhance the services to the job seeker. The most notable recent project has been the progress of the Central Region Sector Strategies under the NextGen model. The initial launch of the program was tailored to Manufacturing; however, the goal is to create a framework to be scaled to all priority sectors, while allowing a coordinated approach and improved service delivery. This is an on-going project in support of the State’s priority.

In addition, several years ago the area began collaborating with local IT businesses on a project to introduce coding skills to non-traditional IT job seekers (Create Opportunity). The project was initiated by the businesses that sought our assistance in seeking potential talent to launch the program. We have worked with them on several successful cycles and are looking forward to our continued work with them to meet their needs and underserved job seekers.

- Sharing best practices across partner programs in order to increase awareness of partner services, promote a workforce environment of growth and continuous improvement, and support a system viewpoint.

The Midlands area prioritizes communication among partners. We use that to increase awareness of partner programs to address services from a system view. We try to share job seeker success stories at every meeting to highlight various projects or approaches that have worked well. We encourage our partners to do the same as they share program information. We engage partners through non-Board member representation on the Board’s standing

committees to encourage the collection of best practice ideas and encourage collaboration among partners. Membership includes: all Adult Education districts, Commission for the Blind, Vocational Rehabilitation, Able SC, Work in Progress, Midlands Technical College, University of South Carolina, County Economic Development offices, Job Corps, Lexington County Sheriff's Department, and the Columbia Housing Authority.

5. A description of how the local board will work with core, required, and other partners, including economic development, to implement the strategies and services discussed in Question 3.

Within the local area and beyond, the Midlands Workforce Development Board (MWDB) has consistently prioritized establishing, and growing partnerships with core programs and contributors. To achieve this and effectively implement the strategies and services, the MWDB sees its role as that of convener and advocate. As the central focus in our service delivery model, this strategy is essential in expanding access to and aligning the available local resources within the community for the foreseeable future.

The OneStop Operator is responsible for coordinating the core and required partners as it relates to the day-to-day operation of services provision. This includes ensuring training (area wide and SC Works 101), distribution of information, and coordinating activities within and between the SC Works Centers. The Operator is also tasked with implementing and enforcing the Midlands Area Operation Plan. Essentially, the OSO is the point of contact for service coordination, implementation, and customer facing activities of the Area. In a complementary role, the Midlands Business Services Lead ensures that core, required, and additional partners are able to collaborate in an efficient manner. Through monthly coordination and consistent communication, the service providing partners are able to connect with industry and economic developers from all three counties. By operating as a collective, the Midlands partners can leverage opportunities, resources, and create efficiency. Finally, the Board, through both appointed membership and non-appointed committee members, creates a collective of subject matter experts. This allows the board to set priorities, and guide the system from a high operating level.

The Midlands is also utilizing Sector Strategies, to bolster these efforts, in conjunction with the Central Workforce Region and core/required/additional partners. The Sector Strategy currently underway for the area, focuses on the in-demand industry of Manufacturing, with future planning for Healthcare and Distribution/Logistics. The NextGen model for our Sector Strategy places Business in the leadership role of the group, and all of the service providing partners in a listening mode. This puts our partners in the room to hear directly from businesses regarding needs, challenges, and barriers. By hearing the same, uninterrupted message from Industry, we are able to focus our collaborative efforts.

Essentially, the implementation of the system for the Midlands system relies on partnership and communication to ensure an integrated workforce system that supports job seekers and employers, utilizing all of the employment and training tools available. As the implementation of the state strategies evolve and South Carolina navigates into a recovery model, the Midlands Board will continue to seek ways to innovate and further align our services and partnerships. Where possible, we cultivate new partnerships and relationships to enhance delivery.

6. A description of the Adult, DW, Youth assessment processes of soft-skills and subsequent provision of soft-skills training, including descriptions of formal tools or resources utilized.

The development of soft skills in job seekers has been a focus in South Carolina, and the Midlands for several years. The issue is complex for many reasons, including defining what soft skills, or essential skills, mean to employers. We traditionally think of abilities like time management, conflict resolution, good communication, and teamwork. As various groups surveyed the needs of employers, other less soft foundational skills emerged as equally critical. Skills like basic computer skills to include Microsoft environment basics, typing, a drivers license, etc. were added to the employers' essential needs list. A multitude of needed skills require a multi-prong approach to assessment and training.

The Midlands area supports State developed initiatives to address soft skill needs. S.C. Job Ready U. is a curriculum developed by Clemson University funded through the State Workforce Development Board. The curriculum is still available to partners to utilize the instructor-led training. Additionally, as the state collective group conducts the final negotiation for the Statewide workready assessments, the Midlands area stands ready and anxious to launch it. In the meantime, since the end of the last contract, the Midlands area has continued to offer WorkKeys assessments for employers with WorkKeys profiles. The MWDB is an assessment provider and thus intends to offer as many assessment options as available in each of the SC Works Center.

The Midlands Area has additional resources to complement the State initiatives. Our WIOA provider offers the MY LEGACY program as a soft skills "bootcamp" workshop series to prepare WIOA Youth for work experience. As success was realized with this project, a similar project was initiated for Adult/Dislocated Worker participants as they prepared themselves for job placement. In addition, select topics are presented as a part of the Center's on-going monthly workshop series, available to the public. As no job seeker has the exact same need, and needs change over time, the area stands ready to adapt and accommodate our customers' needs with relevant products and solutions.

7. A description of the strategies and services for employers that may include the implementation of initiatives such as Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) programs, On-the-Job Training (OJT) programs, customized training programs, industry and sector strategies, career pathways initiatives, utilization of effective business intermediaries, and other business services and strategies designed to meet the needs of regional employers and support the local board's strategic vision and goals.

The Midlands area business services strategies and services include several adjustments and additions. Beginning in PY17, the MWDB began utilizing the option of a locally funded Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) program to supplement the resources made available from state discretionary funds. As long as area funding permits, the MWDB will continue this strategy as a result of the success and return on investment in the form of skill upgrades, wage increases, and potential to create new work opportunities. OJT is another mainstay of the Midlands Area Business (and WIOA training) service toolkit. To support and ensure the success of OJT, Midlands WIOA service providers are budgeted funding and the performance of OJT is tracked to prioritize opportunities that average \$13 or more per hour.

COVID-19 and the long-term impacts will shape the future of many aspects of services to employers. We anticipate that Sector Strategies will play an important role for business; however the needs of our first launched group, Manufacturing, will likely emerge and reconvene with a new set of challenges and barriers. The NextGen model of an "employer-owned," or led process will continue, ideally with a blend of new and returning partners. As we progress into recovery from the pandemic, it is likely that the Central Region plan to scale the process to Healthcare and Distribution Logistics will accelerate - perhaps with natural overlap between the interconnected parts of Industry.

Finally, the Midlands Area Business Service Team continues to grow and increase impacts. The integrated team will continue to recruit partners and employers for membership, and continue to convene on a monthly basis. This consistent environment for partners to gather and conduct a roundtable helps to ensure effective service to employers.

8. A description of how the local board will coordinate local workforce investment activities with regional and economic development activities that are carried out in the local area, including how the local board will promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services.

Collaborations and partnerships through regional and statewide groups will be the prime method of ensuring connection to regional economic development (ED) activities. The MWDB has longstanding, existing relationships with the area economic developers, and through our regional team intend to continue expanding our contacts. Existing Industry (ED) representatives from each of the three counties, as well as the

SC Department of Commerce, are active with the Area Business Service Team. By working with economic development, the MWDB can link with new and expanding existing businesses; however, to promote entrepreneurship, skills, and connect with microenterprises, we are seeking to target additional organizations that move in these circles. To expand our services and business services approach to be more inclusive, our goals include greater connections to subject matter experts (SME) such as Midlands Tech Center for Entrepreneurial Success, SOCO, USC Technology Incubator, engenuitySC, readySC, Women's Entrepreneur Network, Columbia College Women's Business & Entrepreneurship Center, etc.

We will also seek to engage these partners as active members of our Business Services Team. This will ensure that our Team and its approach will be geared toward entrepreneurs and understand the challenges these businesses face as start-ups.

Section IV: Program Design and Evaluation

1. A description of the SC Works delivery system in the local area, including:
 - How the local board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services through the system and that the providers will meet the employment needs of local employers, workers, and jobseekers;

Prior to the start of each new Program Year, the MWDB reviews the current Program Year for any provider to determine if there is either need for improvement as well as any areas that could be enhanced as a mechanism for continuous improvement. The Board completes this as part of the annual decision to renew contracts with the existing service providers for Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, and Operator services, or to issue a Request for Proposals. Depending on the action taken by the Board those areas are either incorporated in the RFP or operationalized into benchmarks for the provider(s). The prime indicators include participation/enrollments, fund utilization, performance, and Youth workbased learning, as well as annual goal elements that are developed based on these indicators. These benchmarks are typically selected to enhance areas that indicate additional opportunity or shifts of service need. The Board and Committees receive quarterly updates on the improvement areas. For any provider that includes a management fee or profit in their proposed budget, those operational benchmarks are included in the awarded contract by the method of earning the management fee or profit. For either type of contract, the operational benchmarks are used to determine the provider effectiveness. As part of the continuous improvement process for the Board, the impact area(s) and level(s) are reevaluated for Program Year.

The Midlands area will support continuous improvement through a thorough review of training provider applications submitted. Applications are considered for approval against the standards set by the Midlands Workforce Development Board to include

attainment of a recognized credential, approval by the State body overseeing the specific training and inclusion within the locally prioritized industry clusters. As performance data becomes available with the implementation of PATH, performance data will become an additional and important criterion for continued approval on the Eligible Training Provider list. **As the State Board establishes benchmarks for the providers on the Eligible Training Provider list, the Midlands area is poised for evaluation of the providers, ways they might be able to improve and gaps in service that any removals may create.**

- How the local board will target rural communities, including facilitating increased access to services provided through the SC Works delivery system through the use of technology and other means;

The Midlands continues to explore partnerships to develop regional access points to deliver virtual access to as many SC Works system services as reasonably possible. At a minimum, our program design would involve providing equipment, training and other necessary materials/resources to a community-based partner. The partner, location, and other variables would determine the services and levels of service that may be available. Geography and population will be primary considerations in targeting our efforts to develop access point affiliate sites. Our target areas include opportunities in rural areas such as Fairfield County (beyond the town of Winnsboro), western Lexington County, eastern Richland County, well as additional downtown Columbia spots. In the meantime, multiple partners who serve on the Business Services Team have received training in job referrals, job search, and resume and cover letter creation to encourage use of the SC Works Online Services (SCWOS) as they work with their clients. Partners who have received the training include Job Corps, SC National Guard, Goodwill (Job Connection and SCSEP staffs), Lexington County DSS, and the various Adult Education partners. While these locations are not official access points, it does widen the access to the job referrals and thus bringing a better value to the businesses we serve.

For other services, the Midlands has sought to use technology when possible to streamline services. The impact of COVID-19 sped up the implementation of virtual workshops. All workshops have been available virtually since April 2020, and will continue. The area is adding new workshop topics each month, using social media to promote access, and is moving towards edited versions of the select workshops on the new YouTube channel and TikTok account to increase capacity to services. TABE is available in a web-based platform to expand the access to the service. As a part of WIOA, the Midlands area has increased customer access to Financial Literacy. Targeted and specific workshops are still held within the Centers with representatives from professional organizations at no cost to the job seeker. Additionally, the Midlands has made a host of financial literacy curriculums available to be taken online as reinforcement and deeper study of selected topics. These tools and training are available by virtue of the SC Works Midlands Centers serving annually as sites for the

Cooperative Ministries' VITA free tax return preparation and filing by trained professionals, and by Wells Fargo. Additional basic skills and occupational skills training are made available to SC Works customers online through Allison and the South Carolina Library. WIOA participants also have access to LinkedIn Learning modules through the Equus Workforce Services contract. LinkedIn Learning is an online training program taught by industry experts in business, software and creative skills. Teambuilding, Leadership, Conflict Resolution and Customer Services are only a few of the universal skills offered as a part of the curriculum. The Midlands is continuing to seek additional online training opportunities for further integration of technology options for the variety of job seekers we serve.

- How entities within the SC Works delivery system, including center operators and partners, will comply with the nondiscrimination provisions of WIOA, if applicable, and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA) regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities; and

All entities and partners that operate to provide services within the SC Works Midlands system must agree to and sign a Memorandum of Understanding that define the manner in which they will participate. Attachment B of the MOU provides the assurance that the partner will comply with nondiscrimination provisions of WIOA, Section 188. In addition to these assurances and certifications, the Midlands Area utilizes a designated EO Officer to ensure compliance and provide assistance as needed to ensure the services within the centers are met, to include accessibility as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. This is achieved through monitoring, technical assistance and where appropriate, training. South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation has conducted an assessment of the comprehensive center to recommend technology and other accommodations that may be needed to assist customers. The recommendations from the report have been assessed and the assistive technology provided to the centers to ensure centers and services are accessible.

To afford our customers the highest quality service, experience, and address on-going staff development, the Midlands Area is working with several partners through the MWDB Disabilities Advisory Committee to develop inclusion training. Areas of emphasis have begun around service to persons with physical and cognitive disabilities, but the committee is targeting expansion into other identified areas of need.

- Identification of the roles and resource contributions of the SC Works partners.

Core partners WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth services along with Wagner-Peyser, Veterans, and Trade Adjustment Assistance will continue to co-locate within the SC Works Centers. Additional partners (full-time, part-time, and electronically linked) will be added to the collection of on-site partners as appropriate. Resource Sharing among SC Works Center partners is outlined in the common costs and methodology for cost allocation in the Midlands Resource Sharing Agreement.

Each Partner agrees to:

- (a) Provide access to its programs or activities through the SC Works delivery system;**
- (b) Use a portion of funds made available to the partner's program, to the extent consistent with the Federal law authorizing the partner's program and with the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards in 2 CFR Part 200 and as supplemented by specific Federal agency Parts and CFRs, to:**
 - **Provide applicable career services; and**
 - **Work collaboratively with the State and Local Board to establish and maintain the SC Works delivery system. This includes jointly funding the one-stop infrastructure costs through partner contributions that are based upon:**
 - **A reasonable cost allocation methodology by which infrastructure costs are charged to each partner in proportion to use and relative benefits received; and**
 - **Federal cost principles;**
- (c) Enter into an MOU with the Local Board relating to the operation of the SC Works system; and**
- (d) Participate in the operation of the SC Works system consistent with the terms of the MOU, requirements of authorizing laws, the Federal cost principles, and all other applicable legal requirements.**

Additionally each partner agrees to:

- **Actively participate in the strategic planning process for the local SC Works system;**
- **Serve on the Business Services team and participate in industry or sector partnerships, as applicable;**
- **Participate in SC Works Partner meetings, as appropriate;**
- **Coordinate and integrate activities so that individuals seeking assistance will have access to information and services that lead to positive employment outcomes; and**
- **At a minimum, provide electronic access to programs, activities and services:**

- Services provided through electronic means will supplement and not supplant those provided through the physical SC Works delivery system. The term “electronic” includes Web sites, social media, internet chat features, and telephone.

Annually the partners participate in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)/Resource Sharing Agreement (RSA) to determine the SC Works Center Midlands area budget and Cost Allocation methodology (FTEs or space usage). To date, the Midlands partners have selected an FTE methodology but this is subject to change for each Program Year. The Center/system budget is also up for negotiation each year. The line items include costs for infrastructure costs to be shared with all partners and other costs are optional for partner sharing. Infrastructure costs items include:

- Lease/rent
- Utilities
- Landscaping
- Janitorial and cleaning maintenance
- Building maintenance and repairs
- HVAC maintenance
 - To date, the optional partner costs have included:
- Front Desk Reception
- Phone/Internet access for Staff
- Shared Printer/Copier Staff access
- Equipment rental expenses
- Security system
- Pest control
- Supplies (public access & common space only)

The provision of core services will be delivered through the various Center partners to include those listed **in the MOU that include** Adult Education, Midlands Technical College, TANF Employment and Training programs, SC Commission for the Blind, Vocational Rehabilitation, Job Corps, Telamon, and SCSEP & Second Chance programs. Those relationships are formalized by the Memorandum of Understanding.

Staff in the Centers aim to empower each of the job seekers through an integrated continuum of career services individualized to address the individual’s unique set of needs. The services begin with initial engagement and lead to retention in long-term employment to support the participant and their financial independence.

2. A description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local area.

The Midlands has developed the area WIOA programs to provide Adult and Dislocated Worker participants access to high quality career services, education and training and supportive services needed to obtain in-demand, quality jobs and retain employment.

Workforce center staff conducts a comprehensive objective assessment summary of each participant's needs, which are essential if sound decisions are to be made by the participants and staff regarding the services needed for the customer. Service providers may offer other comprehensive and specialized assessments of skill levels and service needs of Adults and Dislocated Workers, which may include: WorkKeys, TABE, My Next Move, and other diagnostic testing and assessment tools. Such assessments are especially important for lower-skilled or less-experienced participants, and for those seeking to enter a new field due to layoff. A portion of the assessment process is to determine whether the participant needs training services. Service provider will ensure that all participants meet the following training requirements:

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

Once assessments are completed, the Service provider and participant work together to develop an individual employment plan (IEP), to identify the employment goals, appropriate achievement objectives, and appropriate combination of services for the participant to achieve his or her employment goals, including the list of, and information about, eligible training providers.

Under WIOA and through the workforce center system, employment and training activities will include:

- The Workforce Center will provide labor exchange services, including job search and placement assistance, and labor market employment statistics information, including the provision of accurate information relating to local, regional, and national labor market areas, including job vacancy listings in labor market areas; information on job skills necessary to obtain the vacant jobs listed; and information relating to local occupations in demand and the earnings, skill requirements, and opportunities for advancement for those jobs. The South Carolina Online System (SCWOS) is the system used to provide job search and placement assistance, and labor market information to MWDA participants.
- Information on in-demand industry sectors and occupations.
- Information on nontraditional employment.

- Referrals to and coordination of activities with other programs and services
- Supportive services assistance may be available for Adult and Dislocated Worker participants, and appropriate referrals to other agencies that provide services and assistance, including: child care; child support; legal assistance, access to computers and/or internet, and medical or child health assistance.
- Training services, when determined appropriate, will be provided through an Individual Training Account (ITA). Training services must be linked to in-demand employment opportunities in the local area and be in one of the training clusters that the Midlands Workforce Development Board (MWDB) has approved for the Midlands. The MWDB approved training clusters are currently:
 - Healthcare
 - Transportation & logistics
 - Manufacturing
 - Information Technology
 - Business Services
 - Construction

The selection of training services is conducted in a manner that maximizes customer choice and training providers are selected from the state's eligible training provider list. The MWDA plans to provide the following training opportunities:

- Occupational skills training;
 - Internships and work experiences that are linked to careers;
 - On-the-job training (OJT);
 - Incumbent worker training (IWT);
 - Skills upgrading and retraining;
 - Entrepreneurial training;
 - Transitional jobs;
 - Job readiness training;
 - Adult education & literacy activities, including English language; and
 - Customized training
3. A description of how the local board will coordinate workforce development activities carried out in the local area with statewide rapid response activities.

The coordination of rapid response activities in the Midlands have been enhanced by the standardized training and coordination provided by SC DEW. The area will continue to utilize designated Equus staff within the local area to provide the needed assistance at in-person or virtual Group Orientations. Also, the organization services through the SC DEW Regional Business and Economic Development Coordinator has streamlined the process and response time.

The MWDB has always maintained a strong connection with the SCDEW Rapid Response team. We will continue to promote the Rapid Response services as an effective layoff aversion strategy as well as a first step towards engagement and re-employment for affected workers.

The MWDB prioritizes having a representative present at all on-site Rapid Response events during layoffs, closures, or force reductions at local employer facilities. At these meetings and events, WIOA staff provides information to impacted employees regarding career and training services available for eligible Dislocated Workers. The Midlands also conducts on-site certification and enrollment when the employer's desire and schedule facilities permit this model. Moving forward, we anticipate the need to provide more of these services in a virtual environment, and will explore the platforms that will help us facilitate this.

Additionally, the Midlands values the use of Rapid Response funded IWT as a layoff aversion tool and encourages local businesses to utilize the resources to improve their viability as a proactive step in competition. We have found both strategies to be very beneficial to both employers and the workforce. An added benefit is the relationship it fosters with SC Manufacturing Extension Partnership and training providers. The area intends to continue to support and promote these activities as long as funding is available.

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

The area collaborates with local Youth services organizations, several of which have been recognized as success models. The Midlands also continuously seeks additional partners and other successful models to partner with to leverage resources.

- **City Year Columbia is a part of the National City Year program. It is a national service program that unites young adults from diverse backgrounds for a year of full-time community service. The program is a combined effort of AmeriCorps and the Corporation for National and Community Service. The AmeriCorps volunteers partner with Lexington School District Four and Richland School District One to support teachers in elementary and middle schools to deliver supplementary instruction for identified students to prepare them to become college and career ready. At the same time, the AmeriCorps volunteers are given opportunities to grow leadership skills and even further their education to alternative teaching certification or a Master's degree in Divergent Learning through a partnership with Columbia College. While interface with the Midlands WIOA Youth program is limited due to the**

difference in target groups, City Year's impact on our community is invaluable and WIOA regularly seeks opportunities to learn from each other.

- Communities in Schools Midlands is a part of the national Communities in Schools network founded in the 1970s by Bill Milliken to bring community resources inside public schools to be accessed, coordinated and held accountable. Targeting students living in poverty and at risk of dropping out, the program places a coordinator in the school to coordinate services and help families navigate services with the objective of keeping kids in schools and on the path of graduation by leveraging relationships and resources and using research evidence to drive results. CISM works in targeted elementary-through high school clusters in Richland School District One and Lexington School District Two. The Midlands WIOA leadership has a long history with the organization although we do not share program participants. WIOA Board members and staff have served on the organization's Board of Directors and advisory committees to maintain awareness of emerging students needs and assist with connections to services and resources for students and parents.
- The JAG-SC program offers several sites in the Midlands area. JAG-SC is modeled after the DOL JAG Program and is a drop-out prevention program focused on academic success and career readiness skills. There are two in-school programs in operation (Swansea High School in Lexington County and C.A. Johnson High school in Richland County) The WIOA program receives referrals from the in-school programs' graduates to receive additional services when needed as the Midlands WIOA Youth program serves out-of-school participants. Additionally, the Midlands WIOA program supervisor serves on the advisory committee for the out-of-school Youth pilot to assist in ensuring the programs are complementary partners for referrals for co-enrollment and/or follow-on services at completion.

The Midlands area Youth contractors have a proven track record for successful delivery of WIOA Youth services. Equus has several decades of proven success across the US, including more than five years in the Midlands area. Fairfield County has operated Youth workforce programs since JTPA, and has proven to be a successful model for workforce programs through JTPA, Welfare-to-Work, WIA and WIOA. The two contractors work together to deliver workforce services in the Midlands area.

The MWDA Youth service providers will provide high-quality services for all youth and young adults, beginning with career exploration and guidance, continued support for educational attainment, opportunities for skills training in in-demand industries and occupations. At this time, the Midlands Workforce Development Board has decided to prioritize all Midlands Youth program funding on the Out-of-School Youth population ages 16 to 24 who reside in Fairfield, Lexington, and Richland counties.

The MWDA works towards making all fourteen (14) WIOA required program elements available to all eligible youth participants. Youth service providers will assist youth in

gaining academic and employability skills needed to become successful as they transition into adulthood. MWDA will conduct training for youth service providers, ~~regarding an understanding of the different types of disabilities, how to handle issues of disclosure and disability identification with sensitivity at program intake, and how to determine the most effective mix of services and referrals when a disability is identified.~~ to enhance services for youth with disabilities. The aim will be for providers to gain an understanding of the various types of disabilities. In addition, the training will cover the intake processes that include: reasonable accommodations, disability etiquette, and strategies to promote youth self-disclosure of disability. Emphasis will be placed on providing full programmatic access to youth with disabilities. Information will also be provided to ensure service providers are aware of local disability programs and resources to promote successful outcomes.

The MWDA coordinates with other agencies that provide service in conjunction with the Midlands Area, and other services that cannot be provided under WIOA. Agencies the MWDB currently partners with, and agencies the board plans to collaborate with include:

- Local Department of Juvenile Justice and Juvenile Probation and Parole;
- Columbia Housing Authority for public housing assistance;
- Adult Education and Continuing Education agencies both public and private;
- SC Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS) and SC Department of Social Services(SCDSS) for participant assistance and referrals;
- WIOA title II Adult Education providers;
- SC Department of Disabilities and Special Needs, SC Vocational Rehabilitation Department, and health and mental health providers;
- Project SEARCH business-led school-to-work transition for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities;
- Job Corps referrals;
- Other relevant youth initiatives - both public and private.

After eligibility determination, youth service providers will conduct a comprehensive objective assessment summary to determine participant's needs, for sound decisions to be made by the participants and youth service providers regarding the services needed. Youth service providers may offer other comprehensive and specialized assessments of skill levels and service needs of youth participants, which may include **career readiness**, TABE, and other diagnostic testing or assessment tools. Assessments are also helpful in identifying basic skills deficiency, soft skills levels, training needs, career interest and leadership skills (TABE, Skills Profiler, etc.).

Once assessments are completed, the service provider and participant will together develop a service strategy based on the needs of the youth, to identify appropriate goals and objectives, and any appropriate combination of services for the youth to achieve their education, training and employment goals.

The MWDA Youth service contractors provide or refer to partner agencies participants in need of the fourteen (14) WIOA required program elements available to eligible youth.

1. Tutoring, study skills training
 2. Alternative secondary school services
 3. Paid and unpaid work experiences
 4. Occupational skill training
 5. Education, workforce preparation activities/training for specific occupations/cluster
 6. Leadership development and community service
 7. Supportive services
 8. Adult mentoring
 9. Follow-up services
 10. Comprehensive guidance and counseling
 11. Financial literacy education
 12. Entrepreneurial skills training
 13. Labor market and employment information
 14. Preparation for and transition to postsecondary education and training
5. A description of how the fourteen youth program elements are integrated in program design, including a description of partnerships or formalized agreements in place for the provision of program elements not provided by the local program.

The WIOA youth program provides effective and comprehensive activities to out-of-school youth seeking assistance in achieving academic and employment success. The MWDA is working towards maximizing all fourteen (14) WIOA required program elements available either directly, or through partner referrals to all eligible youth once eligibility is determined, assessments (formal/informal) are given, and an Individual Service Strategy is developed with specific activities listed for a successful outcome. The fourteen required program elements and mechanisms are:

(1) Tutoring, study skills training, instruction and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies that lead to completion of the requirements for a post-secondary school diploma or a recognized postsecondary credential – currently provided through Khan Academy academic support and connections to Adult Education for high school credit recovery;

(2) Alternative secondary school services, or dropout recovery services, when the board determines to provide in-school services – no current in-school services are planned, but for high school dropouts who desire to return to secondary school services connections are made to the local school district. Coordination with the eight Adult Education districts, Job Corps, Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School and Youth ChalleNGe Academy all provide opportunities for high school dropouts to re-engage in

the education system and pursue his/her diploma or GED;

(3) Paid and unpaid work experiences that have academic and occupational education as a component of the work experience, which may include the following types of work experiences and are included in the service provider menu of available services. Internships following classroom training are available to WIOA participants if not a part of the training provider's curriculum. On-the-Job training opportunities are available to WIOA youth throughout program participation as a compliment to other program services. Youth apprenticeships are available through the Midlands area collaboration with Apprenticeship Carolina and Midlands Technical College. Some opportunities are in collaboration with the education entities, while others are direct placements with local employers including Owen Steel, Michelin and Walker White. With the 2020 award of USDOL grants to Apprenticeship Carolina for apprenticeship expansion, the area looks forward to increased opportunities. **Create Opportunities has a growing number of Youth enrollees and by association the Apprenticeship model with an OJT component following the intense six-month classroom training.** Paid work experience is available to WIOA participants both in summer and throughout the year.

(4) Occupational skill training, which includes priority consideration for training programs that lead to recognized post-secondary credentials that align with in-demand industry or occupational clusters approved by the Midlands Workforce Development Board. Training is available to WIOA participants via ITA, federal financial aid and grant sources with individual training providers;

(5) Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster. Each of the Adult Education districts, as well as Job Corps offer GED and diploma education services in conjunction with a select number of high demand occupational training;

(6) Leadership development opportunities, including community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social and civic behaviors. Leadership development opportunities exist in the Midlands workforce system through the City of Columbia Youth Corps, City Year, Job Corps, and Communities in Schools to supplement the activities available through the WIOA program;

(7) Supportive services available through the service provider and referrals made to State, local and community service providers. A variety of supportive services including transportation assistance, child care assistance, and training associated costs such as uniforms, tools, medical and background screens and licensing are available from a variety of sources depending on eligibility. DSS, WIOA, SC Vocational Rehabilitation, and Commission for the Blind are examples of some of those

resources;

(8) Adult mentoring for a duration of at least 12 months that may occur both during and after program participation. WIOA offers limited mentoring services, but are complimented by partnering organizations that include the Boys and Girls Club, City of Columbia Youth Corps, and the Celebrate Freedom Foundation;

(9) Follow-up services for not less than 12 months after the completion of participation. WIOA offers follow-up services for all Youth who complete WIOA program participation.

(10) Comprehensive guidance and counseling, which may include drug and alcohol abuse counseling, as well as referrals to counseling, as appropriate to the needs of the individual youth. WIOA staff offers career guidance counseling and relies on community organizations to lend expertise for specialized counseling. Partner organizations include LRADAC, MIRCI, Transitions, and DSS;

(11) Financial literacy education will be provided through workforce center staff provided workshops available through SC Works Center workshops and Wells Fargo Hands on Banking curriculum;

(12) Entrepreneurial skills training is offered through the SC Works Center workshops for initial exploration. Youth participants interested in more information are linked to partner organizations including the Entrepreneur In Residence program through the Richland Library, SCORE, Columbia College's Entrepreneurship Center, USC Technology Incubator, Benedict College's Business Development Center, Midlands Technical College Enterprise Campus, SOCO, and 100 Million Cups, dependent on participant specific next steps and needs.

(13) Services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services. A variety of labor market information is available through the SC Works Center System, as well as online within SCWOS. Center staff are ready and able to assist in research. Additionally the library branches in all three service counties have dedicated space for employment searches, and branches have received staff training; and

(14) Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training. WIOA works closely with program participants to prepare for their advanced training plans. In addition to this and other Center partners who offer similar services, the Midlands is fortunate to have TRIO programs on the MTC and USC campuses in the Midlands area. These programs have offered outreach services to the public as part of the program recruitment process that assist in preparing youth participants for a successful transition to post-secondary education.

The Midlands area has enjoyed a long-standing collaborative relationship with both the Midlands Education and Business Alliance (MEBA) and the Midlands RECAB. In Program Year 2022, the Midlands area has worked even more closely with the staff in both organizations to extend the collaboration to prepare youth across the area for their transition into post-secondary education and/or employment. Midlands staff has taken a more active role in the Midlands Youth Expo hosted by MEBA to talk to more than 4200 youth across the three county area about career paths and opportunities on the path. Midlands staff will also attend MEBA's winter networking session with area school career advisors to raise awareness of the SC Works services, WIOA eligibility and career pathways to assist their guidance activities with the high school youth. RECAB staff assisted with making a connection to the Midlands Middle College to provide additional support to the career guidance staff there for high school seniors planning for post-graduation career opportunities.

6. If using the basic skills deficient definition contained in WIOA Section 3(5)(B), what is the LWDAs policy that further defines how to determine if a youth 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. If your area continues to use TABE for determining youth basic skills deficiency, a local policy is not required.

The Midlands Area Policy PY-19-03, Change 1 (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Youth Program Eligibility, Expenditures, and Service Requirements) defines the expanded use of BSD as the State policy noted in State Instruction 15-17, Change 2. In addition to using TABE assessments to determine basic skills deficiency, the Midlands area recognizes an individual who meets any one of the following indicators:

- Scores less than 4 on any one or more of the following ~~WIN~~ Ready to Work assessments:
 - Applied Mathematics
 - Locating Information
 - Reading for Information
- Is enrolled in Title II Adult Education, including English as a Second Language (ESL); or
- When formal evaluation is not available or practical, case manager observations, customer acknowledgement and documented case notes are acceptable.

In assessing basic skills, local programs must use assessment instruments that are valid and appropriate for the target population, and must provide reasonable accommodation in the assessment process, if necessary, for persons with disabilities. For purposes of basic skills assessment, local programs are not required to use a NRS-approved assessment, nor are they required to determine an individual's grade level

equivalent or educational functioning level (EFL), although use of these tools is permitted. Rather, local programs may use other formalized testing instruments designed to measure skills-related gains.

In addition to being valid and reliable, any formalized testing used must be appropriate, fair, cost effective, well-matched to the test administrator's qualifications, and easy to administer and interpret results. Alternatively, skills related gains may also be determined through less formal alternative assessment techniques such as observation, folder reviews, or interviews. The latter may be particularly appropriate for youth with disabilities given accessibility issues related to formalized instruments. Grantees should notify the Administrative office if there are potential needs to assess basic skills deficiency with tools beyond the scope of expanded BSD definition above. Previous basic skills assessment results if such previous assessments have been conducted within the past six months.

NOTE: In contrast to the initial basic skills assessment described above, if measuring EFL gains after program enrollment under the measurable skills gain indicator, Grantees must use a NRS-approved assessment for both the EFL pre-test and post-test to determine an individual's EFL. Neither WIN Ready to Work, nor WorkKeys, are NRS-approved assessments.

7. A description of how the local board will coordinate relevant secondary and post-secondary education programs and activities with education and workforce investment activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services.

The Midlands area has always prioritized maximizing and leveraging resources in support of innovative options to serve customers. The Board supports Business Services, Sector Partnerships, Career Pathways, Developing the Talent Pipeline, and Work-Based Learning by working with local employers to provide information to the Board, Midlands Youth Committee and education and training partners. The most notable project has been the progress of the Central Region Sector Strategies under the NextGen model. The initial launch of the program was tailored to Manufacturing; with a long range goal to create a framework to scale to all priority sectors, while allowing a coordinated approach with improved service delivery. The MWDB and Youth Committee are able to use this information to guide job seekers to in-demand occupations, growing industries, and opportunities for career identification, development and growth. The Board is committed to youth career development through strategies such as work-based learning, career exploration with short-term work experience, internships and On-the-Job Training. These work-based learning opportunities, in conjunction with soft skills training and basic skills and occupational training from our secondary and post-secondary partners are a part of our integrated learning services that are Youth specific. In service delivery, educational barriers to employment are always addressed as the WIOA Staff work with our participants. The staff coordinates communication between the education program and the workforce

activities as an on-going action item, while breaking down other barriers. Identification of funding options for participants is critical to addressing education needs while maximizing the available resources. For post-secondary education, MWDA staff work with participants to apply for Federal and other financial aid that may be available. When appropriate, staff will connect the job seeker to Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) partner services for more intense financial aid assistance. The Board has long-standing partnerships with several local post-secondary schools including Midlands Technical College, as well as the local school districts' CTE and Adult Education programs. The Board staff regularly works with each of the groups through the Board Committees, Partner meetings, Business Service Team meetings, and advisory groups established by these education groups. These groups discuss ways to integrate our services, leverage resources, and avoid duplication of service. Additionally, in recent years, the board has made a concerted effort to facilitate regular meetings and contact between these two groups. Workforce activities and investments will be designed and created based on labor market and business demands. The Board will continue to utilize economic reports and feedback gathered by the Business Services Team from the local employers to inform the development of services and investments. As the secondary and post-secondary education providers are an integral part of the Board and Committee structure, the information gathered is shared on a regular basis.

To explore additional ways workforce development can support the secondary education system, the Midlands area is launching in 2023 a pilot project with a local charter school (Midlands Middle College). The pilot project is seeking to bring additional career exploration and readiness resources to a select group of high school seniors to support the existing guidance and career readiness staff.

8. A description of how the local board will coordinate the WIOA Title I workforce investment activities with the provision of transportation, child care, and other appropriate supportive services in the local area.

The Midlands Workforce Development Board has approved a collection of policies that address eliminating barriers through policies that include transportation, childcare and other supportive service policies for the Midlands WIOA program. The services described are designed to assist participants who are receiving WIOA services to secure and retain employment, as well as facilitate participation in employment and training activities. Throughout the program year, policies such as Supportive Services are evaluated for effectiveness and modified as needed. The most notable is an update to the Midlands Area Other Supportive Services policy that allows for assistance with legal aid.

MWDA Supportive Services may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Assistance with transportation;

- Assistance with childcare;
- Legal Aid assistance;
- Assistance with laptop computer and/or internet;
- Assistance with uniforms or other appropriate work attire and work-related tools, including such items as eyeglasses and protective eye gear;
- Assistance with educational testing, books, fees, school supplies and other necessary items for students enrolled in postsecondary education classes;
- Payment of fees for employment and training related applications, tests, and certifications.

Support services are provided on a case-by-case basis, as funding permits, when it is verified that the participant lacks the required means and no other agency is able to assist with services. These services are provided as part of the individual employment plan, and, as such, need to be considered each time an individual is enrolled in an employment and education program.

The Midlands intends for support services to be a short-term measure, and as such are limited in both duration and amount. Funding is limited and it is the responsibility of the Program Managers to ensure that each participant has a viable plan including provisions for meeting basic support needs and to assist the participant in identifying other sources of assistance to augment services.

Service providers ensure that an assessment to determine supportive service needs are completed and documented for all participants who are eligible for, and enrolled in WIOA programs. The MWDA policy addresses the coordination and referral of services to other entities in order to avoid duplication of resources and set limits on the funding and duration of such services.

9. A description of plans, assurances, and strategies for maximizing coordination, improving service delivery, and avoiding duplication of Wagner-Peyser Act services and other services provided through the SC Works delivery system.

The Midlands Area strategy for maximizing service coordination and delivery, while ensuring continuous improvement is a blend of utilizing a Center Operations Business Plan, Memorandums of Understanding, and a Partner Liaison in conjunction with the SC Works Standards. By clearly stating and assigning partner roles, responsibilities and expectations, we ensure services provided to customers are focused and not duplicative. The Midlands operational plan for in-center services provides a method of clearly defined service delivery means so that programs will operate in a complementary manner. The role of the Operator within the Midlands SC Works system is to provide the day-to-day linkage between partners, and oversee the mechanics of the plan execution. The methods and direction that the Operator uses to achieve the seamless effect of service delivery come in the form of guidance from the MWDB, as well as the SC Works Standards. In addition to as-needed meetings in the

centers, formal monthly meetings are scheduled to ensure partners receive the most up-to-date information regarding services and center operations, and to deliver staff training. The operational plan is a constantly evolving document and currently under review as a part of the SC Works Center Certification. The addition of a new One Stop Operator, service partners, and technology drive this process. As the service delivery in the centers and system evolve, so do the roles. Through an active engagement process, coordination and communication ensure that there is no duplication effect of the Wagner-Peyser functions. Examples include regular stand-up meetings, real time communication and correspondence with staff, and monthly staff training sessions as a complement to the informal day-to-day communication of center staff.

10. A description of how the local board will coordinate the WIOA Title I workforce investment activities with adult education and literacy activities under the WIOA Title II, including how the local board will carry out the review of local applications submitted under Title II consistent with WIOA requirements.

The Midlands Workforce Development Board has a long history of collaboration with the Adult Education departments of each school district in the Area. We continue to explore opportunities for streamlining service delivery and strengthening the partnership for our shared customers. Promotion of all Adult Education services available through all eight Adult Education departments is a part of the communication both physically in the Center and through SC Works Midlands social media to bring the opportunities for skill enhancement as close to each customer's neighborhood as possible. The consortium of Adult Education Directors selects their representative on the Midlands Workforce Development Board. This Director serves as the liaison between the groups to share information and collaboration opportunities. Additionally, various Adult Education staff members serve on the Midlands Business Services Team and on each of the Board standing committees. This streamlines information to flow between the frontline staff of both the SC Works Centers and the various Adult Education departments. Combined with the Board member representative on the Midlands Youth Committee, the Board ensures Adult Education priorities and perspectives are understood by the Board and any actions are shared with the Directors. This Collaborative Model continues to serve the Midlands Area and the partnership quite well. By introducing new partners and service providers, the Area maintains the most effective mechanism for efficient coordination is through communication. With regard to the review of local applications submitted under Title II consistent with WIOA requirements, the Midlands Workforce Development Board uses a volunteer-member ad hoc review committee approach. That is, the MWDB Center Management/Planning Committee or Board Chair calls for a minimum of three volunteers from all members to create a committee when the Midlands Area must review such applications. The ad hoc committee is responsible for reviewing and evaluating the proposals according to the criteria provided. This process is consistent with the review mechanism of the MWDB staff with all competitive and application review processes.

11. A description of how the local board will coordinate with partner programs to conduct affirmative outreach to include members of groups protected by the Equal Opportunity provisions of WIOA § 188, including individuals of various religions, racial and ethnic backgrounds, individuals of limited English proficiency, individuals with disabilities, and individuals of different age groups and sexes.

The Midlands Area Equal Opportunity Coordinator oversees activities related to the provisions of WIOA § 188. This includes programmatic monitoring, data evaluation, staff training, and partnership development to ensure a robust and affirmative outreach process. On a quarterly basis, the EO Coordinator pulls data reports from SCWOS to monitor WIOA customer demographics. By knowing the populations that are utilizing our services we may also know which population may need additional or different outreach efforts. The area has also recently begun using the Chumra JobsEQ data system which provides data related to the general population of our counties. This may potentially alert us to additional outreach opportunities.

The Midlands Area outreach mechanisms include social media, partner referral, direct (center) customer contact, and peer-to-peer referral. Of these, social media and partner contacts/referral have the most direct impact on our affirmative outreach. For example, when the Midlands opts for a social media campaign, the platform allows us to tailor our audience approach. In these cases, we set the parameters to our geographic area, and target all individuals 18 and older, helping ensure that all persons using the platform receive information equally on the programs. Also, our partner network provides the opportunity to expand the universe that our service message reaches. While some, such as SC VR and Able SC, focus their service on individuals with disabilities, other groups such as SC DSS, Adult Education, Fast Forward, Mirci, Transitions, etc. provide specific services but not to any individual population.

These activities also encompass the Midlands Area Business Service Team as well. The One-Stop Operator plays a key role in coordinating partner programs through the system partners meetings. Through information distribution and Subject Matter Expert guest presenters, we ensure a diverse approach, and staff maintain a relevant knowledge base that welcomes all customers into our system and services.

At the Board level, the Midlands engages non-appointed members to serve as advisors on the standing committees. While this is most evident with the Disabilities Committee, it is relevant to all committees and the full board. Additionally, the Midlands Area has policies and procedures in place to assist our providers and partners.

These approaches provide a variety of opportunities for us to ensure that we are providing the most wide-ranging outreach that offers equal access to individuals from

various religions, racial and ethnic backgrounds, individuals of limited English proficiency, individuals with disabilities, and individuals of different age groups and sexes. All new partnerships are viewed as an opportunity to expand our affirmative outreach.

Section V: Operations and Compliance

1. Copies of executed cooperative agreements which define how all local service providers, including additional providers, will carry out the requirements for integration of and access to the entire set of services available in the local SC Works system. This includes agreements between the local board or other local entities with respect to efforts that will enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities, such as the cross-training of staff, technical assistance, the use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers, and other efforts at cooperation, collaboration, and coordination.

The Midlands PY22 MOU and RSA are included as an attachment.

2. A description of the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds as determined by the chief elected official(s).

The consortium of Fairfield, Lexington & Richland Counties selected the Central Midlands Council of Governments as the fiscal agent for the Midlands area. Since 1969, the Central Midlands Council of Governments (CMCOG) has been assisting local governments develop local and regional plans within the four midlands counties (Fairfield, Lexington, Newberry, Richland) of South Carolina, as well as providing local governments with planning and technical support to improve the quality of life within the region. CMCOG currently consists of 15 member governments and serves in excess of 725,000 people by providing a regional forum, which allows local officials to seek out common goals and address regional concerns. Today, CMCOG offers a variety of local and regional planning services and technical assistance to local governments within the four-county region.

3. A description of the competitive process that will be used to award the sub grants and contracts for WIOA Title I activities.

The Midlands WDB successfully completed a competitive procurement for One-Stop Operator and WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs in the spring of 2020. These services were procured through an RFP issued in March 2020. The procurement process resulted in contracts with Equus (previously ResCare Workforce Solutions) and Fairfield County.

The area follows SC State procurement rules to award the grants. A comprehensive RFP 19-01 was issued on March 6, 2020 for Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth

Services and One-Stop Operator across all three service counties with responses due April 15, 2020. The solicitation included the award period, approximate funds available and the elements of the services solicited. The RFP was advertised in SCBO, posted on the MWDB and CMCOG websites, and notice was mailed to over 100 individuals and organizations who had requested to be on the notification list for any solicitations. Questions regarding the RFP were accepted until March 27, 2020, and all questions and answers were posted on the MWDB website on April 1, 2020. Five proposals were received and all were forwarded to the ad hoc Committee of the MWDB for review and scoring. The ad hoc Committee met on May 28, 2020, and forwarded their award recommendation to the Board. The Board reviewed and approved the Committee’s recommendation at the June 4, 2020 Board meeting. Notification letters were sent to the successful and unsuccessful bidders following the meeting. At the end of the appeal time expiration, staff began negotiations with the successful bidders to write the contract. Contracts resulting from the RFP commenced on July 1, 2020.

4. Agreed upon local performance goals after negotiations are finalized.

WIOA Performance Measures for Program Year 2022 and 2023 are below.

WIOA TITLE I – ADULT	Program Year 2022 Goal	Program Year 2023 Goal
Employment Rate 2 nd Quarter After Exit	77.1%	77.1%
Employment Rate 4 th Quarter After Exit	79.0%	79.0%
Median Earnings in the 2 nd Quarter After Exit	\$6,600	\$6,600
Credential Attainment Rate	54.5%	54.5%
Measurable Skill Gains	55.2%	55.2%
WIOA TITLE I – DISLOCATED WORKER	Program Year 2022 Goal	Program Year 2023 Goal
Employment Rate 2 nd Quarter After Exit	82.8%	82.8%
Employment Rate 4 th Quarter After Exit	83.7%	83.7%

Median Earnings in the 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$8,258	\$8,258
Credential Attainment Rate	66.2%	66.2%
Measurable Skill Gains	57.1%	57.1%
WIOA TITLE I – YOUTH	Program Year 2022 Goal	Program Year 2023 Goal
Education or Training Activities or Employment in the 2nd Quarter After Exit	82.6%	82.6%
Education or Training Activities or Employment in the 4th Quarter After Exit	78.9%	78.9%
Median Earnings in the 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$4,241	\$4,241
Credential Attainment Rate	65.0%	65.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	52.8%	52.8%

5. A description of actions the local board will take toward becoming or remaining a high-performing workforce area, including:
 - The effectiveness and continuous improvement criteria the local board will implement to assess their one-stop centers;

The Midlands Area will continue the focus on and develop business-friendly services, and enhance the integration of partner services. Additionally, we will utilize the SC Works Center Standards for Job Seekers and Business Service to ensure consistency across Centers within the local area, region and state. The area initiated a feedback system for customer satisfaction in the Centers several years ago, and will continue this approach until a Statewide alternative is implemented. MWDB members are encouraged to (and do) utilize SC Works Midlands Center services. They provide feedback to the staff and each other on the effectiveness and satisfaction of those services. At times, members have led focus groups to highlight the available services to other local businesses to encourage greater participation.

- A description of fiscal and program performance goals beyond the federal measures and how progress will be tracked and made publically available;

In addition to the federal core performance measures, we are measured on fiscal and programmatic performance. Fiscally, we are required to obligate a minimum of 80% of available resources each year. In addition, we must also expend a minimum of 75% of our Youth funds on out-of-school youth and at least 20% of the Youth funds must be spent on work-based learning activities. We are also challenged to spend a minimum of 70% of all available program funds each year, with at least 30% of the expenditures on direct participant services. **Programmatically, the area must serve a minimum of 75% of participants who meet the Priority of Service definition to achieve the State-imposed program requirement. To meet the Priority of Service definition, participants must be classified as low-income or basic skills deficient described in State Instruction Letter 15-17 Change 3.** The MWDB has also prioritized the expansion of services to a larger audience, increased work-based learning opportunities for all participants and increased focus on technology-based service delivery.

With those requirements in mind, and an eye toward continuous improvement, the Midlands area has established goals to incrementally reach these, and measure our success. Our targeted 2022 goals are as follows:

- Enter a minimum of 45 On-the-Job Training placements;
- Increase Community Engagement with the SC Works Center through at least 12 YouTube Channel videos and 40 new content workshops;
- Hold a minimum of 1 large scale hiring event (minimum of 50 hiring employers) and a minimum of 4 employment or training events from the Midlands priority sectors (minimum of 4 employers or training providers);
- Promote workforce services in the area through social media (SC Works Midlands Facebook or Instagram) highlighting participant success stories, promotion of Center events, Employer engagement/satisfaction posts, and Midlands Area job posts. Each post is evaluated on a points system, with a minimum point score required each month.

The MWDB meetings are public meetings and our progress toward these goals both program and fiscal are reported as a part of each meeting.

- A description of the methodology used by the local board to allocate SC Works center infrastructure funds; and

The Midlands utilizes the Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) framework issued at the State level to allocate costs to partners. All partners share in the costs of Center-specific operations (rent, utilities, janitorial, phone/internet,

shared paper/ink, etc.) in addition to access to optional added service costs for Center staff (staff internet and phone) and a center navigator/front-desk staff. Partner costs are calculated based on the staff hours spent in the Center - a Full-time Equivalent (FTE) methodology. Some partners are physically housed in the Center on a full or part-time basis with some work-space sharing and others are connected virtually. Therefore, the FTE methodology was determined and selected by partners as the best way for all partners to share in the infrastructure cost with regards to proportionate use and relative benefit received.

Partners are billed on a quarterly basis and most make cash payments. The exception to this is the SC Department of Employment and Workforce; the SCDEW portion of the depreciation cost for the SC Works Columbia is an in-kind contribution. SCDEW owns the building that houses the SC Works Columbia office. All other payments from partners are a cash payment.

The development for the IFA begins each Spring for the upcoming Program Year. Partners meet (in person or virtually) as an area each Spring to begin the process. Prior to the meeting: each partner submits their anticipated staff level needs per Center to the MWDB staff to check for capacity and begin preparation for a proposed budget; MWDB staff then sends a preliminary budget for the Centers (based on actual known costs from the 1st and 2nd Quarters of the previous year and any changes anticipated), as well as preliminary costs per partner based on the FTE methodology and the anticipated staff levels per Center. At the meeting, MWDB staff reviews the budget, answers any questions regarding specific costs and opens discussion from the partners about any potential changes in line item costs for the purposes of negotiation. After all process and budget details are agreed to, MWDB staff prepares the final document for distribution and coordinates the collection of signatures.

- A description of the roles and contributions of SC Works partners, including cost allocation.

The Center is managed by a WIOA-funded Operator who oversees the day-to-day functions of the Center, and coordinates partner activities and their needs. The partners bring their specific services to the SC Works Centers - either through in-person delivery, referral or using technology-based delivery. Services are agreed upon each year as part of the MOU process. Individual partners maintain supervision responsibilities of their program staff in the Centers. The partners also share in the costs of Center-specific operational costs. Cost shares are determined by FTE and outlined in the annual partner MOU. Line items include:

- Rent/Annual Depreciation;

- **Building & Grounds Maintenance;**
- **Utilities;**
- **Center Security (optional);**
- **Front Desk Reception (optional);**
- **Staff internet & phone (optional);**
- **Internet & Maintenance for Resource Room computers; and**
- **Center commons supplies (Resource Room printers and ink).**

Partner shared costs are billed on a quarterly basis.

6. A description of how adult and dislocated worker training services will be provided through the use of individual training accounts (ITAs), including:

- If contracts for training services will be used;

The Midlands Area service providers utilize voucher systems to issue vouchers for participant Individual Training Accounts. The area does not intend to issue contracts for full training classes at this time.

- How the use of training service contracts will be coordinated with the use of ITAs; and

The Midlands area utilizes Individual Training Accounts in conjunction with On-the-Job Training opportunities to deliver occupational skills training with WIOA funding.

- How the local board will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs regardless of how the training services are to be provided.

In the Midlands area, WIOA participants complete a customer selection form in conjunction with the WIOA Eligible Training Provider (ETP)/SCPATH System list as part of the training funding application process. The Midlands internal ETP list is currently arranged by cluster to assist the participants in identifying the individual training providers for a specific training. The arrangement of the list also assists management and the Business Services Team in identifying gaps that may exist in the training availability as employment requirements evolve.

7. A description of the process used by the local board to provide a 30-day public comment period prior to submission of the plan, including an opportunity to have input into development of the local plan, particularly for representatives of the businesses, labor organizations, and education.

A time-table and management plan has been established to ensure sufficient time for input and development of the Midlands Local (and Central Region) Plan as well as a

30-day public comment period. While the MWDB facilitated the development of the plan, we seek to create opportunities for community stakeholders and partners to shape the strategies described in the plan. We are seeking partner created solutions for an economic self-sufficient community.

To ensure a wide distribution of the plan and to solicit input, the plan framework, drafts, and associated documents are hosted on our website, and notice (with links) was provided through: social media outlets, SC Works Centers, and direct contact to county, city/town elected officials, economic developers, regional planners, representatives of community groups, and stakeholders including the local technical college and all eight school districts. The plan development was a discussion topic at MWDB and Committee meetings, the monthly partner meeting and the area business services monthly team meeting. Membership and attendees of those groups include labor organization, education (K-12, Adult Education, Midlands Technical College and private-for profit education providers), and business and industry leaders.

Additionally, the Midlands Area Business Services Team was tapped to assist us in reaching business leaders and labor representatives. Each presentation outlined the elements of the plans, where to find a complete copy and how to submit comments.

8. A description of how the local area SC Works centers are implementing and transitioning to an integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information system for programs carried out under WIOA and by SC Works partners.

The COVID-19 crisis and the resulting response by the Midlands Area centered around a technology-enabled environment. It is likely that the immediate need to transition services to virtual platforms to comply with safety protocols accelerated the Area use of new hardware and software by several years in a matter of hours and days.

All SC Works staff have access to virtual connectivity tools - either through center smart boards or issued laptops. This has allowed for all services to be made available in a virtual environment through the use of either Google-based Meet or Web-Ex. Both platforms offer our customers the ability to connect with staff, provide documents, and receive services such as orientation workshops. Customers are also positively being taught to use technology which will lead to increased instruction being offered virtually or employment opportunities when face-to-face interviews are not possible. WIOA staff assess digital literacy through asking open ended questions about technology familiarity and use. They also complete short WebEx virtual meetings before the certification and enrollment appointment to ensure the technology is appropriate and that the user will be able to complete the appointment.

For the SC Works Center services, the area transitioned to 100% virtual services within a few days of closing the public access to the Center due to the COVID-19 crisis. Pre-COVID the area had begun testing the streaming of select workshops to increase access to the services. As such, we were able to transition all workshops to the on-line platform as quickly as we were able to ensure the volunteer speak of each workshop

could make the adjustment. Workshops as well as employers accustomed to on-site hiring events were transitioned. The first employer to test the Facebook Live broadcast was IH Services, a sub-tier contractor for Amazon. Given the dramatic increase in shipping service through Amazon, the demand for staff was immediate. Community and business partners have been encouraged to promote the availability of the services and events as well as welcomed to assist in the expansion of offerings for target services and populations. As we gradually expand the SC Works Center's face-to-face services again, virtual workshops will remain a critical element of our services. The SC Works Centers instituted a reservation software, TablesReady, when the Centers reopened. The software allowed the staff to put customers on a waitlist for the next available computer and have them wait in their cars or return to the Center a short time later to access the Resource Room computers mainly but also have a personal interaction with staff without creating a crowd in the lobby. While the COVID-19 protocols have loosened, the staff is still using the software to communicate the availability of computers as traffic has continued to grow.

The implementation of a virtual greeter kiosk system has also streamlined customer check in, as well as data management and analytics. Accurate reports are available on demand, in contrast to the prior system of paper sign-in sheets, and hand tabulated reports.

The Midlands Area is constantly searching for new technology to make our services more accessible and efficient. Other areas of interest include Virtual Job fair systems, and Artificial Intelligence based systems such as ERISS+SARA to work in conjunction with the SCWOS case management system. In general, the only limitation that the Midlands encounters related to technology implementation and innovation is funding.

9. A description of how the local board ensures compliance with the adult priority of service requirements under WIOA Title I.

Midlands policy and procedures have been established to give priority to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, individuals who are basic skills deficient and covered individuals in the provision of individualized career services and training services in the Adult program.

The Midlands Workforce Development Board issued MWDA Instruction Letter PY-15-02, Change 6 Midlands Adult Priority of Service Policy on 15 October 2018. Midlands area service providers received training to ensure that they fully understood how the priority of services would be provided in the Midlands. During certification of eligibility, applicants are identified as being covered individuals, low income, recipients of public assistance or basic skills deficient.

The Midlands Workforce Development Area will ensure compliance with the Adult Priority of Service Policy through constant program monitoring by board staff and required internal monitoring by service providers.

The list below describes the priority of service for individuals served in the WIOA Adult Program.

1st Priority – Eligible Veterans and spouses (Eligible covered persons) who are:

- **low income [as defined by WIOA Sec. 3(36)], or**
- **recipients of public assistance, or**
- **who are basic skills deficient.**

2nd Priority - Eligible individuals (non-covered persons) who are:

- **low income [as defined by WIOA Sec. 3(36)], or**
- **recipients of public assistance, or who are basic skills deficient.**

3rd Priority - Eligible veterans and eligible spouses who are:

- **not low income, and**
- **not recipients of public assistance, and**
- **not basic skills deficient.**

4th Priority - Eligible individuals (non-covered persons) who do not meet the above priorities may be enrolled on a case-by-case basis: Local policy limits the number of adults enrolled in WIOA who are not low income, public assistance recipients, or basic skills deficient to not more than 25% of all adults registered in the current program year.

The Midlands Workforce Development Board has adjusted priority of service levels to serve First through Fourth Priorities. Individuals within 4th Priority must be interested in occupational skills training and/or OJT within the approved Midlands Training Clusters.

The Midlands is consistently monitoring data to determine if adjustments to service levels are needed.

10. A description of how the local board is serving priority populations, including those with barriers to employment, as required by WIOA.

The Midlands Workforce Development Board’s goal is to develop strategies and provide intensive services targeted to individuals with significant barriers to employment. MWDB recognizes the need to implement intensive services to those with significant barriers to enter the labor force. Efforts related to this goal include the provision of more work-based learning opportunities, access to in-demand industry certifications, job readiness training, and relevant skill building efforts. Additionally

the Board seeks to increase the program population of participants with employment barriers and tailor services to persons with disabilities, veterans, out of school youth, young adults with limited work history, those facing language barriers, criminal justice involvement, or homelessness.

The changes to Midlands economy, as well as connectivity that emerges from the COVID-19 response will also continue to shape the Midlands approach to form new (and renewed) partnerships and engage with initiatives to leverage opportunity.

Individuals with barriers to employment include those individuals in one or more of the following:

Displaced homemakers – Services provided by the MWDA dislocated worker program; the area collaborates with area women and family shelters to provide virtual access to SC Works workshops, events and job listings. Staff periodically meets with residents as a part of the organizations' speaker bureaus and provides training to organizational staff to better facilitate virtual services and WIOA referrals when the residents' housing status is stabilized.

Low-income individuals – Services provided by the MWDA adult or youth program; Close collaboration with DSS staff, Midlands Fatherhood Coalition and local food pantries for participant referrals to the SC Works Center and the WIOA program as appropriate.

Individuals with disabilities – The Midlands Area seeks partnerships to increase outreach to persons with disabilities, and to provide WIOA career services. Additional services beyond WIOA are sought and provided through partnership with SC Vocational Rehabilitation, SC Commission for the Blind, MIRCI, and Work in Progress;

Older individuals – Services provided by the MWDA and in conjunction with SCSEP Service Provider - Goodwill Industries of the Upstate/Midlands;

Ex-offenders – Services provided by the MWDA and in conjunction with SC Department of Corrections, Alston Wilkes, Goodwill Industries of the Upstate/Midlands, and ReEmerge;

Homeless individuals – Services provided by the MWDA and in conjunction with His House, Oliver Gospel Mission, MIRCI, SC DEW's Back to Work, Sistercare Inc., Fast Forward, Samaritan's Well and Transitions;

Youth in or aging out of the foster care services provided by the MWDA and in conjunction with Department of Social Services and Epworth Children's Home;

English language learners – Services provided by the MWDA and in conjunction with **area Adult Education Centers**, English Program for Internationals (EPI) and Agape English Language;

Within 2 years of exhausting TANF – Services provided by the MWDA and in conjunction with South Carolina Department of Social Services;

Pregnant/parenting – Services provided by the MWDA and in conjunction with Department of Social Services;

Long-term unemployed individuals – Services provided by the MWDA and in conjunction with Department of Employment and Workforce and Unemployment services and Wagner-Peyser employment services as well as other community and partner organizations that serve customers that may be considered as long-term unemployed.

11. A description of the local area’s fiscal and programmatic monitoring process.

Fiscal monitoring is conducted annually by the Central Midlands Council of Governments finance staff. All sub-recipients are monitored for compliance with WIOA and grant terms and conditions. Generally, the process is a random selection of invoices/transactions, with a verification of backup documentation. Upon completion of financial monitoring, the contract signatory receives a comprehensive report outlining areas needing improvement. Contractors are given 30 days to respond with an action plan.

Programmatic monitoring is conducted **once** a program year (fall). Areas of review include Certification; Case Notes; WorkKeys/WIN; Career Assessments; Basic Skills Assessments; Objective Assessment; IEP; Resume; Training; MSG/Credential; Supportive Services; Work Based Learning; and hard copy file paperwork. Upon completion of monitoring, supervisors receive a comprehensive report outlining areas needing improvement. Contractors are given 30 days to respond with an action plan.

On a quarterly basis, the area conducts Data Validation monitoring to check for DOL-approved file documentation for the elements and participants selected at random by software. The quarterly files are provided by the SC Department of Employment and Workforce and include the participant files to be monitored and the data elements to review.

Additionally in Program Year 2022, the area has instituted monthly Intentional Monitoring with the front-line staff. The monthly reviews are open-ended conversations between the Administrative and Case Management staff in small groups with rotating topics monthly. Topics completed or planned so far include a complete review of the caseload for stage evaluation and file familiarity, top

challenging cases or scenarios, top successes or best practices, resume reviews, long-term participants, recent enrollments, unmet needs, job ready next steps, and nearing training completion next steps. The purpose of the monitoring is two-fold, to inform the Administrative staff of challenges, successes and opportunities to support service delivery and serve as a small group collaborative training opportunity for staff to supplement the monthly staff training meeting.

12. Copies of current local board policies and definitions, including:

- Supportive Services policy
- OJT reimbursement policy;
- IWT policy, when using local funds;
- Youth incentives policy;
- Local training cap policy;
- Youth BSD policy (if applicable);
- Local definition for youth who “require additional assistance”; and
- Adult and dislocated worker self-sufficiency definition(s) for training.

13. Copies of current local workforce area documents, including:

- Memorandum(s) of Understanding, including signature sheets;
- Resources Sharing Agreements, including signature sheets;
- All service provider grants, including statements of work and budgets;
- Statements of work for in-house operational staff (where applicable); **N/A**
- Current or most recent Grant Application Request(s)/Request(s) for Proposals;
- LWDB By-Laws
- LWDB and Committee meeting schedules;
- LWDB budgets; and
- Local monitoring schedules.

Local Plan Signatures

Local Workforce Development Board:

Midlands Workforce Development Board
Harry Plexico, Chair



1/11/23

Signature

Date

Local Grant Recipient Signatory Official:

Midlands Workforce Development Area
Benjamin Mauldin Executive Director
Name Title

Signature

Date

Attachment List

- Supportive Services policy
- OJT reimbursement policy;
- IWT policy, when using local funds;
- Youth incentives policy;
- Local training cap policy;
- Youth BSD policy (if applicable);
- Local definition for youth who “require additional assistance”; and
- Adult and dislocated worker self-sufficiency definition(s) for training
- Memorandum(s) of Understanding, including signature sheets;
- Resources Sharing Agreements, including signature sheets;
- All service provider grants, including statements of work and budgets;
- Statements of work for in-house operational staff (where applicable); **N/A**
- Current or most recent Grant Application Request(s)/Request(s) for Proposals;
- LWDB By-Laws
- LWDB and Committee meeting schedules;
- LWDB budgets; and
- Local monitoring schedules.
- B-1 WIOA LWDB Membership
- B-2 Local Administrative Entity Roster of Workforce Staff
- B-3 Comprehensive/Affiliate/Specialized SC Works Center
- B-4 SC Works Access Points
- B-5 Local Plan Comments
- B-6 LWDA Service Providers