

Regional Plan

Program Years July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2028

Great Northwest Region

Economic Development Region 6

CHAPTER 1. Economic and Workforce Analysis

Introduction to Chapter 1

The Economy and Workforce in Great Northwest Region is embedded with a mixture of industry and occupation sectors separated by those with predominantly high location quotients (LQ) and those with projected growth patterns. In order to effectively contribute to a continuous strengthening economy and workforce, Great Northwest Regional planning partners made a decision to focus on industries that were most impactful to the region based on significant presence and growth potential by creating two (2) focus tiers that are reflective of each category.

Tier One (1) is a result of a 50-year history of being typified by a manufacturing, agriculture, and extraction economy that thrived due to domestic and international trade. This Tier is constructed of more mature industries with high location quotients; Industries include manufacturing, agriculture, distribution/transportation logistics, and healthcare. Tier 2 industries are represented by more emerging industries with projected growth patterns and include: Education, Professional business services/financial activities, construction, self-employed, IT, and leisure/hospitality.

The Economic and workforce analysis below is a depiction of the diversity held within Economic Development Region 6's workforce, and an explanation for the partner decision to create two separate tiers.

a. Provide an analysis of the:

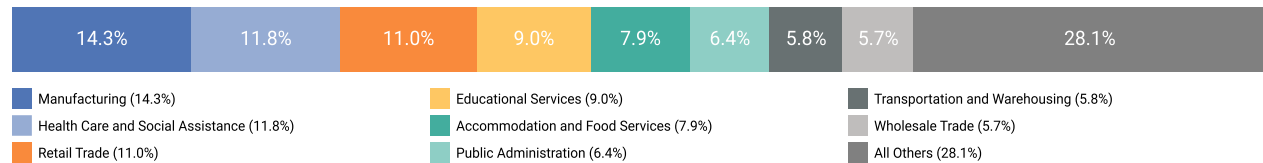
1. Economic conditions including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations (§679.560(a)(1)(i)):

a. *What are the Targeted Industries, High Impact Industry Clusters, In-Demand Occupations*

Targeted Industries:

The largest sector in the Great Northwest Illinois Region is Manufacturing, employing 27,912 workers. The next-largest sectors in the region are Health Care and Social Assistance (22,967 workers) and Retail Trade (21,344). High location quotients (LQs) indicate sectors in which a region has high concentrations of employment compared to the national average. The sectors with the largest LQs in the region are Utilities (LQ = 2.25), Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting (2.06), and Manufacturing (1.86).

Total Workers for Great Northwest Illinois Region by Industry



Source: JobsEQ®
Data as of 2026Q1
Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Employment data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and imputed where necessary. Data are updated through 2025Q4 with preliminary estimates updated to 2026Q1.

Sectors in the Great Northwest Illinois Region with the highest average wages per worker are Utilities (\$168,230), Wholesale Trade (\$136,258), and Management of Companies and Enterprises (\$117,512). Regional sectors with the best job growth (or most moderate job losses) over the last 5 years are Wholesale Trade (+3,374 jobs), Accommodation and Food Services (+2,638), and Educational Services (+1,932).

Over the next 5 years, employment in the Great Northwest Illinois Region is projected to contract by 8,828 jobs. The fastest growing sector in the region is expected to be Health Care and Social Assistance with a -0.5% year-over-year rate of growth. The strongest forecast by number of jobs over this period is expected for Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction (-21 jobs), Management of Companies and Enterprises (-40), and Real Estate and Rental and Leasing (-67).

Tier 1 – Manufacturing, Transportation/Distribution/Logistics, Agriculture, Health. Tier 2 – Education, Professional and Business Services, Construction, IT, Self-Employed, Leisure/Hospitality.

High Impact Industries:

Manufacturing, Health, Professional and Business Services (including IT), and Construction.

In-Demand Occupations (based on average annual job openings):

Education beyond Bachelor's Degree required: General & Operations Managers, Financial Managers, Management Analysts, Sales Managers, Clergy, Lawyers, Marketing Managers, Chief Executives, Medical & Health Managers, and Administrative Services Managers.

Bachelor's Degree required:

Registered Nurses, Business Operations Specialists, Accountants & Auditors, Substitute Teachers, Insurance Sales Agents, Market Research Analysts & Specialists, Computer Systems Analysts, Software Applications Developers, and Industrial Engineers.

Associate's Degree required:

Registered Nurses, Computer User Support Specialists, Paralegals & Legal Assistants, Physical Therapist Assistants, Computer Network Specialists, Engineering Technicians, Medical Records/Health Administration Technicians, Dental Hygienists, and Life/Physical/Social Science Technicians.

Postsecondary Vocational Award required:

Nursing Assistants, Automotive Service Techs/Mechanics, Fitness Trainers & Aerobics Instructors, Hairdressers/Hair Stylists/Cosmetologists, Licensed Practical & Vocational Nurses, Pre-school Teachers, Medical Secretaries, Bus/Truck/Diesel Engine Mechanics, Emergency Medical Techs & Paramedics, and Library Technicians.

Long-Term On-the-Job Training required:

Farmers/Ranchers & Other Ag. Managers, Restaurant Cooks, General Maintenance & Repair Workers, Machinists, Carpenters, Police & Sheriff's Patrol Officers, Electricians, Welders/Cutters/Solderers/Brazers, Plumbers/Pipefitters/Steamfitters, and Industrial Machinery Mechanics.

Moderate-Term On-the-Job Training required:

Customer Service Representatives, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers, Wholesale & Manufacturing Sales Representatives, Secretaries, Production Workers, Bookkeeping/Accounting/Auditing Clerks, Construction Laborers, Services Sales Representatives, Correctional Officers & Jailers, and Inspectors/Testers/Sorters/Weighers.

Short-Term On-the-Job Training required:

Cashiers, Food Preparation & Serving Workers, Retail Salespersons, Laborers/Freight/Stock & Material Movers, Waiters & Waitresses, Stock Clerks & Order Fillers, General Office Clerks, Janitors/Cleaners, Light or Delivery Services Drivers, and Hand Packers & Packagers.

b. What industries and occupations have favorable location quotients? (Table A)

An updated definition of a sector partnership - Sector partnership is the collaboration between one or more private or public sector entities and the workforce system as a whole (WIOA and non-WIOA partners). The focus of such partnerships is to identify a need/challenge, or a list of needs/challenges, that the workforce system can assist in developing and implementing strategic solutions that may include: recruitment assistance, training and upskilling, access accommodations including ELL assistance/Adult Education/HSE preparation, and other publicly funded/delivered services.

Requirement to identify neutral conveners and geographic coverage -

Geographic coverage includes the 3 counties of LWIA 13 and 7 of the 8 counties of LWIA 4. Neutral conveners will include both LWIA grant entities (all 4 titles), LWIAB members, Chief Elected Offices of the 10 counties, economic development entities, DCEO RED team members, 3 community college (Illinois Valley Community College, Blackhawk Community College, and Sauk Valley Community College) and Morrison Institute of Technology, area chamber, and the local and regional business service team members (many of which are from the partner agencies and community college already listed).

Requirement to confirm partnerships are authentically business-led - All partnership and strategies will be business identified, agreed upon, and led. The public workforce system and its partners will act as guides and liaisons through the strategy process, but responsibility for identifying challenges and solutions will remain with the businesses involved.

New directive prohibiting listing isolated sectoral activities - Region 6 understands that for a project to be a true sector strategy it has to encompass more than 1 business within a given industry. Utilizing the local and regional business services teams, Region 6 team members will work to identify and report shared challenges among area businesses and work with system partners to bring those businesses together that share common challenges to develop solutions that meet their needs and to find the resources needed to implement solutions.

TPM framework integration requirements - The vast majority of sector strategies in Region 6 been successfully addressed without the establishment of a long-term entity to implement them. LWIA 4 has had experience with the

establishment of a Chief Manufacturing Executive group that meets quarterly to address new and evolving demands, trends, and challenges facing the manufacturing sector for La Salle, Putnam, and Bureau Counties. Likewise, LWIA 4, prior to 2008, had established a Logistics Council to also address the demands, trends, and challenges facing the logistics industry and the expected growth it was to experience.

Established in cooperation between the Title 1 entity (BEST, Inc.) and Illinois Valley Community College, these sector entities have the ability to expand into a stand-alone entity supported by their shared resources. The experience that staff have obtained in the creation and implementation of these groups can easily be replicated and expanded across Region 6. While the ability to integrate this TPM framework exists, the decision to take on the full TPM framework will be at the discretion of the private sector participants in the sector strategy.

Great Northwest Illinois Region, 2026Q1¹

NAICS	Industry	Current			5-Year History		5-Year Forecast				
		Empl	Avg Ann Wages	LQ	Empl Change	Ann %	Total Demand	Exits	Transfers	Empl Growth	Ann % Growth
31	Manufacturing	27,912	\$76,289	1.86	-839	-0.6%	11,796	5,391	7,973	-1,568	-1.2%
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	22,967	\$61,890	0.75	196	0.2%	10,628	5,592	5,600	-564	-0.5%
44	Retail Trade	21,344	\$36,516	1.15	74	0.1%	12,518	6,333	7,565	-1,380	-1.3%
61	Educational Services	17,605	\$48,275	1.11	1,932	2.4%	7,100	3,898	4,162	-959	-1.1%
72	Accommodation and Food Services	15,430	\$22,805	0.91	2,638	3.8%	12,549	5,825	7,285	-561	-0.7%
92	Public Administration	12,403	\$69,197	1.36	-106	-0.2%	4,843	2,344	3,132	-633	-1.0%
48	Transportation and Warehousing	11,273	\$64,079	1.14	29	0.1%	5,335	2,596	3,245	-506	-0.9%
42	Wholesale Trade	11,137	\$136,258	1.56	3,374	7.5%	4,819	2,168	3,127	-476	-0.9%
23	Construction	10,010	\$74,173	0.85	768	1.6%	3,781	1,631	2,431	-281	-0.6%
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	8,416	\$35,641	1.02	120	0.3%	4,302	2,043	2,582	-323	-0.8%
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	8,415	\$51,347	0.72	-1,119	-2.5%	4,243	1,991	2,605	-354	-0.9%
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	6,871	\$76,556	0.49	-452	-1.3%	2,497	1,070	1,595	-168	-0.5%
52	Finance and Insurance	5,498	\$77,290	0.72	-225	-0.8%	1,955	910	1,253	-209	-0.8%
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	4,804	\$85,744	2.06	-536	-2.1%	2,485	1,436	1,342	-292	-1.2%
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	3,033	\$21,404	0.73	1,260	11.3%	2,045	911	1,231	-97	-0.6%
22	Utilities	2,312	\$168,230	2.25	275	2.6%	670	369	569	-268	-2.4%
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1,704	\$57,100	0.50	12	0.1%	728	379	415	-67	-0.8%
51	Information	1,461	\$53,679	0.40	-195	-2.5%	504	228	360	-84	-1.2%
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	1,382	\$117,512	0.46	-3,213	-21.4%	512	223	328	-40	-0.6%

Great Northwest Illinois Region, 2026Q1¹

NAICS	Industry	Current			5-Year History		5-Year Forecast				
		Empl	Avg Ann Wages	LQ	Empl Change	Ann %	Total Demand	Exits	Transfers	Empl Growth	Ann % Growth
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	740	\$99,191	1.09	-2	-0.1%	305	121	205	-21	-0.6%
99	Unclassified	10	\$55,772	0.04	3	7.2%	5	2	3	0	-0.8%
Total - All Industries		194,729	\$63,101	1.00	3,993	0.4%	92,806	45,251	56,382	-8,828	-0.9%

Source: [JobsEQ®](#)

Data as of 2026Q1

Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding.

1. All data based upon a four-quarter moving average

Exits and transfers are approximate estimates based upon occupation separation rates.

Employment data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and imputed where necessary. Data are updated through 2025Q4 with preliminary estimates updated to 2026Q1. Forecast employment growth uses national projections adapted for regional growth patterns

This table explores industries with significant location quotients, as mentioned in the introduction. Tier 1 Industries include the following: Small Arms, Ordnance, and Ordnance Accessories Manufacturing; Small Electrical Appliance Manufacturing; Farm Machinery and Equipment Manufacturing; Flavoring Syrup and Concentrate Manufacturing; Photographic Film, Paper, Plate, and Chemical Manufacturing; Mushroom Production; Corn Farming; Automatic Environmental Control Manufacturing for Residential, Commercial, and Application Use; Farm Product Warehousing and Storage; Dry, Condensed, and Evaporated Dairy Product Manufacturing; and Mechanical Power Transmission Equipment Manufacturing. The largest sector in the Great Northwest Illinois Region is Manufacturing, employing 27,912 workers. The next-largest sectors in the region are Health Care and Social Assistance (22,967 workers) and Retail Trade (21,344). High location quotients (LQs) indicate sectors in which a region has high concentrations of employment compared to the national average. The sectors with the largest LQs in the region are Utilities (LQ = 2.25), Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting (2.06), and Manufacturing (1.86).

Tier 1 Industries with LQ > 1 and Positive Average Annual Growth over Next 3 years (Table B)

NAICS	Industry	Employment	LQ
4931	Warehousing & Storage	534	8.27
4832	Inland Water Transportation	127	4.58
6233	Continuing Care Retirement Communities & Assisted Living Facilities for the Elderly	1610	1.31
4881	Support Activities for Air Transportation	329	0.97
4855	Other Transit & Ground Passenger Transportation	19	0.68
6219	Other Ambulatory Health Care Services	398	0.90
4854	School and Employee Bus Transportation	29	1.49

Source: JobsEQ, 4th Quarter 2025

The Tier 1 Industries include Manufacturing, Transportation/Distribution/Logistics, Agriculture, and Health. Of those industries only the Health Industry is experiencing or is projected to experience growth over the next 3 years.

The table above displays the Tier 1 Industries that have positive (1.00 >) location quotients and are projected to grow over the next 3 years. These include Farm Product Warehousing and Storage; General Warehousing and Storage; Inland Water Freight Transportation; Continuing Care Retirement Communities; Other Supported Activities for Road Transportation; Assisted Living Facilities for the Elderly; All Other Transit and Ground Passenger Transportation; Ambulance Services; and Scenic and Sightseeing Transportation, Land. These industries are clustered in the Transportation/Distribution/Logistics and Health Industries.

Industries – Tier 2 (Table C)

NAICS	Industry	Employment	LQ
5619	Other Support Services	1,415	1.36
5622	Waste Treatment & Disposal	898	4.96
2211	Electric Power Generation, Transmission & Distribution	1,976	6.04
5418	Advertising, Public Relations, and Related Services	586	1.60
2371	Utility System Construction	849	1.27
2382	Building Equipment Contractors	3,226	1.27
5622	Water Treatment Disposal	898	4.96
5221	Depository Credit Intermediation	3,324	0.24
5322	Consumer Goods Rental	92	1.05
2381	Foundation, Structure, & Building Exterior Contractors	1,074	0.74
5131	Newspaper, Periodical, Book, and Directory Publishers	148	0.33
5321	Automotive Equipment Rental & Leasing	240	0.72
5324	Machinery & Equipment Rental & Leasing	306	0.99
5616	Investigation & Security Services	150	0.26
5151	Radio & Television Broadcasting	96	0.52
5221	Monetary Authorities Central Bank	162	2.54
5419	Other Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	1,095	0.74
5192	Other Information Services	354	0.92
5511	Management of Companies & Enterprises	1,736	0.58

Source: JobsEQ, 4th Quarter 2025.

Great Northwest Region planning team members decided to focus on industries that were most impactful to the region based on significant presence and growth potential. Tier 1 industries are typified as more mature industries. Tier 2 industries are represented by more emerging industries and include Education, Professional and Business Services, Construction, IT, Leisure/Hospitality, and the Self Employed.

Tier 2 industries with favorable location quotients in Great Northwest Region include Packaging and Labeling Services; Solid Waste Landfill; Wind Power Generation; Other Services Related to Advertising; Power and Communication Line and Related Structures Construction; Other Nonresidential Building Equipment Contractors; Video Tape and Disc Rental; Other Nonhazardous Waste Treatment and Disposal; Savings Institutions; Formal Wear and Costume Rental; Nonresidential Glass and Glazing Contractors; and Newspaper Publishers. These industries have location quotients greater than 2 (2.00>).

Tier 2 Industries with LQ > 1 and Positive Average Annual Growth over Next 3 years (Table D)

NAICS	Industry	Employment	LQ
2371	Utility System Construction	849	1.06
2382	Building Equipment Contractors	3,226	1.27
2381	Foundation, Structure, & Building Exterior Contractors	1,074	0.74
5324	Machinery & Equipment Rental & Leasing	306	0.99
5192	Other Information Services	354	0.92
2379	Other Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction	322	1.80
2381	Foundation, Structure, and Building Exterior Contractors	1074	0.74
5622	Remediation & Other Waste Management Services	898	4.96
2373	Highway, Street, & Bridge Construction	704	1.07
5419	Other Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	1,415	5.77

Source: JobsEQ, 4th Quarter 2025

When re-examining the location quotient data to include industries with positive average annual growth over the following 3 years, the industry mix changes somewhat. The top Tier 2 industries with both favorable location quotients and favorable annual growth include the following: Power and Communication Line and Related Structures Construction; Other Nonresidential Building Equipment Contractors; Nonresidential Glass and Glazing Contractors; Commercial Air, Rail, and Water Transportation Equipment Rental and Leasing; Libraries and Archives; Construction, Mining, and Forestry Machinery and Equipment Rental and Leasing; Other Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction; Nonresidential Roofing Contractors; Remediation Services; Material Recovery Facilities; Highway, Street, and Bridge Construction; and Veterinary Services.

Occupations: (Table E)

SOC	Occupation	Employment	LQ
19-4051	Nuclear Technicians	247	32.65
51-8011	Nuclear Power Reactor Operators	178	24.79
49-3041	Farm Equipment Mechanics and Service Technicians	696	15.28
17-2161	Nuclear Engineers	183	9.75
51-6042	Shoe Machine Operators and Tenders	26	5.74
15-2099	Mathematical Science Occupations, All Other	30	5.02
51-3023	Slaughterers and Meat Packers	364	4.59
33-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Correctional Officers	286	4.57
47-5051	Rock Splitters, Quarry	18	4.19
51-4034	Lathe and Turning Machine Tool Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plastic	86	3.95
53-7041	Hoist and Winch Operators	13	3.89
53-6011	Bridge and Lock Tenders	13	3.48
47-5022	Excavating and Loading Machine and Dragline Operators, Surface Mining	133	3.27
51-4033	Grinding, Lapping, Polishing, and Buffing Machine Tool Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plastic	252	3.18
51-4191	Heat Treating Equipment Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plastic	52	3.05
51-4111	Tool and Die Makers	183	3.01

Source: JobsEQ, 4th Quarter 2025

With the industry data, information collected was limited to industries that the region classified as Tier 1 and Tier 2. With occupational information, data was not limited by industry due to the nature of Standard Occupational Codes. Individuals classified as working in computer occupations might work in various industries and not just Information Technology or Computer-related industries in many cases they work in manufacturing, agriculture and other industries but their classification is dependent on job skills and not the industry.

Occupations in Great Northwest Region with favorable location quotients include the following: Nuclear Technicians; Nuclear Power Reactor Operators; Nuclear Engineers; Rock Splitters, Quarry; Shoe Machine Operators and Tenders; Slaughterers and Meat Packers; Farm Equipment Mechanics and Service Technicians; Occupational Therapy Aides; Lathe and Turning Machine Tool Setter, Operators, and Tenders – Metal and Plastic; Mine Cutting and Channeling Machine Operators; Wind Turbine Service Technicians; Dredge Operators; Dietetic Technicians; Multiple Machine Tool Setters, Operators, and Tenders – Metal and Plastic; First-Line Supervisors of Correctional Officers; and Patternmakers – Metal

and Plastic. Of these occupations, only Occupational Therapy Aides and Wind Turbine Service Technicians are projected to experience positive average annual growth over the next 3 years.

Occupations with LQ > 1 and Positive Average Annual Growth over Next 3 years (Table F)

SOC	Occupation	Employment	LQ
49-3041	Farm Equipment Mechanics and Service Technicians	696	15.28
49-9081	Wind Turbine Service Technicians	38	2.06
49-9011	Mechanical Door Repairers	39	1.16
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	569	1.13
31-2011	Occupational Therapy Assistants	53	0.89
31-2021	Physical Therapist Assistants	95	0.72
21-1018	Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors	386	0.66
21-1019	Counselors, All Other	53	0.64
19-4092	Forensic Science Technicians	14	0.63
47-2231	Solar Photovoltaic Installers	9	0.24

Source: JobsEQ, 4th Quarter 2025.

To determine which occupations, have favorable location quotients AND growth, the data was re-analyzed. The occupations that exhibit both favorable location quotients and positive growth are as follows: Occupational Therapy Aides; Wind Turbine Service Technicians; Computer Numerically Controlled Machine Tool Programmers – Metal and Plastic; Millwrights; Food Servers, Non-restaurant; Financial Managers; Elevator Installers and Repairers; Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers; Paving, Surfacing, and Tamping Equipment Operators; All Other Counselors; Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics; Family and General Practitioners; Radio, Cellular, and Tower Equipment Installers and Repairers; Postsecondary Social Science Teachers; and Septic Tank Servicers and Sewer Pipe Cleaners. The aforementioned occupations all have location quotients above 1.10 (1.10>). The other occupations listed in the table all have location quotients above 1.00 (1.00>).

c. What industries and occupations have favorable demand projections based on growth?
Industries – Tier 1 (Table G)

SOC	Occupation	Base Employment Number	Ann % Growth
47-2231	Solar Photovoltaic Installers	9	4.0%
49-9081	Wind Turbine Service Technicians	38	3.8%
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	569	0.6%
31-2021	Physical Therapist Assistants	95	0.6%
21-1013	Marriage and Family Therapists	30	0.5%
21-1018	Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors	386	0.5%
31-1122	Personal Care Aides	1,986	0.4%
49-9011	Mechanical Door Repairers	39	0.4%
31-1121	Home Health Aides	699	0.4%
49-3041	Farm Equipment Mechanics and Service Technicians	696	0.2%
31-2011	Occupational Therapy Assistants	53	0.2%
21-1019	Counselors, All Other	53	0.1%
21-1094	Community Health Workers	54	0.1%

Source: JobsEQ, 4th Quarter 2025.

Three of the four Tier 1 Industries (Manufacturing, Transportation/Distribution/ Logistics, and Agriculture) that Great Northwest Region is focused on are not projected to grow significantly over the next 3 years. However, one industry, Health, is projected to exhibit increases in average annual growth. The top five industries based on projected growth are as follows: Home Health Care Services; Offices of Podiatrists; Services for the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities; Offices of Physical, Occupational, and Speech Therapists and Audiologists; and Kidney Dialysis Centers. Out of the rest of the 15 industries in the top 20 (see table above), all but two are classified as “Health”. The two non-Health industries on the list are All Other Transit and Ground Passenger Transportation and Scenic and Sightseeing Transportation (Land).

Industries – Tier 2 (Table H)

NAICS	Industry	Annual % Growth (3-year forecast)
5192	Libraries and Archives	0.1%
2131	Support Activities for Oil and Gas Operations	0.8%
2211	Electric Power Generation, Transmission & Distribution	-1.0%
5191	Other Information Services	1.5%
2371	Utility System Construction	-0.3%
6117	Educational Support Services	0.6%
5621	Waste Collection	0.5%
5223	Activities Related To Credit Intermediation	-0.8%
5239	Other Financial Vehicles	-0.2%
5241	Insurance Carriers	-1.3%
5313	Activities Related to Real Estate	-0.8%
5416	Management, Scientific, Technical Consulting Service	-0.3%
5629	Remediation and Other Waste Management Services	0.2%
6116	Other Schools and Instruction	-0.6%

Source: JobsEQ, 2nd Quarter 2025.

Source: JobsEQ, 4th Quarter 2025.

Industries in Tier 2 (Education, Professional and Business Services, Construction, IT, Self-Employed, Leisure/Hospitality) with the most favorable demand projections based on average annual growth over the next 3 years include the following: Wind Electric Power Generation; Libraries and Archives; Power and Communication Line and Related Structures Construction; Oil and Gas Pipeline and Related Structures Construction; Water and Sewer Line and Related Structures Construction, Educational Support Services; Solid Waste Collection; Mortgage and Nonmortgage Loan Brokers; Financial Transactions, Processing, Reserve, and Clearinghouse Activities, and Other Activities Related to Credit Intermediation. Clearly, Construction and Financial Activities predominate in the top 10 industries. The rest of the industries in the table (all industries with a projected annual percentage growth rate of 1.1%) included those from Professional and Business Services and Education.

Occupations: (Table I)

SOC	Occupation	Annual % Growth (3-year forecast)
47-2231	Solar Photovoltaic Installers	4.0%
49-9081	Wind Turbine Service Technicians	3.8%
29-1171	Nurse Practitioners	2.2%
15-2051	Data Scientists	1.6%
15-1212	Information Security Analysts- Medical Health Services	1.0%
11-9111	Managers	0.9%
29-1071	Physician Assistants	0.9%
13-2061	Financial Examiners	0.9%
15-2011	Actuaries	0.9%
29-2057	Ophthalmic Medical Technicians	0.8%
15-2031	Operations Research Analyst	0.7%
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	0.6%
31-2021	Physical Therapist Assistant Substance Abuse, Behavioral and Mental Health	0.6%
21-1018	Counselors	0.5%
21-1013	Marriage and Family Therapist	0.5%

Source: JobsEQ, 4th Quarter 2025.

Occupational information was reviewed without regards to industry classification. The top 10 occupations with the most favorable demand projections based on average annual growth over the next 3 years include the

following: Wind Turbine Service Technicians; Solar Photovoltaic Installers; Nurse Practitioners, Data Scientists, Home Health Aides; Physician Assistants; Personal Care Aides; Postsecondary Health Specialties Teachers; Electrical Power-Line Installers; Statisticians; and Counselors. Nine out of 10 of the fastest growing occupations can be classified as Health, Education, or Construction related. Most of the other occupations on the list are also in Health but also Professional and Business Services and Construction.

Source: JobsEQ, 2nd Quarter 2019.

For Great Northwest Region, a primary and immediate focus of its workforce development plan and training initiatives will need to be focused on replacing workers existing industries. The area workforce is aging, and retirements are projected to rapidly increase over the next few years. Additionally, low unemployment is forcing industries to compete for workers who have more opportunities to transfer their skills to another position or industry. While total demand for certain industries might be decreasing and annual growth is not significant in many others, the need to replace exiting workers will remain critical.

Among the Tier 1 Industries, the industries with the most favorable demand projections based on replacement estimates for the coming 3 year period include the following: General Medical and Surgical Hospitals; General Warehousing and Storage; Nursing Care Facilities (Skilled Nursing Facilities); Farm Machinery and Equipment Manufacturing; Meat Processing; Small Arms, Ordnance, and Ordnance Accessories Manufacturing; Offices of Physicians; Local General Freight Trucking; Child Day Care Services; Long Distance General Freight Trucking (Less than Truckload); Crop Production (Proprietors); Continuing Care Retirement Communities; Home Health Care Services; Small Electrical Appliance Manufacturing; and Long Distance General Freight Trucking (Truckload).

The Health Industry will require significant replacement workers over the next 3 years, as will manufacturing sectors focused on Farm Machinery and Equipment Manufacturing, Small Arms Manufacturing, and Small Electrical Appliance Manufacturing. Industries related to Warehousing and Trucking will also require large numbers of replacements. While Crop Production is projected to require large numbers of replacements, the nature of the Agriculture suggests that the needed replacements will be supplanted by increasing farm sizes and the expansion of corporate farming.

Among Tier 2, the industries with the most favorable demand projections based on replacement estimates are as follows: Elementary and Secondary Schools; Corporate, Subsidiary, and Regional Managing Offices; Temporary Help Services; Hotels and Motels; Commercial Banking; Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools; Packaging and Labeling Services; Janitorial Services; Insurance Agencies and Brokerages; Engineering Services; Solid Waste Landfill; Junior Colleges; Landscaping Services; Power and Communication Line and Related Structures Construction; and Residential Plumbing, Heating, and Air-Conditioning Contractors.

Of these industries, total demand outstrips replacements in four industries: Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools; Janitorial Services; Power and Communication Line and Related Structures Construction; and Residential Plumbing, Heating, and Air-Conditioning Contractors. In the rest of the industries, total employment growth is projected to be negative but significant replacements will still be needed to meet demand.

Occupations: (Table J)

SOC	Occupation	Total Demand	Exits	3-Year Forecast		
				Transfers	Empl Growth	Ann % Growth
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	2,709	1,277	1,513	-81	-0.6%
41-2011	Cashiers	2,115	1,238	1,187	-310	-2.3%
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	2,023	890	1,183	-50	-0.4%
53-7062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	1,924	830	1,261	-166	-1.0%
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	1,617	843	943	-169	-1.3%
35-3031	Waiters and Waitresses	1,246	552	775	-82	-1.2%
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	1,027	491	624	-88	-0.8%
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	968	522	515	-69	-0.9%
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	926	310	728	-112	-0.8%
31-1122	Personal Care Aides	906	518	367	21	0.4%
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	830	418	552	-141	-1.8%
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	809	486	486	-163	-1.9%
31-1131	Nursing Assistants	791	411	448	-69	-1.1%
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	738	330	389	19	0.4%
51-2092	Team Assemblers	722	331	486	-95	-1.2%

Source: JobsEQ, 4th Quarter 2025.

Occupations in Great Northwest Region with significant need for replacement workers over the next 3 years include several occupations in retail, the leisure and hospitality industry, and personal care industries. The top 5 occupations with favorable demand projects based on projected replacement estimates include Cashiers; Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers; Retail Salespersons; Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers (Hand); and General Office Clerks. These occupations and many of the others displayed in the table above have high turnovers due lower annual salaries so strategies focused on replacing these workers will always be important.

A few of the occupations, including General and Operations Managers; Wholesale and Manufacturing Sales Representatives, and Registered Nurses have significantly higher annual average wages and have more educational requirements for entry.

Because of this, we re-examined the data to focus on occupations with high projected demand for replacement workers that also had annual average wages that equaled or exceeded \$40,000. That data is in the following table.

Occupations – with Annual Average Wages above \$40,000 (Table K):

3-Year Forecast						
SOC	Occupation	Total Demand	Exits	Transfers	Empl Growth	Ann % Growth
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	2,023	890	1,183	-50	-0.4%
53-7062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	1,924	830	1,261	-166	-1.0%
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	1,027	491	624	-88	-0.8%
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	809	486	486	-163	-1.9%
11-9013	Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers	555	446	207	-98	-1.5%
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	830	418	552	-141	-1.8%
31-1131	Nursing Assistants	791	411	448	-69	-1.1%
43-6014	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	592	361	317	-87	-1.3%
51-2092	Team Assemblers	722	331	486	-95	-1.2%
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	926	310	728	-112	-0.8%
49-9071	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	563	309	309	-55	-0.8%
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	456	307	240	-91	-1.8%
29-1141	Registered Nurses	389	263	197	-71	-0.7%
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	380	233	226	-78	-1.1%
53-3051	Bus Drivers, School	292	220	91	-20	-1.0%
41-4012	Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	465	212	331	-78	-1.2%
41-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	400	202	304	-106	-1.9%
37-3011	Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers	456	195	291	-29	-0.7%
35-1012	First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	520	194	353	-26	-0.7%
45-2092	Farmworkers and Laborers, Crop, Nursery, and Greenhouse	365	185	221	-41	-1.4%

Source: JobsEQ, 4th Quarter 2025.

The top occupations with average annual wages that equal or exceed \$40,000 and replacement worker projections above 500 include the following: Stockers and Order Fillers, Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers (Hand); General Office Clerks; Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers; Customer Service Representatives; General and Operations Managers; Team Assemblers; Secretaries and Administrative Assistants (except Legal, Medical and Executive); Wholesale and Manufacturing Sales Representatives; Registered Nurses; Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers; General Maintenance and Repair Workers; Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks; and Construction Laborers. Nursing Assistants, First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers, and General Maintenance and Repair Workers.

Other industries with significant replacement needs in this category include Elementary and Secondary School Teachers; Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks; Registered Nurses, School Bus Drivers; Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing Except Technical and Scientific Products; First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers; Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers. Industrial Truck Operators and Light Truck or Delivery Service Drivers; Machinists and Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, Weighers; Supervisors of Production, Operating, Office, and Administrative Support Workers; and Sales Representatives, Accountants and Auditors, and Business Operations Specialists.

Both Farmers and Farmworkers/Laborers are also included on this list but the ongoing transformation of the agricultural industry makes these replacement estimates suspect. They are likely developed based on projections of current figures without a recognition of the ongoing trends that include the reduction in the number of farms, the increase in farm sizes, and continued mechanization of farming that reduces the need for Farmers and Farmworkers.

e. What industries and occupations are considered mature but still important to the economy?

Industries:

- Natural resources and mining
- Other Services
- Agricultural production

Occupations:

- Nuclear Technicians
- Nuclear power reactor operators
- Nuclear engineers
- Rock splitters, quarry
- Shoe machine operators and tenders

f. What industries and occupations are considered emerging in the regional economy?

Industries:

- Health care and social assistance
- Professional and business services
- Leisure and hospitality
- Self-employed workers

Occupations:

- General & Operations Managers
- Financial Managers
- Management Analysts
- Registered Nurses
- Business Operations Specialists
- Accountants and Auditors
- Computer Use Specialists
- All other Computer Occupations
- Paralegals and Legal Assistants
- Nursing Assistants
- Automotive Service Techs/Mechanics
- Fitness Trainers/Aerobics Instructors

g. What sources of supply and demand data were used to determine the targeted industries, occupations, and skills?

- JobsEQ – Data as of 4th Quarter 2025; 2026 Regional Plan Data Packet – EDR 6 Northwest.

2. Employment needs of employers in existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations;

52 Overall employment between Quarter 4 2017 and Quarter 4 2018 has increased in the region, with the exception of Jo Daviess, Carroll, Lee, and LaSalle Counties in Illinois. Leading industries in the region are Manufacturing, Transportation & Warehousing, Wholesale Trade, and Retail Trade. Within the leading industries the number of qualified workers does not meet employer demand in the following occupations:

- Engineering Technicians
- Industrial Machinery Mechanics
- Machinists
- Welders
- Diesel Engine Mechanics
- Light Truck or Delivery Service Drivers
- Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers

Emerging industries include Construction, Professional & Business Services, Health Care & Social Assistance, Solar Energy (especially in LaSalle County) and Leisure & Hospitality. Among emerging industries, demand gap was found in the following occupations:

- Registered Nurses
- Licensed Practical Nurses
- Certified Medical Assistant
- Solar Energy Technicians
- Nurse Assistants
- Physical Therapy Assistants
- Medical Records/Health Information Technicians
- Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics
- Pre-school Teachers
- First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades
- Carpenters
- Electricians
- Plumbers, Pipefitters & Steamfitters
- Paralegals and Legal Assistants
- Bookkeeping, Accounting and Auditing Clerks
- First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers
- Secretaries and Administrative Assistants
- Medical Secretaries

Demand gaps were also found in Information Technology occupations such as Computer User Support Specialists, Computer Network Support Specialists, Software Application Developers, and Computer Systems Analysts. Workers are employed in all sectors in Information Technology occupations.

3. Knowledge and skills needed to meet the employment needs of the employers in the region,

- a. What are the targeted career pathway clusters in the region?

As noted in the introduction of Chapter one, the regional planning team has developed two tiers of industry in which a focus will be drawn to. Chapter 1.a states that high impact industries include: Manufacturing, Health, Professional and Business Services (including IT), and Construction.

Career pathway clusters within these industries are included in the following career clusters: Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources; Architecture and Construction; Business, Management, and Administration; Information Technology; and Health Sciences. The following chart illustrates these career clusters' career pathways according to projected occupational gaps in Region 6.

Career Cluster	Career Pathway	Gap	Projected annual Income
Health Science	Registered Nurse	-71	\$82,700
Business, Management, and Administration	General and Operations Managers	-112	\$109,500
Finance	Financial Managers	-8	\$143,900
Information Technology	Software developers	-2	\$117,500
Business, Management, and Administration	Management Analyst	-7	\$101,100
Business, Management, and Administration	Managers (all)	-6	\$80,000
Marketing	Market Research analysts and Marketing Specialists	-13	\$76,100
Finance	Accountants and Auditors	-28	\$73,300
Architecture and Construction	Construction Managers	-4	\$111,800
Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources	Farmers, Ranchers, and other Agricultural Managers	-98	\$84,000
Health Science	Medical and Health Services Managers	-14	\$118,500

JobsEQ, data as of Q5 2025, except wages which are as of 2023

b. What are the skills that are in demand in the region?

In demand skills in the region are largely Middle Skills that require some post-secondary training or education, but not a four-year degree. Illustrated in the following chart are Skill Gaps of all occupations, of which the majority would be considered Middle Skill.

Tier	Industry	Skill	Gap
Two	Professional Business services/ financial activities	Microsoft Office	-129
Two	Education	Teaching/Training	-95
One and Two	Multiple	Bilingual	-70
One	Transportation	Merchandising	-64
Two	Professional Business services/ financial activities	Microsoft Excel	-54
One and Two	Multiple	Mathematics	-44
One	Healthcare	Medical Terminology	-43
Two	Professional Business services/ financial activities	Typing 31-40 wpm	-42
One and Two	Multiple	Change Management	-39

JobsEq, Data as of 2025 Qtr4

c. How well do the existing skills of job seekers match the demands of local businesses?

Middle Skills are in demand in all occupations. According to National Skills Coalition, In Illinois Middle Skill jobs account for 53% of Illinois' labor market, yet only 42% of the state's workers are trained with middle-skill level skills.

4. Regional workforce considering current labor force employment and unemployment data, information on labor market trends, and educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment⁵(§679.560(a)(3))
 - a. How is the region changing in terms of demographics, labor supply and occupational demand?

Population 2020 - 2025

	Population (2025*)	Population (2020)	Population Change (2025- 2020*)	Population Percent Change (2025- 2020*)
Bureau	32,519	33,269	-759	-2.3%
Carroll	15,468	15,720	-301	-1.9%
Henry	48,095	49,284	-1189	-2.4%
Jo Daviess	21,594	22,075	-481	-2.2%
LaSalle	107,773	109,645	-1,872	-1.7%
Lee	32,914	34,152	-1,278	-3.7%
Mercer	15,229	15,701	-472	3.0%
Putnam	5,619	5,631	-12	-0.2%
Rock Island	141,869	144,669	-2,800	-1.9%
Whiteside	54,121	55,688	-1,567	-2.8%
Great Northwest Region Total	475,143	485,874	-10,731	-2.2%
U.S.	341,784,857	331,449,281	10,335,576	3.1%

Between 2020 and 2025, the general population in the Northwest Region declined by 2.2 percent from 485,874 to 475,143, whereas, the U.S. population increased 3.1 percent. Lee County had the most dramatic decrease in population during this time period with a 3.7 percent decrease in overall population. Mercer County followed

with a 3.0 percent decrease, Bureau County showed a 2.3 percent decrease.

* The data in this table are calculated by ACS using annual surveys conducted during 2020 - 2025 and are representative of average characteristics during this period. **Source:**
U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2020 - 2025.

The population decline is striking age cohorts in Great Northwest Region in a disproportionate manner. The 65 and over population and the age cohort consisting of 45 to 64-year old's have both grown significantly between 2010 and 2025. However, the number of individuals in the 35 to 44 age range decreased by over 8,000 between 2010 and 2025. This is a prime age range for the workforce and shows that there has been substantial outmigration from the Northwest Region. A corresponding decrease in the "Under 18" cohort shows that individuals in the 35 to 44 age range are taking their families and moving out of the area. The number of individuals within the 18 to 34 age range has decreased, as well.

This age re-distribution cycle will have a dramatic impact on workforce in Great Northwest Region for years to come. A growing portion of the population is reaching retirement age and their replacements are not there to take over their positions. More importantly, businesses and industries will need to retain older workers or be prepared to train replacements that might be older and less amenable to developing critical technological skills that will be needed in the 21st century workplace. It also suggests an urgent need to make linkages and communicate opportunities to younger residents in the area to keep them in the area and in the local workforce.

State/County	2010 Census	2020 Census	Projections 2025	% Change in Population, 2010 to 2025
Illinois	12,830,632	12,799,088	12,696,384	-.25%
Bureau	34,978	33,269	32,510	-7.0%
Carroll	15,387	15,720	15,419	-0.0%
Henry	50,486	49,284	48,095	-5.0%
Jo Daviess	22,678	22,075	21,594	-5.0%
LaSalle	113,924	109,645	107,773	-5.0%
Lee	36,031	34,192	32,914	0.2%
Mercer	16,434	15,701	15,229	-9.0%
Putnam	6,006	5,631	5,619	-6.0%
Rock Island	147,546	144,669	141,869	-4.0%
Whiteside	58,498	55,688	54,121	-7.0%
Great Northwest Region	501,968	485,874	475,143	-5.0%

Source: Illinois Department of Public Health, 2025 and US Census Bureau statistics 2010 and 2020

Looking forward, Great Northwest Region is typified by projected population loss through 2025. Based on Illinois Department of Public Health population projections using the 2010 Census as the baseline, the population of Illinois is expected to decrease .25 percent through 2025 to 12,696,384. Conversely, the population of Great Northwest Region is expected to decrease 5 percent in the same time period, dropping from 501,968 residents identified in the 2010 Census to 475,143 in 2025. This represents a loss of over 26,000 residents within a span of 15 years.

Some counties in the region are projected to experience larger population losses with Mercer County's population projected to decrease almost 9 percent between 2010 and 2025, followed by Whiteside and Bureau County with a 7 percent population decline, and Putnam County with a 6 percent decline. Rock Island County, the largest and most urbanized county within the region is expected to lose nearly 5,500 residents during this time period.

Population according to race; percent of total 2025

	White alone	Black or African American alone	American Indian alone	Asian alone	Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Is. Alone	Some other race	Two or more races
Bureau	87.5%	0.6%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%	4.5%	6.6%
Carroll	90.1%	4.0%	0.3%	0.8%	0.0%	1.5%	3.4%
Henry	87.9%	1.1%	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%	2.5%	7.9%
Jo Daviess	93.5%	0.8%	0.3%	0.5%	0.1%	.9%	4.0%
LaSalle	85.5%	2.6%	0.2%	0.8%	0.0%	3.8%	7.1%
Lee	85.8%	5.3%	0.1%	0.7%	0.0%	1.2%	6.8%
Mercer	94.2%	0.6%	0.1%	0.4%	0.0%	1.1%	3.7%
Putnam	91.3%	0.3%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	2.3%	5.1%
Rock Island	71.5%	11.4%	0.4%	2.8%	0.0%	0.10%	9.4%
Whiteside	85.1%	1.3%	0.4%	0.5%	0.2%	4.4%	9.6%
Great Northwest Region	83.6%	4.8%	0.2%	1.3%	0.1%	3.3%	7.7%
U.S.	82.40%	12.30%	0.70%	5.30%	0.20%	0.20%	2.30%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2020 - 2025.

Hispanic Population vs. Non-Hispanic Population 2025

	Total Populat ion	Hispan ic or Latino (of any race)	Not Hispani c or Latino	White alone	Black or Africa n Ameri can alone	Ameri can Indian alone	Asian alone	Native Hawaii an & Oth.Pa cific Is. alone	Som e other race	Two or more races
Bureau	32,866	3,357	30,677	28,743	193	11	253	0	1,464	2,168
Carroll	15,576	820	14,178	14,027	628	44	102	0	226	526
Henry	48,643	3,366	46,918	42,780	535	5	283	3	1,227	3,839
Jo Davies	21,851	912	21,398	20,434	166	63	105	11	193	866
LaSalle	111,151	12,161	100,828	92,952	2,796	210	871	10	4,099	2,306
Lee	33,869	2,564	32,629	29,059	1,798	37	235	12	414	414
Merced	15,495	534	15,440	14,589	93	14	43	0	174	569
Putnam	5,601	368	5,463	5,113	19	2	21	12	128	285
Rock Island	142,757	20,305	127,844	102,074	16,270	555	3,506	231	6,244	13,440
White side	56,823	7,319	50,132	46,769	691	206	269	39	1,714	5,273
Great North west Region	180,319	51,706	445,507	396,540	23,189	1147	5,688	282	15,883	37,008
U.S.	341,784,857	68,510,571	191,741,304	247,110,451	46,140,955	7,177,482	23,583,155	1,025,354	715,432	16,747,457

* The data in this table are calculated by ACS using annual surveys conducted during 2020-2025 and are representative of average characteristics during this period. Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2025

In terms of racial identity, the population of the Northwest Region area is significantly White with pockets of diversity in Rock Island County, which has a Black or African American population of 11.4 percent and an Asian population of 2.8 percent, and to a lesser extent, Lee County which has a Black or African American population of 5.3 percent. For the entire Great Northwest Region, the population is 82.4 percent White, 4.8 percent African American, 0.2 percent American Indian, 1.3 percent Asian, 0.1 percent Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, 3.3 percent some other race, and 7.7 percent two or more races.

Racial/Ethnic Population Change: 2010-2025

	White			Black			American Indian & Alaska Native			Asian		
	2010	2025	% Growth 2010-2025	2010	2025	% Growth 2010-2025	2010	2025	% Growth 2010-2025	2010	2025	% Growth 2010-2025
Bureau	32,937	28,743	-13%	212	193	-9%	98	11	-89%	228	287	26%
Carroll	14,906	14,027	-6%	123	628	411%	47	44	-6%	53	125	136%
Henry	47,846	42,780	-11%	796	535	-33%	93	5	-95%	191	254	33%
Jo Daviess	22,046	20,434	-7%	107	166	55%	45	63	40%	72	118	64%
La Salle	106,187	92,952	-12%	2,186	2,796	28%	289	210	-27%	762	911	20%
Lee	32,745	29,059	-11%	1,735	1,798	4%	74	37	-50%	246	243	-1%
Mercer	16,153	14,589	-10%	47	93	98%	17	14	-18%	52	56	8%
Putnam	5,803	5,113	-12%	32	19	-41%	6	2	-67%	13	42	223%
Rock Island	120,382	102,074	-15%	13,289	16,270	22%	395	555	41%	2,419	3,943	63%
Whiteside	53,923	46,769	-13%	781	691	12%	170	206	21%	276	291	5%
Great Northwest Region	452,928	396,540	-12%	19,308	23,189	20%	1,234	1147	-7%	4,312	6,270	45%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2020-2025

Racially and ethnically, Great Northwest Region has become more diverse between 2010 and 2025, while simultaneously declining in overall population. The White population in the region has declined as a percentage of the population and in real numeric totals. Overall for the region, the White population declined by 12 percent between 2010 and 2025 with the steepest decline being in Rock Island County (-15 percent) followed by Whiteside and Bureau Counties (-13 percent).

The Black or African American population in the region grew by 20 percent, with the largest jumps being registered in Carroll County (411 percent increase) and Mercer County (98 percent increase). The Black or African American population in Putnam County decreased by 41 percent and in Henry County, it decreased by 33 percent. Regarding both counties, the Black or African American population was small to begin with, so the movement of several individuals magnifies the percentage change substantially.

Likewise, the American Indian and Alaska Native population was small in 2010 and remained small in 2025 but registered a decline of 7 percent. Putnam County's American Indian and Native Alaskan

population ceased to exist during this time period. Again, the numbers in Putnam County were extremely small to begin with so the 100 percent decline in this population should be viewed with caution.

The Asian population in the region grew 45 percent between 2010 and 2025 with the highest rates being in Putnam County (223 percent increase) and Carroll County (136 percent increase). Only one county saw a reduction in Asian population, Lee County at a 1 percent decrease.

Racial/Ethnic Population Change 2010-2017 continued

	Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander			Some Other Race			Two or More Races			Hispanic		
	2010	2025	% Growth 2010- 2025	2010	2025	% Growth 2010- 2025	2010	2025	% Growth 2010- 2025	2010	2025	% Growth 2010- 2017
Bureau	6	0	-100%	1,046	1464	40%	451	2,163	380%	2,695	3,357	25%
Carroll	3	0	-100%	87	226	160%	168	526	213%	437	820	88%
Henry	14	3	-79%	814	1227	51%	732	3,839	424%	2,402	3,366	40%
Jo Daviess	11	11	0%	194	193	-1%	203	866	327%	609	912	50%
La Salle	16	10	-38%	2,838	4099	44%	1,646	7,736	370%	9,135	12,161	33%
Lee	10	12	20%	693	414	-40%	528	2,306	337%	1,802	2,564	42%
Mercer	1	0	-100%	42	174	314%	122	569	366%	307	534	74%
Putnam	1	12	1100%	82	128	56%	69	285	313%	252	368	46%
Rock Island	48	231	381%	6,555	6244	-5%	4,458	13,440	201%	17,118	20,305	19%
Whiteside County	9	3	67%	2,044	86	-96%	1,295	5,273	307%	6,455	7,739	20%
Northwest Region	119	282	137%	14,395	380	-97%	9,672	37,008	283%	41,212	51,706	25%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2017

The Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander population grew by 137 percent in Great Northwest Region, the largest percentage growth of any ethnic or racial group in the region. However, the numbers are very small, and the high percentage growth is attributed to the movement of just a few individuals. Of interest are the counties of Whiteside and Lee where there were substantial jumps in individuals in this category. Rock Island County saw a 381 percent increase in Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders with the population jumping from 48 in 2000 to 231 in 2025.

The category, “Some Other Race” experienced a massive decline over the period of 2010 to 2017. According to the statistics, there were 97 percent fewer individuals identifying themselves as “Some Other Race” in 2025 than in 2010. Part of the reason for the decline could be more individuals self-identifying in the category “Two or More Races”.

Between 2010 and 2025, the population in the “Two or More Races” category increased by 283 percent in the region.

The Hispanic population, which includes all racial categories, grew substantially across the region and within each county over the 25-year period. For the entire region, the Hispanic population increased 25 percent during this time period. Carroll County's Hispanic population grew 88 percent and Mercer County's Hispanic population grew 74 percent.

Educational Attainment, 25 years and older, 2025

	Total Population 25 yrs. or older	No high school degree	High school graduate	Some college, No degree	Associates degree	Bachelor's degree	Graduate or professional
Bureau	25,539	8.5%	32.7%	25.2%	11.5%	16.0%	6.1%
Carroll	11,599	12.7%	33.9%	22.9%	11.9%	13.9%	4.8%
Henry	34,788	7.5%	30.7%	21.9%	12.6%	19.2%	8.1%
Jo Daviess	16,604	5.1%	28.9%	20.1%	15.4%	22.3%	8.2%
LaSalle	77,134	8%	33.3%	24.5%	12.3%	15.6%	6.3%
Lee	24,965	8.8%	35.3%	25.0%	11.1%	13.2%	6.7%
Mercer	11,123	5.8%	36.5%	22.3%	13.5%	14.8%	7.0%
Putnam	4,235	5.7%	40.0%	26.1%	11.5%	17.4%	7.5%
Rock Island	98,032	9.4%	29.4%	24.4%	11.3%	16.7%	8.8%
Whiteside	38,673	6.7%	35.1%	23.4%	11.8%	14.5%	8.4%
U.S.	216,271,644	12.6%	27.3%	20.8%	8.3%	19.1%	11.8%
The data in this table are calculated by ACS using annual surveys conducted during 2020 - 2025 and are representative of average characteristics during this period. Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2025.							

Educational Attainment, 18-25 years, 2025

	Total Population 18-25 yrs.	No high school degree	High school graduate	Some college or Associates degree	Bachelor's degree or higher
Bureau	2,528	16.1%	41.5%	36.1%	6.3%
Carroll	1,218	12.9%	48%	34.4%	4.7%
Henry	3,339	14.0%	36.8%	41.7%	7.5%
Jo Daviess	1,275	14.4%	37.6%	38.5%	9.6%
LaSalle	8,560	15.0%	34.7%	44.3%	5.9%
Lee	2,249	19.4%	33.2%	42.4%	5.0%
Mercer	1,142	11.5%	43.8%	36.2%	8.5%
Putnam	369	8.5%	33.1%	50.5%	7.9%
Rock Island	12,634	10.9%	32.1%	47.2%	9.8%
Whiteside	4,209	15.5%	39.4%	36.8%	8.2%
U.S.	31,131,484	13.4%	30.5%	45.7%	10.5%
* The data in this table are calculated by ACS using annual surveys conducted during 2020-02025 and are representative of average characteristics during this period. Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2025.					

When reviewing educational attainment figures based on percentages, Great Northwest Region is below the national average for bachelor's degree and Graduate/Professional degree attainment. While 19.1% of the U.S. population over 25 has attained at least a bachelor's degree, within Great Northwest Region most counties fall within 13-18 percent having obtained a bachelor's or better. However, the High School graduate rate in the region exceeds the national average with every county in the region surpassing the U.S. High School graduation rate. Additionally, Great Northwest Region's Associates degree attainment rate is generally higher than the national average of 7.9 percent.

Within the region, Henry County has the highest proportion of High School, Bachelor's degree, and Graduate or Professional School graduates.

Household Income and Income Distribution*

	Bureau	Carr	Hen	Jo	LaS	Lee	Mer	Putn	Roc	White	Great	U.S.
	au	oll	ry	Davi	alle		cer	am	k	side	North	
				ess					Island		west	Region
Per	\$37,	\$32,	\$39,	\$44,	\$39,	\$35,	\$39,	\$33,	\$40,	\$37,3		\$55,19
Capita	423	110	614	251	375	945	391	697	375	12		5
Income												
(2025\$)												
Median	\$69,	\$60,	\$71,	\$73,	\$73,	\$70,	\$74,	\$75,	\$67,	\$67,5		\$83,73
Household	257	758	911	993	045	292	182	590	159	00		0
Income^												
(2025 \$)												
Total	15,6	8,20	22,2	13,4	49,8	14,9	7,28	3,09	66,7	25,83	227,2	118,82
House	30	4	10	40	43	95	5	0	59	7	93	5,921
holds												
Less than	668	430	1,15	425	2,73	857	413	86	4,57	1,140	12,47	7,942,2
\$10,000			3		5				1		8	51
to	614	332	990	391	2,41	567	260	56	2,98	948	9,557	5,768,1
\$14,999					0				9			14
\$15,000	1,53	773	2,25	1,07	4,51	1,29	580	265	6,12	2,781	21,19	11,637,
to	8		1	0	3	7			9		7	905
\$24,999												
\$25,000	1,50	836	2,02	1,14	4,35	1,49	677	225	6,31	2,762	21,34	11,330,
to	2		9	1	6	9			9		6	288
\$34,999												
\$35,000	2,05	878	2,53	1,40	6,40	1,55	958	362	8,96	3,677	28,79	15,412,
to	8		3	9	5	2			4		6	493
\$49,999												
\$50,000	2,81	1,40	3,85	1,92	8,69	2,80	1,55	410	11,8	4,656	39,93	21,000,
to	4	3	6	5	4	9	3		13		3	314
\$74,999												
\$75,000	1,97	857	2,89	1,48	5,84	2,08	954	469	7,74	3,294	27,59	14,636,
to	5		0	3	2	2			6		2	046
\$99,999												
\$100,000	1,72	740	2,86	1,20	6,49	1,50	919	356	7,68	2,739	26,23	16,701,
to	8		6	7	3	2			9		9	857
\$149,999												
\$150,000	546	191	867	425	1,81	838	151	73	2,20	764	7,873	6,931,1
to					6				2			36
\$199,999												
\$200,000	373	133	556	319	1,18	413	155	136	1,64	707	5,618	7,465,5
or more					4				2			17

* The data in this table are calculated by ACS using annual surveys conducted during 2020 - 2025 and are representative of average characteristics during this period. Source:

U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2025

Jo Davies County has the highest Per Capita Income within the region at \$44,251, and it is the one of only two counties in the region that exceeds the U.S. average of \$55,195. Rock Island County comes in second in the region at \$40,375. Carroll County has the lowest Per Capita Income at \$32,110. Regarding Median Household Income, Putnum County has the highest figure in the region, \$75,590. The lowest Median Household Income figure is in Carroll County at \$60,758.

In terms of income distribution, the \$50,000 to \$74,999 income range contains the largest percentage of residents both regionally and nationally. Within the region, income distribution is concentrated in the middle with U.S. having larger percentages in the bottom income levels and in the higher income levels. Rock Island and LaSalle Counties, both more urbanized areas than the region, have larger percentages of residents making less than \$10,000 per year than the rest of the region.

Poverty, 2017*

	Bureau	Carr oll	Henry	Jo Daviess	LaSalle	Lee	Mercer	Putnam	Rock Island	White side	Great North west Region	U.S.
People	33,099	14,430	48,808	21,844	107,626	31,360	15,532	5,711	141,038	55,692	475,140	313,048,563
Families	9,596	4,091	13,716	6,401	29,605	8,548	4,510	1,646	37,684	15,320	131,117	78,298,703
People Below Poverty	4,175	1,634	6,109	1,658	14,617	3,699	1,765	507	20,597	6,207	60,968	45,650,345
Families below poverty	920	357	1,228	339	2,914	583	423	82	4,150	1,173	12,169	8,253,388
Percent of Total												
People Below Poverty	12.6%	11.3%	12.5%	7.6%	13.6%	11.8%	11.4%	8.9%	14.6%	11.1%	12.8%	14.6%
Families below poverty	9.6%	8.7%	9.0%	5.3%	9.8%	6.8%	9.4%	5.0%	11.0%	7.7%	9.3%	10.5%

* The data in this table are calculated by ACS using annual surveys conducted during 2013-2017 and are representative of average characteristics during this period.

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2017.

For the U.S., 14.6 percent of the population is classified as living below the poverty level and 10.5 percent of families live below the poverty level. In comparison, 12.6 percent of the residents in Great Northwest Region live below the poverty level while 9.6 percent of the 130,862 families in the Northwest Region live below the poverty line.

Rock Island County has 14.6 percent of its total population and 11.0 percent of its families living below the poverty level, the highest rates in the region. The lowest poverty rates for individuals and families exists in Jo Daviess County where 7.6 percent of individuals and 9.0 percent of families reside below poverty levels.

Unemployment Rates (Annual Averages) Percentages

	2021	2022	2023	2024	Dec. 2025
Bureau	5.1	4.6	5.7	5.1	6.2
Carroll	4.6	4.2	4.6	4.4	5.8
Henry	4.9	4.4	4.9	4.7	5.9
Jo Daviess	4.4	3.7	4.0	3.7	4.7
LaSalle	5.9	5.0	5.7	5.0	6.3
Lee	5.1	4.6	4.9	4.2	5.5
Mercer	5.0	4.4	4.8	4.5	6.1
Putnam	4.9	4.8	6.0	5.0	5.9
Rock Island	5.6	4.5	5.0	5.0	6.2
Whiteside	5.0	4.2	4.7	4.1	5.3
Illinois	6.1	4.6	4.5	4.3	4.8

Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security, 2026.

Overall, the unemployment rate in the region remained fairly steady over the period of 2021 thru 2024; with one county, Jo Daviess, maintaining statistical full employment (at or below 4.7%) throughout the 5-year period. 2025 did see an increase across all counties over 2024. The largest increase was experience in Bureau, Mercer, and Rock Island Counties, where the unemployment rate increased by more than 1% in each county. This increase is most likely the result of a significant reduction in force at a major Quad Cities manufacturer that also impacted adjacent industries in Bureau County.

Employment by Industry

	Civilian employed pop. > 16 years	Ag. Forestry, Fishing, Hunting & Mining	Con- st.	Mfg.	Whole sale Trade	Retail Trade	Transp., Warehousing, and Utilities	Info.	Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	Prof., Scientific, Mgmt., Admin., & Waste Mgmt.	Education, Health & Social Assistance	Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation, & Food	Other Services	Public Admin
Bureau	16,874	550	604	1,387	433	1,164	2,132	100	241	284	1,991	218	537	461
Carroll	6,678	287	269	785	169	447	263	26	157	125	747	39	245	666
Henry	24,431	946	1,477	1,651	507	1,864	531	168	674	381	3,719	346	559	977
Jo Davie ss	10,892	398	805	714	212	1,143	299	49	149	248	1,340	278	462	314
LaSalle	99,438	880	2,018	5,701	2,122	5,607	2,196	283	1,340	1,181	7,520	491	2,095	2,466
Lee	15,690	327	351	3,098	711	1,318	304	30	250	207	3,491	88	616	1,422
Merced	7,648	303	157	380	198	358	80	68	98	94	1,127	115	159	260
Putnam	2,803	225	183	500	67	103	234	25	62	56	212	55	66	109
Rock Island	69,883	329	3,174	10,791	6,089	6,739	3,586	599	1,913	3,309	14,700	945	2,905	4,833
White side	27,351	560	972	2,904	630	2,601	1,649	113	613	987	5,723	458	772	895
Great North west Region	281,688	4,805	10,010	27,911	11,138	21,344	10,274	1,461	5,497	6,872	40,570	14,418	8,416	12,403

The data in this table comes from Qrt12026 jobseq

Employment by Industry, Percent of Total *

	Ag, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, & Mining	Construction	Manufacturing	Wholesale Trade	Retail Trade	Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	Information	Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative, & Waste Management	Education, Health & Social Assistance	Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation, & Food	Other Services	Public Administration
Bureau	5.4%	5.9%	13.7%	4.2%	11.5%	21.1%	0.9%	2.3%	2.8%	19.7%	2.1%	5.3%	4.5%
Carroll	6.7%	6.3%	18.5%	4.0%	10.5%	6.2%	0.6%	3.7%	2.9%	17.6%	0.9%	5.7%	15.7%
Henry	6.8%	10.6%	11.9%	3.6%	13.4%	3.8%	1.2%	4.8%	2.7%	26.9%	2.5%	4.0%	7.0%
Jo Davies	6.2%	12.5%	11.1%	3.3%	17.8%	4.6%	0.7%	2.3%	3.8%	20.8%	4.3%	7.2%	4.8%
LaSalle	2.5%	5.9%	16.8%	6.2%	16.5%	6.4%	0.8%	3.9%	3.4%	22.1%	1.4%	6.1%	7.2%
Lee	2.6%	2.8%	25.3%	5.8%	10.7%	2.4%	0.2%	2.0%	1.6%	28.5%	0.7%	5.0%	11.6%
Mercer	8.9%	4.6%	11.1%	5.8%	10.5%	2.3%	2.0%	2.8%	2.7%	33.1%	3.3%	4.6%	7.6%
Putnam	11.8%	9.6%	26.3%	3.5%	5.4%	12.3%	1.3%	3.2%	2.9%	11.1%	2.8%	3.4%	5.7%
Rock Island	0.5%	5.2%	18.0%	10.1%	11.2%	5.9%	0.9%	3.1%	5.5%	24.5%	1.5%	4.8%	8.0%
White side	2.9%	5.1%	15.3%	3.3%	13.7%	8.7%	0.5%	3.2%	5.2%	30.3%	2.4%	4.0%	4.7%
Great North west Region	2.7%	5.7%	15.9%	6.3%	12.1%	5.8%	0.8%	0.3%	3.9%	23.1%	8.2%	4.8%	8.7%
U.S.	-0.8%	2.3%	10%	1.7%	0.8%	3.0%	1.2%	0.8%	2.4%	5.8%	9.6%	2.5%	1.0%

* The data in this table are using data from Qt12026 jobseq

Within Great Northwest Region, the Education, Healthcare & Social Assistance sector employs more workers than any of the other categories listed above at 23.1 percent of the area's workforce employed in this sector. The other top sectors include Manufacturing employing 15.9 percent and Retail Trade employing 12.1 percent. Within the region, Mercer County has the highest percentage of residents employed in the Education, Healthcare, and Social Assistance at 33.1 percent and Putnam County has the highest percentage of population employed in Manufacturing at 26.3 percent.

Employment by Occupation*

	Civilian employed population > 16 years	Management, Professional, & Related	Services	Sales and Office	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	Construction, Extraction, Maint., & Repair	Production, Transportation, & Material Moving
Bureau	16,874	1,030	446	1,980	188	866	3,122
Carroll	6,678	535	362	821	70	302	902
Henry	24,431	1,538	826	2,965	358	1,581	2,401
Jo Davies	10,892	935	386	1,705	94	954	1,091
LaSalle	99,438	3,419	2,033	8,256	322	3,678	8,664
Lee	15,690	1,175	850	2,305	87	927	2,967
Mercer	7,648	465	241	640	64	275	498
Putnam	2,803	258	85	343	103	266	600
Rock Island	69,883	6,026	3,429	13,913	155	6,338	14,837
Whiteside	27,351	1,826	923	3,968	180	1,539	4,341
Great Northwest Region	281,688	17,205	9,588	36,896	1,622	23,426	39,429
U.S.	170,199,520	430,125	122,923	461,200	90,111	1,064,818	1,314,300

* The data in this table are calculated from data from Qt12026 jobseq data

Employment by Occupation*

	Management, Professional, & Related	Services	Sales and Office	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	Construction, Extraction, Maint., & Repair	Production, Transportation, & Material Moving
Bureau	13.4%	5.8%	25.9%	2.4%	11.3%	40.9%
Carroll	17.8%	12.0%	27.4%	2.3%	10.0%	30.1%
Henry	15.9%	3.7%	8.4%	0.7%	3.1%	9.3%
Jo Davies	18.1%	7.4%	33.0%	1.8%	18.4%	21.1%
LaSalle	12.9%	7.7%	31.3%	1.2%	13.9%	32.8%
Lee	14.1%	10.2%	27.7%	1.0%	11.1%	35.6%
Mercer	21.3%	11.0%	29.3%	2.9%	12.5%	22.8%
Putnam	15.5%	5.1%	20.7%	6.2%	16.0%	36.2%
Rock Island	13.4%	7.6%	31.1%	0.3%	14.1%	33.1%
Whiteside	14.2%	7.2%	31.0%	1.4%	12.0%	33.9%
Great Northwest Region	13.4%	7.4%	54.5%	1.2%	18.2%	30.7%
U.S.	4.0%	7.8%	8%	1.8%	2.2%	3.0%

* The data in this table are calculated from data from Q1 2026 jobseq

Regarding occupational data for Great Northwest Region, the largest occupational category for the area is Sales and Office occupations with 54.5 percent of the area's population working in these occupations. Another 30.7 percent are employed in Production and Transportation/Material Moving Occupations and 18.2 percent of the population is employed in Construction/Extraction and Maintenance/Repair in the area.

Within the region, Bureau County has the highest proportion of its residents employed in Production, Transportation and Material Moving with 40.9 percent of its population working in these occupations. Conversely, Henry County has the lowest proportion of its working population employed in these occupations. La Salle County has the highest proportion of residents employed in Sales and Office Occupations (31.3 percent) with Henry County having the lowest proportion of residents employed in Sales and Office Occupations (8.4 percent). However, the region's leading occupations are a still small portion of the nation's overall workforce in the Occupational Clusters listed.

Labor Participation Characteristics,
2020

	Bureau	Carr	Henry	Jo Davies	LaSalle	Lee	Mercer	Putnam	Rock Island	Whiteside	Great North west Region	U.S.
Population 16 to 64	8,903	9,597	29,560	12,454	69,231	21,791	9,416	3,498	80,596	60,397	274,903	215,485,473
WEEKS WORKED PER YEAR:												
Worked 50 to 52 weeks	5,524	5,570	18,309	7,923	39,026	11,471	5,810	2,306	47,373	35,708	161,365	108,013,699
Worked 27 to 49 weeks	970	1,149	2,753	1,349	7,835	2,406	940	384	8,508	6,826	29,664	19,177,920
Worked 1 to 26 weeks	751	868	1,793	1,168	6,463	1,854	746	211	7,830	5,170	24,256	15,979,995
Did not work	1,658	2,011	6,705	2,014	15,907	6,059	1,920	597	16,884	12,694	59,617	45,681,573
HOURS WORKED PER WEEK:												
Worked 35 or more hours per week	5,561	5,744	17,434	8,078	39,603	11,957	6,031	2,299	47,248	35,549	161,884	110,022,879
Worked 15 to 34 hours per week	1,349	1,525	4,264	1,682	10,848	2,677	1,114	485	13,027	10,002	42,017	26,647,526
Worked 1 to 14 hours per week	335	317	1,157	680	2,872	1,098	351	117	3,436	2,153	11,386	6,501,209
Did not work	1,658	2,011	6,705	2,014	15,907	6,059	1,920	597	16,884	12,694	59,617	45,681,573

The data in this table are calculated by ACS using annual surveys conducted during 2020 - 2025 and are representative of average characteristics during this period.

Source U.S Census, American Community Survey, 2020

In 2020, 50 percent of the U.S. population worked 50 to 52 weeks; 9 percent worked 27 to 49 weeks per year; 7 percent worked 1 to 26 weeks per year; and 21 percent did not work. In the region, Putnam County had the highest percentage of residents between the ages of 16 to 64 who worked 50 to 52 weeks per year at 66 percent. Lee County had the lowest percentage of residents in this category at 53 percent.

The region had higher percentages of labor participation for all three levels than the U.S. averages. However, nationally 21 percent of the U.S. population did not work in the preceding year while in Great Northwest Region, 22 percent of residents reported that they did not work in the previous year. Three Counties exceeded the U.S. rate for non-participation in the labor market: Henry at 23% LaSalle at 23% and Lee County where 28 percent of the population between the ages of 16 and 64 did not work in the previous year.

Jo Daviess County had the lowest percentage of residents in the 16 to 64 age range who reported that they had not worked in the previous year at 16 percent.

Commutation Patterns

Commuting In

Commutation Patterns Commuting In

	Total Work in County	Work and Live In	Commute from Other County	Total Comm ute from out of state	I N	IA	K Y	M O	W I	Oth er
Bureau	12,662	9,376	3,170	116	51	4	0	42	16	3
Carroll	5,517	3,845	1,186	486	0	374	0	0	15	97
Henry	15,698	12,233	2,811	654	0	508	0	3	0	143
Jo Daviess	8,168	6,287	625	1,256	0	703	0	0	541	12
La Salle	45,590	35,725	9,696	169	38	0	0	40	28	63
Lee	14,732	8,584	6,063	85	16	16	0	0	11	42
Mercer	3,865	3,214	516	135	0	135	0	0	0	0
Putnam	1,793	1,091	679	23	0	0	0	0	0	23
Rock Island	74,045	45,666	10,786	17,593	28	17,274	8	2	41	240
Whiteside	22,596	17,135	4,531	930	7	732	0	0	66	125

Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security, 2020; US Census Bureau, 2019-2020 American Community Survey.

Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security, 2018; US Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey.

Commuting Out

Commuting Out

	Total Work in County	Work and Live In	Commute to another County	Total Comm ute out of state	I N	IA	K Y	M O	W I	Oth er
Bureau	15,610	9,376	6,056	178	20	93	0	9	24	32
Carroll	6,348	3,845	1,907	596	0	530	0	10	48	8
Henry	22,982	12,233	7,742	3,007	7	2,968	0	0	4	28
Jo Daviess	10,579	6,287	984	3,308	0	2,622	0	0	656	30

La Salle	50,444	35,725	14,545	174	28	23	5	22	11	85
Lee	14,872	8,584	6,127	161	17	54	0	0	43	47
Mercer	7,256	3,214	2,590	1,452	4	1,440	0	0	0	8
Putnam	2,771	1,091	1,658	22	0	12	0	0	0	10
Rock Island	65,256	45,666	2,428	17,162	40	16,856	4	32	51	179
Whiteside	25,730	17,135	5,968	2,627	60	2,379	0	0	39	149

Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security, 2020; US Census Bureau, 2019-2023 American Community Survey.

Most commuting in-and-out of state takes place in Rock Island County, where urban areas exist and crossings of the Mississippi River are more common, with 17,593 people commuting to Rock Island from another state, and an additional 10,786 commuting from another county within Illinois, suggesting that Rock Island County is a regional hub. Furthermore, residents living in Rock Island County commute out-of-county frequently, with 17,162 residents traveling to work out-of-state. La Salle County also has a large commuter community, with 14,545 residents commuting to another county within Illinois. This can be explained by La Salle County's proximity to the Chicago Metropolitan Area.

Language Spoken at Home, Percent of Total 2023*

	Speak only English	Speak a language other than English	Spanish or Spanish Creole	Other Indo-European languages	Asian and Pacific Island languages	Other languages
Bureau	92.30%	7.30%	5.30%	1.20%	0.60%	0.10%
Carroll	94.00%	6.00%	3.20%	2.10%	0.40%	0.20%
Henry	95.50%	4.50%	3.60%	0.60%	0.20%	0.10%
Jo Daviess	97.40%	2.60%	1.50%	0.70%	0.30%	0.10%
LaSalle	93.10%	6.90%	5.10%	1.00%	0.80%	0.00%
Lee	94.50%	4.60%	2.80%	1.00%	0.60%	0.20%
Mercer	97.20%	2.80%	2.10%	0.30%	0.30%	0.10%
Putnam	96.20%	3.80%	2.60%	0.70%	0.50%	0.00%
Rock Island	84.00%	16.00%	7.80%	3.40%	1.20%	3.50%
Whiteside	92.80%	7.20%	5.80%	1.00%	0.30%	0.10%
Great Northwest Region	91.80%	8.20%	5.30%	1.60%	0.70%	0.60%
U.S.	77.00%	23.00%	13.90%	4.10%	3.70%	1.30%

U.S Census Bureau, 2019 - 2023 American Community Survey,
Table S1601

Besides a growing Hispanic population within the region, Rock Island County is home to World Relief, an organization that assists in the relocation of refugees to the Quad Cities metropolitan area. As a result of World Relief's efforts and refugee and immigrant secondary migration, there is a significant population in the area that speaks languages other than English as a first language. The refugee / immigrant population includes a significant number of West Africans, Central Africans, Burmese, Iraqis, and Central Americans.

Additionally, from a workforce perspective, the population in this region is older with younger residents migrating away from the area. From a workforce policy standpoint, this requires an approach to workforce development that emphasizes "lifelong learning" and helping workers who are already in the workforce to identify educational and career paths that are not traditional. Recent changes in the criminal justice system regarding sentencing and early release will increase the number of returning citizens who will require education and workforce services.

The area also has a larger than average population that have worked in production-oriented fields. Oftentimes, when entering these fields, very little advanced training was required but with the changing dynamics of manufacturing, there is a premium place on more technical skills that are developed beyond the High School level. A focus for this population needs to be taking their real-world skills and transforming them into applicable and certifiable skills that local manufacturers are demanding of their employees.

b. What special populations exist in the region, what is their magnitude, and what are the policy and service implications to meet the needs of these individuals?

Great Northwestern Region recognizes that special populations may endure an increase volume of barriers when seeking advanced employment and/or training that leads to a sustainable income. Leadership team and Staff of regional One Stop Centers agree that every individual will have unique barriers, that no situation will be matched and that our team is determined to assist clients to the best of our ability. Through collaboration and cross training, partners continue to learn what agency to turn to for client assistance. Although we do have a list of supportive services in which we can provide, we recognize additional services may be needed. All clients, whether defined as having barriers or not, will have access to supportive services as listed in TEGL 19-16. In addition, all clients will have access to ADA compliant accessibility tools and equipment. All public funding will be awarded on a nondiscriminatory basis.

Below is an introduction to the magnitude and resulting programing in place to serve these special populations throughout the region:

- **For Individuals with a disability**

According to the 2026 Regional Plan Data Packet, twelve percent of Illinoisans are deemed disabled. In Great Northwestern Region 30,251 individuals age 18-64 are disabled; 13,008 of those individuals participate in the labor force. (JobsEQ)

To serve this population, the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS), through Illinois Department of Human Services, provides individuals with a physical or mental impairment the opportunity to achieve employment outcome by use of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services. VR services assist clients prepare for, find, and maintain quality employment that pays a living wage and offers opportunities for advancement.

To qualify for services through DRS, staff have 60 days to determine eligibility by review of existing (medical, psychological, and educational) records, interaction with client and (if necessary) arrange for assessments. A financial analysis process will be conducted to set an amount that must be paid prior to DRS providing any financial contribution.

The Arc of the Quad Cities is a non-for-profit agency partner that provides Work Services programs designed for individuals who may require more direct supervision than one might get in a community position. The Arc provides paid work opportunities in sheltered workshop settings where individuals concentrate on developing a strong work ethic, good work habits, and proficient skills. Workers are trained in performing service contracts, light assembly work, textile recycling, secure document destruction, and product packaging.

The Arc offers training and paid employment opportunities which help individuals develop transferable work skills.

- **Youth with Disabilities**

Secondary Transitional Experience Program (STEP) is a part of DRS continuum of coordinated transition services for youth with disabilities. STEP is a training/placement program that helps students with disabilities prepare to transition to employment and community participation during and after high school. With STEP, students have the opportunity to learn to become productive, self-sufficient adults through a variety of experiences.

Pre-Employment Transition Services (PTS) are provided to students with disabilities to improve their chances to enter employment or post-secondary education upon leaving school. Some services provided are: job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on opportunities for postsecondary education, workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living, and instruction on self-advocacy, including peer mentoring.

DRS identifies a student with a disability as an individual aged 14 to 21 who has a disability and is enrolled in an educational program.

The Arc of the Quad Cities program *ARCedu*, is a six-week school-to-community transition program which offers students classroom and hands-on structured curriculum to learn basic skills in a particular field. Upon completion, students will receive a Certificate of Completion that provides employers evidence of achieved skill levels. Students completing *ARCedu* programs are stronger candidates for success in competitive job placement.

In addition to agency partnerships, the region has a Targeted Populations Committee that considers individuals with Disabilities as one of its local priorities, and has been working on an initiative to develop a workshop to help them better market themselves to employers, and to educate employers about the advantages of hiring individuals with Disabilities.

The table below depicts disability by type and then by age:

Disability type

Disability	Percentage of EDR 6 Disabled population
Ambulatory	42.5%
Cognitive	45.7%
Hearing	20.5%
Independent Living	37.4%
Self-care	15.1%
Vision	15.2%

American Community Survey, 2019-2023, Table S1810

Disabled Population by Age

Age	Disabled population percentage
0-4	.4%
5-17	7.4%
18-34	10.8%
35-64	32.5%
65-74	19.3%
75 and over	26.9%

American Community Survey, 2019-2023, Table S1810

- **Older Adults age 55 and older**

According to statistical analysis conducted using U.S. Census Bureau, Annual County Resident Population, , approximately 13.3% of the region’s population is between the ages of 55 to 64. It is recognized that a majority of these adults continue to seek employment. Older Adults in the region can receive services through National Able Network’s Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) – SCSEP is designed to provide low-income job seekers age 55 or older with personalized career supports that integrate career coaching, specialized training, and direct connections to the job.

Age	Regional Population Percentage
55 to 64	13.3%
65 to 74	12.8%
75 and older	9.6%

U.S. Census Bureau, Annual County Resident Population, 2024

- **Farm Workers/Migrant Workers**

Through Illinois Migrant Council (IMC) services are provided to farm, migrant and other economically disadvantaged families to be sure they live and work in a healthy and safe environment; earn a living wage that is inductive of economic security and increase their access to educational opportunities. IMC provided services and guidance include: program initial skills assessment, education in regards to program eligibility for training programs at IMC and the nearest One-Stop Center, coordination with one-stop delivery providers and partners, outreach, intake, eligibility determination and enrollment in National Farmworkers Job Program (NFJP), labor market information, job search, identification of employment barriers, individualized employment development planning, career pathways counseling, short term services to prepare for training or employment, job placement assistance, adult education services and referrals, supportive services including life skills and services for youth ages 14 to 24, follow-up services include counseling for job placed, emergency assistance referrals, and work related health education.

The regional One Stop Center IDES team uses IllinoisJobLink.com, the state’s labor exchange system, for the creation of a job order for Migrant Seasonal Farm Worker (MSFW) clients. These job orders are then handled by local One Stop IDES staff who will refer the client to the appropriate One Stop partner. IDES service plan for Farm and Migrant workers include aiding obtaining employment, housing, medical care, and other vital necessities by referring to partner agencies that are specialized in the area of need. IDES inputs specific job orders into IllinoisJobLink.com

- **Veterans/Disabled Veterans**

Statewide Illinois is home to 582,362 honorable Veterans, nearly 6% of our state’s population. Of these Veterans, 72% are of working age (18-64). To serve this population effectively, IDES executes Veteran Services programs designed to assist veterans in finding gainful employment. Wagner-Peyser staff members are trained to begin services by conducting the Veteran Intake Form (VIF), which is a client centered data and assessment procedure that results in the determination of need for employment services, including significant barriers to employment (SBE). Wagner-Peyser staff will provide clients with all available basic career services, including referral to supportive services, as needed. Upon completion of this Initial Assessment, Wagner-Peyser staff will immediately refer any Veteran who has reported any SBE to a Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist for Individualized Career Services. Once the client is job ready, the DVOP will work with the Local Veteran’s Employment Representative (LVER) and the client to assist with finding sustainable employment. A forty-eight-hour priority is given to Veterans when new job orders are entered into IllinoisJobLink.com.

Regional IDES One Stop staff conduct numerous hiring events that allow Veteran to connect and collaborate with local employers. In addition, One Stop Center staff that specialize in Veteran services continuously seek out and volunteer for community events that enrich the lives of our Nations Veterans.

Age	Percent of Veteran Population
18-34	7.0%
35-54	19.3%
55-64	18.9%
65-74	27.5%
75 and over	27.4%

American Community Survey, 2019-2023, Table S2101

- **Displaced Homemaker**

One Stop Centers in the region follow WIOA guidelines to classify an individual as a Displaced Homemaker. Once deemed qualifying, a Displaced Homemaker will receive services under guidelines for “Dislocated Worker”. This population will receive guidance and funding for training and/or employment services through One Stop Center Career Planners. Career Planners will refer the individual to other relevant partner services on an as needed basis. It is probable that a client in this situation will need intense case management in order to successfully achieve training or employment.

- **Individuals needing assistance with English Language Learning, Low Literacy, Substance Abuse**

English Language Learner: Adult Education programs provide English as a Second Language programs for more than 19 different languages within the region. This program has experienced an influx of enrollment due to the increase of migration.

Below is an example of the diversity of language spoken by regional residents:

Language Spoken at Home, 2025*

	Population 5 yrs. or older	Speak only English	Speak a language other than English	Spanish or Spanish Creole	Other Indo- European languages	Asian and Pacific Island languages	Other languages	Speak English less than "very well"
Bureau	31,845	29,381	2,464	1,829	411	196	28	850
Carroll	13,964	13,505	459	275	107	74	0	169
Henry	46,890	44,778	2,112	1,555	272	260	4	646
Jo Daviess	21,123	20,215	908	562	210	59	66	306
LaSalle	105,030	97,774	7,256	5,345	1,023	870	16	2,682
Lee	32,894	31,066	1,828	1,208	406	154	54	513
Mercer	15,009	14,782	227	123	50	42	10	69
Putnam	5,516	5,175	341	257	70	14	0	91
Rock Island	136,834	119,007	17,827	10,939	3,460	2,063	1,247	7,064
Whiteside	53,547	49,569	3,978	2,747	854	178	154	1,140
Great Northwest Region	462,652	425,252	37,400	24,840	6,863	3,910	1,579	13,530
U.S.	301,150,892	236,929,699	64,221,193	39,769,281	10,907,675	10,409,087	3,090,332	25,654,421

* The data in this table are calculated by ACS using annual surveys conducted during 2019-2023 and are representative of average characteristics during this period.

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2025.

Low Literacy: Adult educational centers have programs available to assist adults and youth with literacy attainment.

Substance Abuse: Clients will be referred to organizations specializing in Behavioral Health and Addiction. Substance abuse may have a negative impact on the successful completion of training/education course work. It is also agreed that substance abuse is a serious mental health condition that deserves treatment. Any acknowledging client will be assisted with a referral to or assistance with contacting an organization that can assist with remission.

- **Incarcerated Offenders / Returning Citizens**

2026 regional data packet reports that Great Northwestern Region has 1,079 incarcerated adults. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD (WDB) Innovation Project for Returning Citizens (IPRC) established an **American Job Center**® Specialized One-Stop Career Center inside Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center. Partner organizations include WDB / IPRC, Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC), Rock Island Tri-County Consortium, Lake Land College, Black Hawk College, University of Illinois Extension, Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES), Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS), The Illinois Migrant Council, and Project NOW, Inc. Supporting organizations include Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB), Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO), Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), Southern Illinois University Carbondale Center for Workforce Development (SIUC CWD), First Institute Training & Management Corporation, and Midwest Trailer Manufacturing, LLC. The objective is to build valuable life skills and prepare offenders for Re-Entry into society while maintaining safety and security. There is a focus on offenders who are ready to make needed changes in order to successfully reintegrate into their communities, by offering educational, job readiness, and cognitive behavior therapy courses. Business-driven career, education, training, and supportive services are provided. Customers being served are (1) businesses / employers, (2) State of Illinois / IDOC, and (3) incarcerated offenders / returning citizens. Workforce professionals meet routinely with all three types of customers to ensure that focus and programs are customer driven. Outreach has been improved using digital newsletters and videos produced by incarcerated offenders.

The region's Targeted Populations Committee considers this expanded targeted population as one of its local priorities, and has been working on an initiative to develop a workshop to help them better market themselves to employers, and to educate employers about the advantages of hiring individuals with any kind of background issue, whether incarcerated at any time or not.

- **Youth in Foster care or aged out of foster care**

Regional leadership teams will report to the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) to provide information on WIOA and the One Stop Center services available within the area. This population of youth are recognized to have a multitude of barriers due to the environmental conditions which lead to placement in Foster Care. It is with great prudence that One Stop Center staff collaborate with partners and co-workers to develop an intensive IEP that meets the critical needs of the client. In addition, our team collaborates with Superintendents throughout the region by attending Board of Control committee meetings. Attendance at these meetings offers program education to area professionals that work directly with at risk youth, including youth involved in Foster Care.

- **Homeless and/or Homeless Youth**

Regional leadership teams will apply similar outreach as described under the previous bullet "Youth in Foster Care or aged out of Foster Care". In addition, outreach will be promoted to area community-based organization and/or community resources.

- **Indians, Alaskan Natives and/or Native Hawaiians**

This special population represents .02% of Great Northwestern Region’s population. Leadership team will provide outreach to community-based organizations.

Table is a depiction of Indian, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian population residing in EDR 6.

Race	Population by percentage	Population by number
Native Hawaiian	0%	83
American Indian and Alaska Native	.2%	292

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 - 2023 American Community Survey, Table B03002

- **Single Parents**

According to JobsEQ, in Great Northwestern Region 18,607 families are made up of Single Parent households. Because single parent households typically have less annual income and more responsibilities than dual parent households, many stress inducing barriers may exist. This population will be referred to appropriate partner organizations by all partners. Communication with community-based organizations and schools may also provide a strong source of outreach. Single Parents will receive support and funding for training and/or employment services through One Stop Center Career Planners. Career Planners will refer the individual to other relevant partner services on an as needed basis. It is probable that a client in this situation will need intense case management in order to successfully achieve training or employment.

The table below compares annual income of varying household member types.

County	Married Households	Male Household	Female Households
Bureau	\$87,121	\$52,536	\$33,511
Carroll	\$78,644	\$52,266	\$37,590
Henry	\$106,769	\$50,775	\$42,907
Jo Daviess	\$78,763	\$34,545	\$27,708
LaSalle	\$82,571	\$48,450	\$20,717
Lee	\$82,547	\$46,700	\$24,500
Mercer	\$80,095	\$47,500	\$16,214
Putnam	\$91,118	\$63,333	\$27,813
Rock Island	\$77,289	\$41,879	\$24,594
Whiteside	\$82,087	\$40,938	\$25,139

Source: American Community Survey, 2019 -2023 ,Table S1903

- **Chronically Unemployed**

Reports from Illinois Department of Employment Security show that Illinois unemployment was at 5.0 percent in 2024. It is a regional understanding that the unemployed population may have additional barriers related to chronic unemployment. For this reason, IDES, as the primary contact for the unemployed, will refer clients to partner and community-based organizations as needed. If IDES is not the primary contact for clients, any partner will have the knowledge and ability to properly seek out assistance for this population.

B. Describe the development and implementation of sector initiatives for in-demand industry sectors or occupations for the planning region.

1. How will the workforce partners convene employers, foundations, regional institutions to help lead sector partnership and make coordinated investments?

Seven counties within EDR 6 recently completed a rapid talent pipeline pilot project (RTPI) to more actively engage the business community. The RTPI team is comprised of members from Illinois Valley Community College, IDES, BEST, Inc. (workforce Title 1), Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce, and Blackhawk Hills Regional Council. The team's purpose is to engage the business community to ascertain their current and projected needs, create a plan of action to help address those needs, and follow through with the company on implementing that plan of action. At times the need to convene a larger group of a specific industry may be necessary to assess the pervasive an identified need is. Members of NCI Works (LWIA 4) are in a position to convene such summits. In the Illinois Valley Community College district, a healthcare networking group has been established as the result of a healthcare summit held in 2017. This networking group's purpose is to keep all stakeholders apprised of the needs and trends within the healthcare industry so that workforce and education can respond to those needs in a timely fashion. As a result of this networking group, Illinois Valley Community College recently began a Certified Medical Assistant (CMA) program. This CMA program has also recently become an apprenticeship program with NCI Works serving as the sponsor and St. Margaret's Health in Spring Valley as its first participating employer. Replicating such efforts across the region would not be difficult.

BEST, Inc., on behalf of both local workforce areas within EDR 6, recently submitted a proposal for an apprenticeship expansion grant. If chosen to receive this grant members of the NCI Works RTPI Team as well as the BEST Navigator will work with area chambers, economic development, community colleges, region 6 career centers, and LWIA 13 staff to engage businesses on a regional basis to recruit current apprenticeship program companies and new ones to the project of expanding registered apprenticeship participants.

Community college advisory committees also work to engage area businesses across industry sectors to contribute to the development and improvement of certificate and degreed programs. In addition, community college business training offices are able to work with workforce development entities to offer training to the incumbent workforce along with Title 1 incumbent worker training funding for most occupational training and upgrades.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD (WDB) Innovation Project for Returning Citizens (IPRC) established an **American Job Center**® Specialized One-Stop Career Center inside Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center. Supporting organizations include business-led Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB), as well as businesses such as First Institute Training & Management Corporation and Midwest

Trailer Manufacturing, LLC. The objective is to build valuable life skills and prepare offenders for Re-Entry into society while maintaining safety and security. Business-driven career, education, training, and supportive services are provided. Customers being served are (1) businesses / employers, (2) State of Illinois / IDOC, and (3) incarcerated offenders / returning citizens. Workforce professionals meet routinely with all three types of customers to ensure that focus and programs are customer driven.

2. Identify the established and active industry sector partnerships in the region.

All partners participated in a series of meetings, telephone conference calls, and the summit to compile and review data, evaluate resources, and identify the key regional targeted sectors. Since four community colleges have significant portions of their districts housed within the Northwest Region, many initial planning discussions tended to revolve around data compiled by the respective colleges. This data was combined with the on-the-ground experiences of partners. This method also insured that the varying needs of the large region were considered.

Black Hawk College

The Black Hawk College District covers most or all of Rock Island, Mercer, and Henry counties and combines both rural and urban areas. This district is also impacted significantly by proximity to the Iowa counties of Scott and Muscatine. As a result, much of the data used to determine sector initiatives in this portion of the Northwest Region is specific to the Davenport-Moline-Rock Island, IA-IL Metropolitan Statistical Area. Economic Modeling Software, Inc. (EMSI) projects strong growth between 2015 and 2023 in:

- Healthcare – Registered Nurses, Nursing Assistants, Personal Care Aides, Home Health Aides, Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses, Medical Assistants
- Logistics – Laborers and Freight, Stock and Material Movers, Heavy and Tractor Trailer Drivers, Light Truck or Delivery Services Drivers
- Manufacturing/Trades – Industrial Machinery Mechanics, Machinists, Maintenance and Repair Workers, Team Assemblers, Electricians, Plumbers, Pipefitter, Steamfitters
- Agriculture – Farmers, Ranchers, Other Agricultural Managers, Landscaping and Groundskeeping
- IT – Computer Systems Analysts, Software Developers, Applications, Computer User Support Specialists (combined with IT requirements in many of the other fields)

In addition to the EMSI data, we reviewed the five key industries identified for each county in the Bi-State Region based on Location Quotient (LQ) and total jobs. (LQ is a measure of the concentration of a certain industry sector in an area relative to the concentration of that industry sector in the U.S.) Key industries for each county are:

- Rock Island – Agricultural and Construction Machinery Manufacturing, Military Manufacturing and Logistics, Packaging and Labeling Services, Animal Slaughtering, Nuclear Electric Power Generation
- Henry County – Small Arms Manufacturing, Truck Trailer Manufacturing, Ethyl Alcohol Manufacturing, Elevator and Moving Stairway Manufacturing, Prefabricated Wood building Manufacturing

- Mercer County – Machined Parts Manufacturing, Crop and Animal Production (Farming), Farm Supply Commodities & Farm Support Activities, Paperboard Container Manufacturing, Plate work and Metal Finishing
- Scott County – Aluminum Manufacturing, Construction Agricultural & Other Industrial Machinery Manufacturing, Animal-based Food Processing, Steel Foundries, Lime Cement & Concrete Manufacturing
- Muscatine County – Office Furniture and Fixtures Manufacturing, Lighting Fixture Manufacturing, Plant- and Animal-based Food Manufacturing, Pesticide and Agricultural Chemical Manufacturing, Iron & Steel Mills Ferro and Non-Ferro alloy Manufacturing

Illinois Valley Community College, Sauk Valley Community College, Highland Community College

These colleges serve the remaining seven counties (Bureau, Carroll, Jo Daviess, LaSalle, Lee, Whiteside, and Putnam Counties). Regional priorities were determined by reviewing the following:

- LMI data from the State of Illinois
- Jobs EQ Reports
- EMSI Reports
- Advisory Committee feedback (Truck driver training, Nursing, Manufacturing/Maintenance/Welding, Agriculture)
- Northern Illinois University P-20 Workforce Needs Report
- Northern Illinois University P-20 Emerging Jobs Report
- Advisory committee work, job data, and a regional survey completed by area Economic Development groups

The community colleges listed above find growth in the educational programs in the fields of:

- Manufacturing, production workers, industrial maintenance, CNC
- Healthcare: nursing, ambulatory care, radiologic technology, certified medical assistant
- Criminal Justice: law enforcement and corrections
- Precision Agriculture and “value-added” agriculture (Agri-Business)

Northwest Illinois Economic Development:

- Manufacturing & Industrial Maintenance
- Food manufacturing – emerging
- Chemical manufacturing – maturing/growing
- Machinery manufacturing – leading/growing
- Fabricated metal manufacturing – leading/growing
- Healthcare
 - Nursing and Skilled Nursing Facilities - Leading
 - Ambulatory Care - emerging
 - Hospitals – maturing
 - Social assistance - emerging
- Transportation/Logistics
 - Merchant Wholesalers – Durable Goods – Leading

- Merchant Wholesalers – Nondurable Goods – Leading
- Truck Transportation – Leading
- Scenic and Sightseeing Transportation – Emerging
- Support Activities for Transportation – Emerging
- Warehousing and Storage – Leading
- IT –as a subfield of Mfg., Healthcare, and Transportation/Logistics Regional priorities were determined by reviewing the following:
 - NWILED surveyed 225 regional companies in Jo Daviess, Carroll, and Stephenson Counties regarding manufacturing skills and occupational demands in October 2014.
 - Other data is from LMI information distributed through IDES to local workforce investment boards.

Based on the data gathered by all partners in Great Northwest Region, the Regional Priorities are:

- Manufacturing and Industrial Maintenance
 - Food Manufacturing – emerging
 - Chemical Manufacturing – maturing/growing
 - Machinery Manufacturing – leading/growing
 - Fabricated Metal Manufacturing – leading/growing
- Healthcare
 - Nursing and Skilled Nursing Facilities – leading
 - Ambulatory Care – emerging
 - Hospitals – maturing
 - Social Assistance – emerging
- Transportation/Logistics
 - Merchant Wholesalers – Durable Goods – leading
 - Merchant Wholesalers – Non-Durable Goods – leading
 - Truck Transportation – leading
 - Scenic and Sightseeing Transportation – emerging
 - Support Activities for Transportation – emerging
 - Warehousing and Storage – leading
- Energy
 - Ethanol – emerging
 - Wind – growing
 - Solar – emerging
- IT- as a subfield of Manufacturing, Healthcare, Energy, and Transportation/Logistics

In addition to the key industries listed above, this area has historically had a strong Agriculture and Logistics presence. The agriculture sector includes occupations in farm labor, crop production, animal production, and commercial mushroom production along with postharvest crop activities. With three major interstates running through these counties (I-80, I-39, and I-88) logistics has grown over the years especially in the area of large-scale warehousing. Along with the growth in warehousing, an increase in demand for truck drivers and diesel mechanics was realized. Replacement demand in these two industry sectors will continue to grow.

3. What other sector-based partnerships exist in the region? If any are they business-led and what is their role in planning?

Additional sector-based partnerships that exist within the region are listed below with a note as to whether they are business- led. These business-led partners did not participate in the planning of the regional planning directly, unless otherwise noted. However, their partnership and collaboration is used throughout the regional plan and is based off of past collaboration.

- Healthcare Networking Group - local healthcare facilities and institutions, NCI Works and Illinois Valley Community College; business led;; meet to address issues and challenges affecting the healthcare industry
- Community colleges have active Advisory groups used in planning healthcare offerings and curricula – community college led (separate bullet point). For example, Black Hawk College and others within the region participated directly
- Manufacturing- American Nickeloid, not business led, participate in bridge class as a guest speaker
- The Quad Cities was recently named one of 12 federally designated manufacturing communities as part of the Investing in Manufacturing Communities Partnership grant.
- Chief Manufacturing Executives meet quarterly at IVCC staff supported by NCI Works and IVCC; business led
- Other Advisory committees meeting annually or biannually(Truck driver training, Nursing, Manufacturing/Maintenance/Welding, Agriculture, Criminal Justice, Fire Science, Rad Tech, and Office and Administrative Service) – community college led
- Northern Illinois Discover Manufacturing Expo – business led
- Public Safety Career Fair – community college led
- Workforce Readiness Coalition (manufacturing) – community college led
- National Manufacturing Day Planning Committee (K-12, College, and Industry)
- Highland Community College has annual advisory meetings, meets monthly with NIDA (Northern Illinois Development Alliance) and TCEDA (Tri- County Economic Development Alliance and with the Workforce Development Coalition. Participated directly
- Pathways to Academic, Career, and Employment (PACE). Eastern Iowa Community Colleges received funds from the Iowa State Legislature for the Pathways to Academic, Career, and Employment (PACE) Program in 2013. PACE strives to create a strong pipeline of individuals entering and completing training in high skill / high demand career areas in Advanced Manufacturing, Allied Health, Information Technology and Transportation / Logistics.
- The LaSalle, Marshall, & Putnam County Regional Office of Education (ROE) in partnership with Illinois Valley Community College sponsored a PACE (Post-Secondary Career Expectations) Framework event for regional middle and high school administrators and teachers. The purpose of the event was to develop a PACE framework for the region to ensure that each student in 8th – 12th grade would have an individualized learning plan to help guide decisions about career and post-secondary education or training. The program, facilitated by the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC), walked implementation teams from nine area schools through the development of a PACE model. In addition to educators, workforce and industry representatives contributed to the discussion. As a result, Regional Office of Education, #35, was the first cohort in the State of Illinois to develop a regional PACE model. The PACE model is now being implemented in area high and middle schools with the college assisting as needed.

To support the process, PACE incorporates the use of sector boards. Sector boards are partnerships of employers within one industry who come together to focus on the workforce needs of the industry within the regional labor market. The Quad Cities Chamber of Commerce could see that having the both the Iowa and Illinois community colleges participate would be preferable to establishing duplicative boards. With Chamber encouragement, Black Hawk College representatives were invited to join.

Sector Boards are different from the traditional Advisory Councils that the colleges have had in place for many years and that continue to work with college career programs advising faculty on the types of training students need today in each of those specific career fields. Sector Boards work on a much broader basis and are focused on long-range planning, considering new technology and factors expected to impact the industry. They are focused on the future workforce and work to identify resources and solutions to anticipated staffing and competitiveness needs.

The four sector boards established are:

1. Advanced Manufacturing
 2. Allied Health (includes mental and dental as well as broad range of medical)
 3. Information Technology (IT)
 4. Transportation and Logistics
- 4. What other public-private partnerships exists in the region that could support sector strategies and what is their role in planning?**

Additional public-private partnerships that exist within the region that could support sector strategies are listed below. These partners did not participate in the planning of the regional planning directly, unless otherwise noted. However, their partnership and collaboration is used throughout the regional plan and is based off of past collaboration.

- CPT- Certified Production Technician – Certificate endorsed by several CME participants
- Community and Economic Development, University of Illinois Extension- Rock Island, Henry, and Mercer Counties. Participated directly Truck Driver Training works with trucking companies for student placement
- Healthcare Executives Group, IVCC nursing department works with area hospitals and nursing homes
- Starved Rock Advantage – nonprofit collaboration of employers, educators, workforce board, and others in the Starved Rock area to develop a work-ready community and talent pipeline for area businesses.
- Workforce Development Coalition – Highland
- Chambers of Commerce and Economic Development Corporations or Organizations
- SET – Stronger Economies Together – multi-county regional economic development planning initiative through USDA and University of Illinois Extension – Putnam County (along with Marshall and Stark Counties)
- LEAD – Leader in Economic Alliance Development – Lee, Carroll, and Whiteside Counties (initially – looking to add Jo Daviess and Ogle Counties) – regional economic development planning initiative through USDA and University of Illinois Extension to develop leadership capacity to promote regional economic collaboration.

- NCI Works Certified Medical Assistant Apprenticeship program – St. Margaret’s Health is participating provider and was a partner in planning the apprenticeship standards. Participated directly

5. What neutral conveners with the capacity to help establish sector partnerships exist in the region and what is their role in planning?

Neutral conveners with the capacity to help establish sector partnerships below did not participate directly with the planning of this regional plan, unless otherwise noted. However, ongoing collaboration with these partners has influenced the planning of this regional plan.

- Chambers of Commerce – represent needs of local employers, advocate for educational programming and resources to meet those needs
- Examples: Quad Cities Chamber of Commerce, Illinois Valley Area Chamber of Commerce, Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce, Illinois River Area Chamber of Commerce.
- Economic Development Organizations – North Central Illinois Economic Development Corporation (NCI EDC), NIDA, NW IL Economic Development, I-88 West Corridor Association, Greater Sterling Development Corp., Henry County Economic Development Partnership, Kewanee Economic Development Corporation, La Salle County EDC
- Local Workforce Boards – provide linkages between employers, prospective employees, training providers and fund training programs. Participated directly
- Adult Education Area Planning Councils – assure that those in need of ABE, ASE, ESL, and High School Equivalency educational programming prepares students for the workforce. Participated directly
- Bi-State Regional Commission – Research and assess opportunities and threats and articulate broad economic development strategies for the region
- North Central Illinois Council of Governments - Research and assess opportunities and threats and articulate broad economic development strategies for the region
- Blackhawk Hills Regional Council - Research and assess opportunities and threats and articulate broad economic development strategies for the region
- North Central Regional Betterment Coalition
- United Way Education and Income Councils – support agencies offering supportive services needed for workforce development
- Sauk Valley Center for Small Business Development
- Starved Rock Startups
- Starved Rock Country Alliance
- Streator Incubator
- Community Colleges: Black Hawk College, Illinois Valley Community College, Highland Community College, Sauk Valley Community College. Participated directly
- Western Illinois University
- Augustana College
- University of Illinois and University of Illinois Extension. Participated directly
- USDA
- BEST, Inc. Participated directly
- Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center (IMEC)

C. Describe Economic Opportunities in the Region within the Context of the Workforce, Education, and Economic Development Plan

The Great Northwest Region (Economic Development Region 6) identifies significant economic opportunities by aligning workforce development, education, and economic development strategies around both established and emerging industries. The regional plan organizes these opportunities into two industry tiers based on existing economic strength and future growth potential.

Established Economic Opportunities (Tier 1 Industries)

The region's economy continues to be anchored by traditional industries that possess strong employment concentrations and remain critical to economic stability. These include:

- Manufacturing
- Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics (TDL)
- Agriculture
- Health Care

Manufacturing remains the region's largest employment sector with 27,912 workers, while Health Care and Social Assistance employs 22,967 workers. Agriculture and Manufacturing also demonstrate strong location quotients, indicating that these industries are more concentrated in the region than in the national economy.

While some of these sectors show modest or negative projected employment growth, the plan emphasizes that large numbers of retirements and worker transfers will create substantial replacement demand.

Significant opportunities are expected in:

- General Warehousing and Storage
- Freight Transportation and Trucking
- Farm Machinery Manufacturing
- Small Arms Manufacturing
- Health Care Services
- Nursing Care Facilities
- Home Health Care Services
- Agricultural Management and Production occupations

Emerging Economic Opportunities (Tier 2 Industries)

The plan highlights several emerging sectors expected to provide future economic growth and diversification:

- Education
- Professional and Business Services
- Information Technology (IT)
- Construction
- Financial Activities
- Self-Employment and Entrepreneurship
- Leisure and Hospitality

Particularly promising opportunities include:

- Data Science
- Information Security
- Software Development
- Financial Management
- Construction Management
- Utility System Construction
- Wind Energy
- Solar Energy
- Educational Support Services
- Professional and Technical Services

The plan notes that construction and financial activities dominate many of the industries showing favorable future growth, while clean energy occupations such as Wind Turbine Service Technicians and Solar Photovoltaic Installers rank among the fastest-growing occupations in the region.

Workforce Development Opportunities

A major workforce challenge facing the region is an aging labor force and population decline. Between 2020 and 2025, the region's population fell by 2.2%, while the number of residents in prime working-age groups declined significantly. As retirements accelerate, employers will need qualified workers to replace experienced employees leaving the workforce.

The plan identifies strong demand for workers in:

- Health care occupations (Registered Nurses, Nurse Practitioners, Physical Therapist Assistants, Home Health Aides)
- Skilled trades (Electricians, Welders, Machinists, Industrial Machinery Mechanics, Carpenters, Plumbers)
- Transportation occupations (Truck Drivers and Logistics Workers)
- Information Technology occupations (Computer Support Specialists, Software Developers, Systems Analysts)
- Business and Financial occupations (Managers, Accountants, Financial Managers)

Educational Opportunities and Career Pathways

To support employer demand, the region's education and training strategy focuses on career pathways connected to high-impact industries. Key career clusters include:

- Health Sciences
- Information Technology
- Business, Management, and Administration
- Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources
- Architecture and Construction

The plan emphasizes "middle-skill" occupations that require postsecondary education or industry credentials but not necessarily a four-year degree. High-demand skills include:

- Microsoft Office and Excel
- Teaching and Training
- Bilingual Skills
- Mathematics
- Medical Terminology
- Change Management
- Technical and Trade Skills

Regional partners, including community colleges and workforce agencies, are expected to expand training and upskilling efforts to address these workforce gaps.

Economic Development Strategy

The region's economic development approach centers on sector partnerships that connect businesses, workforce agencies, educational institutions, economic development organizations, and local governments. These partnerships are designed to identify workforce challenges and develop business-led solutions involving recruitment, training, upskilling, and supportive services.

Overall, the greatest economic opportunities for Region 6 lie in:

1. Replacing retiring workers in manufacturing, health care, agriculture, and logistics.
2. Expanding growth industries such as health care, construction, professional services, IT, and clean energy.
3. Developing career pathways and middle-skill training programs that connect residents to high-demand occupations.
4. Strengthening collaboration between workforce, education, and economic development partners to meet employer needs and retain younger workers in the region.

D. Describe economic challenges in the region within the context of the workforce, education and economic development plans.

Economic Challenges in the Region within the Context of the Workforce, Education, and Economic Development Plan

The Great Northwest Region (Region 6) faces several interconnected economic challenges that affect workforce development, education, and long-term economic growth. The regional plan identifies demographic trends, labor force constraints, educational attainment gaps, and industry-specific workforce shortages as primary barriers to economic prosperity.

Workforce Challenges

One of the most significant challenges is a declining and aging population. The region's overall population has decreased in recent years, and many communities are experiencing a reduction in working-age residents. This trend makes it more difficult for employers to find qualified workers and threatens the long-term sustainability of key industries.

The aging workforce is expected to generate substantial replacement demand as experienced workers retire. While employment growth may be modest in some sectors, employers will still need to replace large numbers of retiring employees in manufacturing, agriculture, transportation, and health care. The loss of experienced workers also creates a risk of losing institutional knowledge and technical expertise.

The plan also notes ongoing labor shortages in critical occupations, including:

- Registered Nurses and other health care professionals
- Truck drivers and logistics workers
- Skilled trades workers such as welders, machinists, electricians, plumbers, and industrial maintenance technicians
- Information technology professionals
- Business and financial managers and specialists

Education and Skills Challenges

A major challenge identified in the regional plan is the gap between employer workforce needs and the skills available in the labor market. Many industries require workers who possess specialized technical skills, industry credentials, or postsecondary training, yet employers report difficulty finding qualified candidates.

The region must also address shortages in "middle-skill" occupations that require education beyond high school but not necessarily a four-year degree. These occupations are particularly important in manufacturing, health care, information technology, transportation, and construction.

Employers continue to seek workers with both technical and foundational workplace skills, including:

- Computer and technology skills
- Mathematics proficiency
- Medical terminology and health care competencies
- Problem solving and critical thinking
- Communication and customer service skills
- Bilingual capabilities in some occupations

The need to continuously upskill existing workers and prepare future workers through career pathways and credentialing programs remains a significant educational challenge for the region.

Economic Development Challenges

The plan identifies several economic development concerns related to the region's industry structure and future competitiveness. Some of the region's largest industries, particularly agriculture and manufacturing, remain essential economic drivers but face employment pressures from automation, productivity improvements, and demographic change. While these sectors remain strong, long-term growth opportunities may be limited without innovation and workforce renewal.

The region must also diversify its economy by supporting growth in emerging industries such as information technology, professional services, construction, renewable energy, and financial activities.

Building these sectors requires investment in workforce development, infrastructure, and educational partnerships.

Another challenge is retaining younger workers and attracting new talent to the region. Population decline and outmigration can reduce the available labor pool and make it more difficult for businesses to expand or locate in the area. Economic development efforts therefore must focus not only on job creation but also on talent attraction and retention.

Regional Coordination Challenges

The plan emphasizes that workforce, education, and economic development systems must work together more effectively to address employer needs. Challenges include:

- Aligning training programs with real-time labor market demands.
- Expanding access to career pathway programs.
- Ensuring employers have a voice in workforce and education planning.
- Coordinating resources across workforce agencies, educational institutions, economic development organizations, and local governments.

Summary

The Region 6 plan identifies four primary economic challenges:

1. Population decline and an aging workforce, resulting in labor shortages and increasing replacement demand.
2. Skills gaps and educational attainment challenges, particularly in middle-skill and technical occupations.
3. Industry workforce shortages in health care, manufacturing, transportation, construction, and information technology.
4. The need for economic diversification and stronger regional collaboration to support emerging industries, retain talent, and sustain long-term economic growth.

E. Describe how responsiveness, inclusivity and accessibility are incorporated into collecting and analyzing labor market information for this plan.

Describe How Responsiveness, Inclusivity, and Accessibility Are Incorporated into Collecting and Analyzing Labor Market Information for This Plan

The Region 6 Workforce, Education, and Economic Development Plan incorporates responsiveness, inclusivity, and accessibility through a comprehensive labor market analysis process that combines data-driven research with extensive stakeholder engagement. The goal is to ensure that workforce and economic development strategies reflect the needs of employers, job seekers, educational institutions, workforce partners, and historically underserved populations.

Responsiveness

The plan is designed to be responsive to current and emerging labor market conditions by utilizing multiple sources of labor market information and continuously engaging regional stakeholders. Data from Lightcast, the U.S. Census Bureau, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES), and other workforce data sources were analyzed to identify industry trends, occupational demand, demographic shifts, and skill requirements.

In addition to quantitative data, the planning process incorporated input from employers, economic development organizations, educational institutions, workforce development boards, and community partners. Through sector partnerships and regional collaboration, workforce strategies are aligned with real-time business needs and emerging opportunities in industries such as manufacturing, health care, transportation and logistics, information technology, construction, and professional services.

This combination of labor market analytics and stakeholder feedback allows the region to adjust workforce priorities, training investments, and career pathway strategies based on changing economic conditions and employer demand.

Inclusivity

The plan emphasizes serving all populations within the region, including individuals who face barriers to employment. Labor market analysis includes demographic information related to age, race, ethnicity, disability status, educational attainment, income levels, and other population characteristics to better understand workforce participation and economic disparities throughout the region.

The planning process engages a broad range of partners, including:

- Local Workforce Innovation Boards
- American Job Centers
- Community colleges

- Secondary education representatives
- Economic development organizations
- Community-based organizations
- Vocational rehabilitation partners
- Adult education providers
- Employers and industry representatives

By incorporating perspectives from these organizations, the plan seeks to ensure that workforce services, training programs, and career pathways are responsive to diverse populations, including low-income individuals, individuals with disabilities, veterans, justice-involved individuals, youth, and other populations with barriers to employment.

Accessibility

Accessibility is incorporated through the use of publicly available labor market data, coordinated regional planning, and workforce service delivery systems that connect residents with employment, education, and training opportunities. The plan promotes access to workforce services through the American Job Center network and partner agencies throughout the region.

The regional planning process also emphasizes making labor market information understandable and actionable for both businesses and job seekers. Career pathway models, sector-based strategies, occupational projections, and skills analyses are used to help individuals identify training opportunities and employment pathways aligned with regional demand.

In addition, collaboration among workforce, education, and economic development partners helps ensure that information is shared broadly across the region and that training programs are aligned with workforce needs, making opportunities more accessible to residents regardless of their location or background.

Summary

The plan incorporates:

- Responsiveness by combining current labor market data with ongoing employer and stakeholder engagement to identify workforce needs and economic trends.
- Inclusivity by analyzing demographic and workforce participation data and involving organizations that serve diverse populations and individuals with barriers to employment.
- Accessibility by using region-wide partnerships, American Job Center services, career pathway information, and coordinated workforce programs to ensure labor market information and opportunities are available to employers, workers, students, and job seekers throughout the region.

Chapter 2: Strategies for Service Integration

- A. Provide an analysis of workforce development activities, including education and training, in the region. This analysis must include the strengths and weaknesses of workforce development activities and capacity to provide the workforce development activities to address the education and skill needs of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment, and the employment needs of employers (§679.560 (a)(4)). Plans must respond to the following:**

Great Northwest Region workforce development activities include classroom training, job search assistance, on-the-job training, essential skills training, customized training, business services, work experience, incumbent worker training, apprenticeship programs, and job shadowing. Employment and Training (Title I) is provided in two Local Workforce Investment Areas (LWIAs) with Local Workforce Development Boards. There are two Comprehensive One-Stop Centers, as well as affiliate One-Stop Centers. Training providers include all of the major institutions – public, private, and proprietary- as well as businesses engaged in work-based learning. Other core partners include Adult Education (Title II), Wagner-Peyser (Title III), and Vocational Rehabilitation (Title IV), which are co-located or available through technology. Great Northwest Region is very large in geographic size, economically diverse, and quite varied in the needs of businesses and individuals. Therefore, the types of workforce development services vary by local area, with each having used different strategies and areas of focus. Many common activities and services, with good return on investment (ROI), will continue.

1. Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of workforce development activities in the region.

Strengths:

1. Several local community colleges offering training of in-demand occupations with frequent enrollment windows in various Adult Education courses.
2. Availability of customized training options through the community college's business training center.
3. Strong area involvement with multiple partners for client strategies.
4. Essential Skills Training.
5. Workforce partner customized labor market information guides Great Northwest Region to better decision making for workforce area.
6. Area business buy in with Incumbent Worker Training (IWT), and Work Based Learning activities
7. Great Northwest Region is comprised of a team with strong local and regional partnership among WIOA workforce partners. Specifically, the region's collaboration/relationship with Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) for Business Services continues to strengthen in the region.
8. Great Northwest Region has a team with years of workforce experience and a long history of engaged workforce board members.
9. Development of stackable credentials that allow for multiple exit and entry points that lead toward attaining a credential.
10. Community College partners provide opportunities for high school students within the district to take college-level courses prior to graduating from high school.

Weaknesses:

1. To increase accessibility, colleges have begun to incorporate flexible class formats, locations, and times. However, more work in this area needs to be done.
2. Silo funded activities.
3. Aging workforce and the inability to retain younger generation to replace aging workforce.
4. Referral Process needs strengthening with proper follow up and documentation n and there is no integrated shared information system for workforce partners.
5. Business owners seeking assistance through Incumbent Workers program are burdened by the limitations set by DOL's regulations in the area of training approval and qualifying employee selection.
6. A state system that requires federal funds to flow into the state budget and be appropriated to the local areas.
7. Great Northwest Region has identified transportation deficits that pose problems for employees to obtain and sustain employment. Public Transportation does not cross into surrounding communities. Hours of operation are limited, leaving 2nd and 3rd shift workers without reliable transportation to and/or from the job site.
8. Difficulty for community college partners in finding qualified instructors in CTE fields. Particularly for in-demand sectors, such as health care and IT.

2. Analyze the capacity of the regional partners to provide workforce development activities to address the education and skill needs of the workforce including individuals with barriers to employment.

Great Northwest Region provides workforce development activities that address educational and skill needs to the public by use of two avenues. With a strong workforce partnership, Great Northwest Region's One Stop Centers allow for successful implementation of Journey Mapping and/or Referral Intake. This process allows for front-line staff members to capture a client's education history, skills history, social service necessities and any (additional) barriers to employment. This model allows for proper referral of services, which results in accurate obtainment of WIOA services. The execution of Business Services teams, including Apprenticeship Navigator and Rapid Talent Pipeline Initiative, will build workforce capacity by developing and strengthening the knowledge, skills, abilities, processes, and resources that businesses, educational institutions, local workforce areas and community partners need to create new or expand existing employment opportunities. Similar to Journey Mapping, Business Services teams will survey businesses in order to capture business needs and allow for development of business service action plans that contribute to a successful workforce.

3. Analyze the capacity of the regional partners to provide activities to address the needs of employers.

The execution of Business Services teams, including Apprenticeship Navigator and Rapid Talent Pipeline Initiative, will build workforce capacity by developing and strengthening the knowledge, skills, abilities, processes, and resources that businesses, educational institutions, local workforce areas and community partners need to create new or expand existing employment opportunities. Such surveying allows for the development of business service action plans that are implemented by workforce partners.

4. How well do existing training programs in the region and local areas prepare job seekers to enter and retain employment with regional businesses?

Creating training programs is a multifaceted process. Data collections from Labor Market programs are useful tools to pinpoint labor market trends. This information is used to narrow down specific Industries and Occupations within an industry that are in-demand. Data collected from post-graduate students offer educational leaders a synopsis of employment success, including length of time from training completion to employment, wages, acquired occupation and employment retainment. This data tool is used to analyze the success of offered programs. Business advisory committees meet to share insight on offered and needed training programs. In these meetings businesses have an opportunity to share workforce needs with educational leaders.

It's the combination of these processes that allows Great Northwest Region's educational partners to successfully create educational and training programs that properly prepare job seekers to enter and retain employment with regional businesses. The process is additionally used to prevent over training in occupations that are not in demand. These processes insure that employee and business needs are being met simultaneously. It's important for any workforce to carefully create trainings based off in-demand occupations.

5. Summarize the commitments of each program partner to implement the selected strategies described in the "Action Plan for Improving Service Integration in the Region."

1. Business Services

- To deliver business services Local Workforce Development Board and its business committee will guide strategic plans to create quarterly meetings, create a functioning business service team, develop defined goals of the business services team, put business service team's action plan into effect and move from low isolation to low coordination.
- Educational partners will continue to share information from Business Advisory Committee meetings and Community Needs Assessments so that partners better understand the business needs and expectations in the community.
- Share Integrated Education and Training (IET) opportunities with the Business Service Team
- Use Business Service Team input to focus refinement of existing IET's and inform the development of additional options

2. Communication occurs across One Stop Partners:

- The Chair will lead Joint Services Committee meetings. All partners are responsible to provide information during meetings that will then be passed on to WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD (WDB) by the Chairperson.
- Provide Adult Education information for inclusion on WDB meetings including the Area Plan and annual Application for Adult Education funding
- Front-line staff meetings continue to be held by partner agencies.
- Work Force Development Board members are invited to **American Job Center®**.
- Partners will inform staff of WDB meetings and encourage attendance.
- During website development, all partners will provide content for public viewing.
- Program Service Team to be created that consists of Front-line staff that will increase knowledge of service and increase communication along System Partners.
- Partners will begin touring partner agency sites, increasing awareness of opportunities for integration.

- Workforce Development Board to educate front-line staff of NCI Works and NCI Works website to increase knowledge of NCI Works activities and advance on WINTEC continuum.
 - Program Service Team (PST) reports to One Stop Operator and Leadership team is an ongoing goal that give accountability to WDB to assure progress is made on the goal.
3. **Cross-Training Provided to Staff**
- Partners will collaborate for the planning and implementation of tours and braided training activities
 - Partners continue to assign staff members to attend weekly front-line staff meetings
4. **Customer input used to design and deliver services**
- Receptionist briefs clients of needed documents and forms of ID prior to seeing program staff.
 - Continue with regular orientations coordinated with partners.
 - Client/student focus groups continue. This will encourage feedback that will drive improvements to service delivery.
 - Development of customer/student satisfaction surveys conducted by educational partners. This feedback will drive improvements to service delivery.
 - Educational partners create informative flyers that summarizing One-Stop services
5. **Staff collaboration on customer assessment**
- Program Services Team meetings to share assessment information.
 - Discussion of Journey Mapping process with Program Services team will prevent duplication of services.
6. **Processes are streamlined and aligned.**
- One Stop Operator will approve Program Service Team's creation of uniform policies and procedures on referral and follow-up.
 - One Stop Operator will train partner staff on the implementation of referral and follow-up policies and procedures.
 - Program Services team and Leadership team to develop evaluation tool to show effectiveness of referral and follow-up processes and procedures.
7. **Customer Information Shared**
- Create One Stop system manual with all partner services included.
 - Provide Training on Policies and procedures to all system partners.
 - Internal monitoring of all system partner customer files to verify consistency.

B. Describe how transportation and other supportive services are coordinated within the region (§679.510(a)(1)(vi). Plans must respond to the following questions:

1. What regional organizations currently provide or could provide supportive services?

- Individuals with Disabilities are referred to Vocational services through IDHS's DRS Rehabilitation services and The Arc of the Quad Cities
- Older Adults are referred to Senior Community Service Employment program through National Able.
- The Illinois Migrant Council and IDHS serves migrant and seasonal farm workers.
- Veterans, including disabled veterans are referred to IDHS.
- Title 1 career planners received referrals to assist Out of School Youth, Dislocated Workers, and individuals that qualify for assistance through Trade Adjustment Assistance.

- English as a second language (ESL) individuals are helped through the regions Educational Partners.
- Incarcerated Offenders/Returning Citizens receive services through IDES and Title 1 Career Planners.
- IDES has specialized programs to assist individuals that are immigrants.
- Individuals burdened by the lack of basic needs are referred to Project Now for assistance with utility assistance, rent and security deposit assistance, food and nutrition programs, health care assistance and referrals, clothing vouchers, transportation vouchers, household budgeting, scholarship program and financial literacy.
- The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program is run by the Illinois Department of Human Services. The program is for families with children and pregnant women who need temporary cash assistance. Those receiving TANF also receive medical assistance
- One Stop center partners may refer clients to agencies that provide transportation. Some partner agency's have programs that provide free access to public transportation.
- Education is given to clients on local community-based organizations that assist with the cost of childcare and dependent care
- Linkages to community services will be completed by partners on a as needed bases.
- Partners throughout the region have program assistance to aid with housing needs.
- Needs-Related Payments (available only to individuals enrolled in training services and must be consistent with 20 CFR 680.930, 680.940, 680.950, 680.960, and 680.970)
- Educational partners can help with educational testing
- Each One stop center is ADA compliant and has reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities.
- Referrals to health care can be conducted by any partner agency.
- Assistance with uniforms or other appropriate work attire and work-related tools, including such items as eye glasses and protective eye gear
- Title 1 and/or Perkins may offer assistance with books, fees, school supplies, and other necessary items for students enrolled in post-secondary education classes
- Payments and fees for employment and training-related applications, tests, and certifications may be included under Title 1 services.
- Clients may be referred to community organizations that offer free legal services for low income persons

2. What policies and procedures will be established to promote coordination of supportive services delivery?

- Through Journey Mapping/Referral Intake process, coordination of supportive services and service follow up will be done on a case by case basis. Moreover, Great Northwest Region's comradery has inspired communication among partners regarding client need of supportive services. With this, partners are comfortable contacting one another in regard to specific client needs; making the referral process a collaborate team effort.

C. Describe the coordination of services with regional economic development services and WIOA service providers (§679.510(a)(1)(v)).

Great Northwestern Region collaborates with Economic Development agencies through business service teams. This collaboration gives the region up to date happenings within the local and regional economy. Economic agencies welcome One Stop Center staff to participate in regularly scheduled meetings as well as arbitrary meeting.

- North Central Illinois Economic Development Corporation (NCI EDC)
- Northwest Illinois Economic Development
- Bi-State Regional Commission
- Henry County Economic Development
- Rock Island Economic Development
- Mercer County Better Together

1. What economic development organizations, WIOA service providers or businesses are actively engaged in regional planning?

- None. EDR 6 collaborates with economic development agencies on an ongoing basis. Therefore, economic development information related to the development of the regional plan was influenced from such ongoing collaboration. University of Illinois Extension is an economic development organization that provided statistical analysis for regional planning.

2. What economic development organizations, WIOA service providers or businesses were invited to participate but declined?

- None. EDR 6 did not have declined participation requests.

D. Describe the coordination of administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate (§679.510(a)(1)(v)).

All required partners participating in the development of this Regional Plan have agreed that administrative cost arrangements are not required at this time. If future projects require additional administrative support, partners will identify in-kind resources, grants, and/or pool administrative costs, as needed and appropriate. The Memorandum of Understanding will continue to be used to coordinate administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs by each local area with EDR 6.

E. Describe how responsiveness, inclusivity and accessibility are or will be incorporated in the regional service integration strategies.

Chapter 3: Vision, Goals and Implementation Strategies

A. Describe the strategic vision to support state and regional economic growth. (§679.560 (a)(5))

In order to support the State's vision, Great Northwest Region (GNR), also known as Economic Development Region 6, will continue to foster a Statewide workforce development system that supports the needs of individuals and businesses to ensure Illinois has a skilled workforce that can effectively compete in the global economy by collaboration with workforce partners. Such drive to collaborate will deliver GDR's vision to promote business-driven talent solutions that integrate education, workforce, and economic development resources across systems to provide businesses, individuals, and communities with the opportunity to prosper and contribute to growing the State of Illinois economy.

Workforce partner professionals use a coordinated workforce pipeline that responds to business needs, for key sectors, while increasing opportunity for individuals.

Achieving this vision will use these principles as guideposts for policy development and program service delivery. Each workforce partner will use its resources to support the following principles:

- Business demand-driven orientation through a sector strategy framework
- Strong partnerships with business at all levels
- Career pathways to jobs of today and tomorrow
- Integrated service delivery
- Access and opportunity for all populations
- Cross-agency collaboration and alignment for developing and/or promoting career pathways and industry recognized stackable credentials
- Clear metrics for progress and success
- Focus on continuous improvement and innovations
- Make the manufacturing sector a priority
- Make the healthcare sector a priority
- Make the transportation sector a priority
- Make information technology, across these three sectors, a priority
- Further analyze the agri-business/farm sector as a future priority
- Integrate workforce, education, and economic development
- Increase collaboration, communication, and shared resources
- Engage business owners and managers as solutions-forming partners
- Increase skill levels of individuals through career pathways
- Focus on eliminating or minimizing barriers to education and employment
- Create user-friendly processes and systems, intake through exit
- Improve outreach, branding, and identity

B. Describe the goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce (including youth and individuals with barriers to employment), and goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on performance indicators. (§677.155 (a)(1))

Great Northwest Region workforce partners will collectively use the following goals to support Illinois' vision to align and integrate education, workforce and economic development strategies at the state,

regional and local levels to improve the economic growth and competitiveness of the state's employers and their workforce.

- Foster improvement and expansion of employer-driven, regional sector partnerships to increase the focus on critical in-demand occupations in key sectors that are the engine of economic growth for the state and its regions.
- Expand career pathway opportunities through more accelerated and work-based training and align and integrate programs of study leading to industry-recognized credentials and improved employment and earnings.
- Expand career services and opportunities for populations facing multiple barriers to close the gap in the educational attainment and economic advancement through career pathways and improved career services and expansion of bridge programs.
- Expand information for employers and job-seekers to access services by improving the Illinois public-private data infrastructure to support the alignment and integration of economic development, workforce development and education initiatives for supporting sector partnerships and career pathways.
-

C. Performance accountability is a shared responsibility between partners. GDR's collaboration and teamwork prepares clients for successful program completion, that includes meeting performance indicators. Provide a description of the regional and local strategies that will achieve the vision and goals. This must include a description of the strategies and services that will be used in the local areas:

- To facilitate engagement of employers in workforce development programs, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations. (§679.560(a)(5)).
- To support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area (§ 679.560(b)(3)(ii)).
- To better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development (§679.560 (b)(3)(iii)).
- To strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs (§679.560 (b)(3)(iv)).
- To promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services (§679.560 (b)(4)).
- C.6 To implement initiatives such as incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training 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 (§679.560(b)(3)(v)).

Great Northwest Region professionals will use a variety of strategies for the implementation of these goals with a focus on improving community prosperity through more competitive businesses and workers.

In addition to existing Incumbent worker training, on-the-job training, and customized training, Great Northwestern Region recently submitted a proposal for an apprenticeship expansion grant. If chosen to receive this grant members of the NCI Works RTPI Team as well as the BEST Navigator will work with area chambers, economic development, community colleges, one stop centers, and business services staff to engage businesses on a regional basis to recruit new and current apprenticeship program companies to the project of expanding registered apprenticeship participants.

Employer forums, focusing on manufacturing, which involved workforce partners in the presentation of partner services, an assessment of business needs, and the identification of critical skills for new hires have recently been held in various parts of the region. These events include a dialogue between workforce partners, area manufacturing representatives, and local educators. It is the intent that this dialogue will be continued after the forums to ensure that workforce partners and educators are responding to the needs of area manufacturers. The offering of additional sector forums will also be considered.

Great Northwest Region recognizes the importance of providing a wide range of employment opportunities to its job seekers. Some, especially dislocated workers, may have marketable skills and talents and simply need some assistance in developing a plan to establish themselves in any number of niche industries/businesses. In order to meet the needs of this group, both LWIAs explore existing entrepreneurial models such as NWILED's Build-It-Grow-It program, and Etsy, the online marketplace that would allow our entrepreneurs to reach a global community of shoppers. Furthermore, connections with local SBDCs will be enhanced for the purpose of providing the information and resources that will help ensure success. Where no SBDCs are located in an area, BSTs will become knowledgeable in these opportunities and will serve as the "go to" resource for assistance.

Some strategies that will be instrumental small businesses, including those with entrepreneurial interests already exist in some areas of EDR #6 and will be replicated throughout the regions 11-county area. For example, our WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD, **American Job Center®**, is a member of Quad Cities Chamber of Commerce, Inc., with workforce development professionals engaging in activities and events with entrepreneurs and business leaders. Example of promoting and connecting entrepreneurs to resources to create, collaborate, pitch, and grow ideas in our Great Northwest Region include:

- Entrepreneurial meetups are free gatherings to exchange ideas and learn from seasoned entrepreneurs.
- Quad Cities co-working space includes workshops, gatherings and partnerships.
- TechBrew is a free monthly networking event for entrepreneurs, educators, technologists, economic developers, and business leaders.
- Henry, Mercer, and Stark Counties Fast Pitch contest to test ideas in front of a panel of judges, with the chance to win prizes and resources to develop a thriving business.
- Service Core of Retired Executives (SCORE) program, the nonprofit association dedicated to educating entrepreneurs and helping small businesses start, grow, and succeed.

C.1 To facilitate engagement of employers in workforce development programs, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations (§679.560(a)(5)).

Great Northwest Region facilitates the engagement of employers by use of data collections that identify current and projected in-demand industry sectors and occupations within those sectors. By use of this data collection, specific positions and individual tasks that would be involved within each position are narrowed down. In addition, interaction with local, county, and regional Economic Development Agencies provides engagement of employer's needs.

C.2 To support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area (§ 679.560(b)(3)(ii)).

The local workforce development system is supported by meeting the needs of businesses in the local area as follows:

- Collaborate with local, county, and regional Economic Development agencies and businesses to target business needs to enhance success and/or prevent closure.
- Utilization of a Business Services approach that leads to stronger communication and a greater understanding of the unique business needs in the communities and which serves as an educational portal of services the Local Workforce Development Board and the one-stop delivery system can provide businesses to assist with such needs.
- Secondary and Vocational education partners are an outreach source for businesses. This relationship has proven to be a wealth of knowledge for the region in terms of business needs and expectations in the community. As a partner, these educational centers advise business leaders of the services available to them throughout the Local Workforce Development Board and the one-stop delivery system.
- Business Services Committee is an active committee consisting of various partners who contact local businesses to educate business leaders on services available through the Local Workforce Development Board and the one-stop delivery system. Once service needs are identified the business services committee develops and implements a strategic service plan.
- Organization of Job Fairs.
- Rapid Talent Pipeline (RTPI) is a systematic approach that allows for businesses to work directly with the RTPI group to identify business needs, create a plan of action, and work together to implement the plan.
 - Regional Apprenticeship Navigator will build capacity by developing and strengthening the knowledge, skills, abilities, processes, and resources that businesses, educational institutions, local workforce areas and community partners need to create new or expand existing apprenticeship programs.

C.3 To better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development (§679.560 (b)(3)(iii)).

- Align and integrate business and job-seeker services among the workforce partners along with local, county, and regional economic development partners.
- Continue to increase coordination between workforce development and economic development practitioners and organizations.
- Provide data and tools to support regional planning for aligning education, workforce and economic development.
- Collaboration with economic development practitioners to identify businesses at risk for hardship allows workforce development teams to collaborate with these businesses to identify solutions. By use of the Rapid Talent Pipeline (RTPI) businesses work directly with a workforce development team to identify business needs, create a plan of action, and implement the plan.

C.4 To strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs (§679.560 (b)(3)(iv)).

Great Northwest Region strengthens the linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs starting at the front desk where an intake referral form is completed. This referral form is unique to each client and is given to intramural partners to eliminate overlooked services. Because of service integration's model, Great Northwest Region has begun holding "frontline" staff meetings where partner staff members attend and discuss current happenings. This cross-training experience gives IDES the ability to properly spot a client's need(s) and refer them to the appropriate partner. This also allows

partner agencies to properly refer clients to IDES. Cross-trained partners are better equipped to determine how services can best address the need(s) of unemployment insurance recipients and get them back into the workforce.

C.5 To promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services (§679.560 (b)(4)).

Providing community awareness of available business services available through the Local Workforce Development Board and the one-stop delivery system serves as a progressive tool for entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services. In addition, Great Northwest Region's frontline staff are equipped to advise entrepreneurs of public and private organizations that promote and connect entrepreneurs and small business owners to resources to start, create, expand, recover, collaborate, pitch and grow ideas.

An example of an agency that frontline staff may recommend to entrepreneurs is The Illinois Small Business Development Center at the Starved Rock Country Alliance which provides FREE tools, resources, and confidential services to entrepreneurs and small businesses across Bureau, Grundy, LaSalle, and Livingston Counties.

C.6 To implement initiatives such as incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training 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 (§679.560(b)(3)(v)).

These strategies have been developed for four different areas. Those areas include Data, Workforce Partners, Business Services, and Workforce Boards. Best practice models will be identified and utilized whenever possible.

Data

- Utilize reputable public databases in order to conduct independent surveys used to fine tune operational and programmatic business activities.
- Utilize up-to-date Labor Market Information for strategic development of programs.
- Request and/or provide database reports to workforce partners and economic development practitioners as needed.

Workforce Partners

- Use of referral and intake form to identify service needs and eliminate duplicated services in order to continue leveraging resources with workforce partners.
- Create new pathways for success by preparing very low-skill adults for sector-based bridge programs.
- Attend Rapid Response and WARN meetings.
- Participate in partner employment service-related events and activities.
- Promote partner re-training programs and events using Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) outreach notices.
- Continue successful out-of-school youth programs.
- Conduct effective Trade-related programs.
- Organize front-line staff meeting on a regular basis to assist with collaboration of client services.

- Share workforce trends with partners throughout the region in order to shift outreach of business and client needs to accurately reflect current workforce and economic trends.

Business Services

- Continue the long history of providing incumbent worker training, on-the-job training, and work experience/internships while developing customized training.
- Implement and expand work-based learning programs and strategies for all eligible customers.
- Schedule employer interview appointments for job seekers, following the job development process.
- Continue to share workforce intelligence and organize hiring events, through partners, local economic development agencies and businesses.
- Continue expanding shared business services through combining local areas' team meetings.
- Regional Apprenticeship Navigator to build capacity by developing and strengthening the knowledge, skills, abilities, processes, and resources that businesses, educational institutions, local workforce areas and community partners need to create new or expand existing apprenticeship programs.
- Rapid Talent Pipeline Initiative (RTPI) will continue guiding businesses towards operating directly with the RTPI workforce partners to identify business needs, create a plan of action, and implement the plan.

Workforce Boards

- Support awareness and adoption of innovative private sector models, such as the United States Chamber of Commerce Talent Pipeline Management Initiative.
 - Implement National Emergency Grant (NEG) Sector Partnership (SP) strategies for the health care sector while exploring options to apply for grants for the regions other identified sectors.
 - Utilize business intermediaries, including but not limited to United States Chamber of Commerce Foundation.
 - Expand employer forums including workforce partners.
 - Create a pilot event in Jo Daviess County or Carroll County to feature The Digital Manufacturing and Design Innovation Institute (Chicago), along with the Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center and NIU EIGERlab (Rockford).
 - Apply for Regional Grant opportunities to assist in the implementation of Sector Strategies.
 - Continue Targeted Populations Standing Committee, as used by one local area, and integrating targeted population's representatives into all committees, as used by the other local area.
- D. Describe regional strategies that will increase apprenticeship and other work-based learning opportunities.**

Through LWIA 4's proposal for the Regional Apprenticeship Navigator Grant, Great Northwest Region will have the capability to conduct structured outreach to businesses with employers and workforce professionals to expand the use of apprenticeship as a work-based learning strategy. Regional Apprenticeship Navigator will build capacity by developing and strengthening the knowledge, skills, abilities, processes, and resources that businesses, educational institutions, local workforce areas and community partners need to create new or expand existing apprenticeship programs.

E. Describe initiatives to shorten the time from credential to employment and address how the area will work with the education system to begin putting training opportunities in place to meet this strategy.

In addition to the Regional Apprenticeship Navigator Grant proposal; Great Northwest Region's educational partners offer Stackable or Micro Certificates that allow clients to advance in their work and their education simultaneously. Additionally, educational partners and Career and Technology Education (CTE) programs work together to offer Integrated Career and Academic Preparation (I-CAPS). This program offers Adult Education students, including ESL students, the opportunity to complete college certificate programs in CNC Manufacturing, Patient Care Assistant, or IT Support Technician while preparing to earn their GED.

F Describe the steps that will be taken to support the state's efforts to align and integrate education, workforce and economic development including:

F.1 Fostering the improvement and expansion of employer-driven regional sector partnerships to increase the focus on critical in-demand occupations in key sectors that are the engine of economic growth for the state and its regions.

LWIA 4's execution of a Rapid Talent Pipeline Initiative (RTPI) has a goal to develop a universal template for use by partners in the workforce area to help employers develop/improve their talent pipelines, address the challenge of engaging rural employers, and improve employer engagement in the region. The process for implementing RTPI utilizes five process steps: Identify and Recruit Employers with identified needs, Assess Skill Needs and Pipeline Options, Develop an RTPI Plan, Implement the RTPI Plan with the employer's approval, and Review the Outcomes. The process is designed to be collaborative among partners, focused on working with smaller numbers of employers to identify specific talent needs and solutions, faster at responding to those needs by using existing programs whenever possible, and data driven so that new projects will benefit from what has been learned in previous projects.

Great Northwestern Region will work to establish a regional business service team based on the RTPI process. Representatives from both workforce areas will convene to establish a list of possible members that represent a minimum of all core partners and will work from there to identify additional members that serve the business community who can contribute to the successful expansion of the rapid talent pipeline initiative outlined previously.

To make businesses more competitive, Great Northwest Region's NCI Works launched a new initiative designed to provide labor market and career information to our businesses, job seekers, young adults and current workers through the publication of Industry Brief's designed to explain local business leader's workforce occupations, educational and training requirement, valued skill sets for potential employees, and the challenges the industry is facing today. These Industry Briefs are circulated through workforce partners, schools, libraries, elected officials, economic development organizations and local chambers to share with the community.

To help reach an even broader audience, podcasts that feature those same presenters and perhaps even guest presenters to promote further discussion on the selected industry as well as other related workforce topics are hosted. Podcasts are accessible on an on-going basis. This also supports our programmatic accessibility efforts, as well as our career pathways initiatives by providing career information.

F.2 Expanding career pathway⁷ opportunities through more accelerated and work-based training and align and integrate programs of study leading to industry-recognized credentials and improved employment and earnings.

Great Northwest Region will collaborate with existing employer sector groups to expand career pathway opportunities through more accelerated training and work-based learning; leading to industry-recognized credentials that result in improved employment and earnings by focusing a Regional Apprenticeship Navigator Business Service Team on outreach to area chambers of commerce, economic development teams, Adult Education, Wager Peyser, and regional one-stop center partners/other unique workforce system partners (example: area libraries) in order to engage businesses throughout the region to become familiar with current business services including apprenticeship programs in order to strategize what training will benefit clients emerging into the workforce. Businesses will have the opportunity to troubleshoot their workforce needs with team members who will report to one-stop centers for strategic solutions. In addition, Rapid Talent Pipeline (RTPI) and Sector Strategies are a systematic approaches that allow for businesses to work directly with the business service team to identify business needs, create a plan of action, and work together to implement the plan.

F.3 Expanding career services and opportunities for populations facing multiple barriers to close the gap in educational attainment and economic advancement through career pathways and improved career services and expansion of bridge programs.

- By working closely with local community college partners in bridge programs, providing work-based training and co-enrolling individuals with local partner programs, Great Northwest Region expands career services and opportunities for populations facing multiple barriers by minimizing the gap in educational attainment and economic advancement. A Targeted Population Committee consisting of 2-4 individuals is in place to develop a career stop curriculum that will help client's market themselves and market the advantages of hiring the client.
- Front line staff from all partnering agencies share information on what is happening within their organizations, new initiatives, common concerns, what is lacking, service delivery and with the shared client - journey mapping. Journey mapping consists of ensuring that services are not duplicated yet the individuals is getting the services that they need to become successful. This is all connected to the service integration strategies in the area.
- WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD, Innovation Project for Returning Citizens, **American Job Center**® partner organizations are reducing recidivism and improving public safety by providing returning citizens with vocational training and employment services.
- To help support our programmatic accessibility efforts, as well as our career pathways initiatives by providing career information, podcasts that feature industry leaders, business owners and guest presenters are broadcasted to promote thorough discussion on a selected industry as well as other related workforce topics. Podcasts are accessible on an on-going basis.
- NCI Works Targeted Pop initiative re: integrating/re-integrating individuals with disabilities, individuals with background issues and veterans into/back into the workforce.

F.4 Expanding information for employers and job-seekers to access services by improving the Illinois public-private data infrastructure to support the alignment and integration of economic development, workforce development and education initiatives for supporting sector partnerships and career pathways.

This state goal will be supported by:

- Participating in the region's several workforce development initiatives of Chambers of Commerce and United Way organizations.
- Supporting Illinois Economic Development Association (IEDA) through membership.
- Creating public-private partnerships or alignments with businesses and not-for-profit agencies that serve special populations.
- Improving public/private data infrastructure by collecting regional data and investigating methods to make the data accessible.
- Requesting opportunities to make presentations to economic development practitioners and professionals, through chambers of commerce and economic development association.
- Hosting workshops for economic development practitioners and professionals.
- Connecting with entrepreneurs and those starting businesses, to assist with workforce needs.
- Participating in the region's several Area Planning Council (APC_ Area Plan Development processes with education professionals and community college administrators.
- Participating in the region's several Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) planning processes with economic development professionals.
- Assisting communities and chambers with requests for information from businesses that may relocate or expand.

G. Describe how goals established in this plan will be monitored and evaluated.

The Region 6 Workforce, Education, and Economic Development Plan establishes a framework for ongoing monitoring and evaluation through regional collaboration, performance measurement, labor market analysis, and continuous engagement with employers and workforce partners. The purpose of this process is to ensure that strategies remain aligned with changing workforce and economic conditions and that progress toward regional goals can be measured effectively.

Performance Measurement and Data Analysis

The plan relies on the continuous review of labor market information, employment trends, industry demand, demographic data, and workforce outcomes to assess the effectiveness of regional strategies. Regional partners use labor market data from sources such as the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES), Lightcast, the U.S. Census Bureau, and other workforce data systems to monitor economic conditions and identify emerging workforce needs.

Data reviewed may include:

- Employment and unemployment trends.
- Industry and occupational growth projections.
- Workforce participation rates.

- Population and demographic changes.
- Skills demand and workforce shortages in key industries.

Regional Planning and Partner Engagement

Goal attainment will be monitored through ongoing collaboration among workforce development boards, economic development organizations, educational institutions, employers, and other regional stakeholders. The regional sector partnerships described in the plan provide a mechanism for employers and partners to regularly identify workforce challenges, evaluate progress, and recommend adjustments to workforce and training strategies.

Regular communication among these partners allows the region to:

- Assess whether workforce services are meeting employer needs.
- Identify gaps in training and education programs.
- Adjust career pathway initiatives based on current demand.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of recruitment, retention, and upskilling efforts.

Evaluation of Workforce and Education Strategies

The plan emphasizes aligning workforce and education initiatives with regional industry needs. Progress will be evaluated by examining whether training programs and career pathways are producing workers with the credentials, skills, and competencies required by employers in targeted sectors such as manufacturing, health care, transportation and logistics, agriculture, construction, information technology, and professional services.

Evaluation efforts focus on determining whether:

- Participants are successfully completing training programs.
- Workers are obtaining employment in high-demand occupations.
- Businesses are able to fill critical positions.
- Workforce shortages identified in the plan are being reduced.

Continuous Improvement

The plan incorporates a continuous improvement approach in which labor market information and stakeholder feedback are used to refine regional priorities over time. As economic conditions change, regional partners will reassess strategies and make adjustments to ensure workforce investments remain responsive to employer demand and regional economic opportunities.

Summary

The goals established in the Region 6 Plan will be monitored and evaluated through:

1. Ongoing analysis of labor market and economic data to track workforce and industry trends.
2. Regular engagement with employers and regional partners through sector partnerships and collaborative planning efforts.
3. Review of workforce and education outcomes to determine whether training programs and career pathways are meeting employer needs.
4. Continuous improvement processes that allow strategies to be adjusted based on performance results and changing economic conditions.

H. Describe how responsiveness, inclusivity and accessibility are or will be incorporated in the implementation of the regional workforce, education, and economic development strategies.

The Region 6 Workforce, Education, and Economic Development Plan incorporates **responsiveness, inclusivity, and accessibility** into implementation through strategic partnerships, sector-based workforce initiatives, employer engagement, and coordinated service delivery designed to meet the needs of businesses, workers, students, and job seekers throughout the region.

Responsiveness

The plan's implementation strategy emphasizes responsiveness to changing labor market conditions and employer workforce needs. Through industry sector partnerships and ongoing collaboration among workforce, education, and economic development stakeholders, regional partners continually assess workforce challenges and identify opportunities for improvement.

Implementation efforts are driven by current labor market data and direct employer input to ensure training, education, and workforce programs align with regional demand. This allows partners to respond quickly to workforce shortages, emerging industries, technological changes, and evolving skill requirements in key sectors such as manufacturing, health care, transportation and logistics, agriculture, construction, information technology, and professional services.

The plan also supports continuous evaluation and adjustment of workforce strategies to ensure that resources and services remain aligned with economic and workforce needs.

Inclusivity

Inclusivity is incorporated by ensuring that workforce development strategies serve all populations, including individuals facing barriers to employment. The plan promotes collaboration among workforce agencies, educational institutions, community organizations, vocational rehabilitation partners, and American Job Center partners to expand opportunities for diverse populations across the region.

Implementation strategies focus on increasing access to education, training, credentials, and employment opportunities for groups that may be underrepresented in the workforce, including:

- Individuals with disabilities.

- Veterans.
- Low-income individuals.
- Justice-involved individuals.
- Youth and young adults.
- Adult learners.
- Other individuals facing barriers to employment.

The plan's career pathway and sector partnership approaches are intended to connect these populations to in-demand occupations and family-sustaining careers while supporting employer workforce needs.

Accessibility

Accessibility is incorporated through the regional workforce system's coordinated delivery of services, education, and training opportunities. The American Job Center network and partner organizations play a central role in connecting residents to employment services, career counseling, supportive services, training programs, and labor market information.

The plan promotes accessible career pathways that provide multiple entry and advancement points for job seekers. These pathways help individuals obtain industry-recognized credentials, develop skills, and progress toward higher-paying occupations in targeted industries.

Collaboration among workforce boards, educational institutions, employers, and economic development organizations helps ensure that training opportunities and workforce resources are available throughout the region and aligned with local economic needs. This regional approach improves access to workforce services regardless of an individual's location, educational background, or employment status.

Summary

The implementation of the Region 6 strategies reflects:

- **Responsiveness** through ongoing employer engagement, labor market analysis, sector partnerships, and continuous adaptation of workforce strategies.
- **Inclusivity** by engaging diverse partners and ensuring workforce, education, and training opportunities are available to individuals with barriers to employment and other underserved populations.
- **Accessibility** through coordinated service delivery, American Job Center resources, career pathway models, and regional collaboration that expands access to workforce and educational opportunities across the region.