

**COMPREHENSIVE
WIOA REGIONAL PLAN
FOR
WESTERN OKLAHOMA**



**PREPARED BY
SOUTH CENTRAL OKLAHOMA WORKFORCE BOARD
WESTERN OKLAHOMA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

The Western Oklahoma Planning Region is comprised of thirty-three counties: Alfalfa, Beaver, Beckham, Blaine, Caddo, Cimarron, Comanche, Cotton, Custer, Dewey, Ellis, Garfield, Grady, Grant, Greer, Harmon, Harper, Jackson, Jefferson, Kay, Kingfisher, Kiowa, Major, McClain, Noble, Payne, Roger Mills, Stephens, Texas, Tillman, Washita, Woods, and Woodward.

PERIOD: JULY 1, 2017 – JUNE 30, 2021

PLANNING REGION:

Western Oklahoma

The questions provided as a template to assist in the development of the plan are highlighted in grey. Updates to the plan at the two-year review period are in red.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity

Act (WIOA) of 2014 represents a commitment to workforce development for individual and national economic growth. WIOA seeks to increase opportunities for individuals, especially those facing barriers to employment, and invests in the imperative connection between education and the career preparation. Planning regions have been created based on state labor market areas, regional economic development areas, and funding mechanisms for educational centers including colleges, universities, and Career Technology Centers. One primary purpose of the planning regions is to foster necessary partnerships that reduce costs and meet training needs of Oklahoma's workforce. Planning regions allow the opportunity to more effectively prioritize training for in-demand occupations unique to the area while streamlining efficiency. The Western Oklahoma Planning Region is comprised of thirty-three counties: Alfalfa, Beaver, Beckham, Blaine, Caddo, Cimarron, Comanche, Cotton, Custer, Dewey, Ellis, Garfield, Grady, Grant, Greer, Harmon, Harper, Jackson, Jefferson, Kay, Kingfisher, Kiowa, Major, McClain, Noble, Payne, Roger Mills, Stephens, Texas, Tillman, Washita, Woods, and Woodward.

Western Oklahoma Planning Region Overview (data obtained from EMSI)

	2016	2018
Population	744,829	728,513
Jobs	282,707	306,121
Average Earnings	\$48,038	\$50,400
Unemployed	16,593	9,071

A. Data Analysis

1. Provide an analysis of the regional economic conditions, including:

a. Existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations; and,

The Region reviewed the Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development (OOWD) report for the Western Oklahoma Planning Region (Region) that can be found at <http://oklahomaworks.gov/kenecon/> of regional data issued in April 2016 as well as data provided by OOWD as the plan was being developed and compared it to reports from EMSI to better understand what are existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations. Naturally, because the Region is so large (33 counties), not all counties or communities will have the exact same industries and/or occupations listed but the two Workforce Development Areas share similar traits.

From the OOWD data:

Significant Demand Industries - 2016

Industry	2016 Jobs	2025 Jobs	Change in Jobs (2016-2025)	% Change	2016 Earnings Per Worker	2016 Average Hourly Earnings
Government	84,996	82,449	(2,547)	(3%)	\$52,449	\$25.22
Retail Trade	33,204	35,978	2,774	8%	\$29,802	\$14.33
Health Care and Social Assistance	25,614	27,925	2,311	9%	\$41,601	\$20.00
Accommodation and Food Services	24,055	26,431	2,376	10%	\$16,125	\$7.75
Manufacturing	20,075	21,373	1,298	6%	\$62,895	\$30.24
Construction	18,325	21,146	2,821	15%	\$51,609	\$24.81
Other Services (except Public Administration)	14,199	14,571	372	3%	\$23,640	\$11.37
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	14,053	15,912	1,859	13%	\$85,437	\$41.08
Crop and Animal Production	13,070	13,963	893	7%	\$34,852	\$16.76
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	10,477	12,097	1,620	15%	\$34,021	\$16.36
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	9,602	11,635	2,033	21%	\$55,397	\$26.63
Finance and Insurance	8,796	9,116	320	4%	\$55,653	\$26.76
Transportation and Warehousing	8,252	9,256	1,004	12%	\$56,404	\$27.12
Wholesale Trade	8,159	10,145	1,986	24%	\$57,678	\$27.73

Oklahoma Ecosystem Employment - 2016

Ecosystems (Key and Complimentary)	2016 Jobs	2025 Jobs	Change in Jobs (2016-2025)	% Change	2016 Earnings Per Worker	2016 Average Hourly Earnings
Education Ecosystem (Complimentary)	34,350	32,302	-2,048	-6%	\$44,810	\$21.54
Healthcare Ecosystem (Complimentary)	34,107	36,752	2,645	8%	\$45,909	\$22.07
Construction Ecosystem (Complimentary)	31,925	36,804	4,879	15%	\$52,211	\$25.10
Agriculture/Biosciences Ecosystem	25,425	28,207	2,782	11%	\$45,376	\$21.82
Aerospace/Defense Ecosystem	24,836	25,328	492	2%	\$56,852	\$27.33
Energy Ecosystem	23,348	26,482	3,134	13%	\$84,000	\$40.38
Transportation/Distribution Ecosystem	18,965	21,523	2,558	13%	\$61,832	\$29.73
Information/Finance Ecosystem	12,876	14,102	1,226	10%	\$65,105	\$31.30
STEM industries	7,778	9,241	1,463	19%	\$95,901	\$46.11

Top 12 Emerging In-demand Industries - Projected for 2025

Industry	2016 Jobs	2025 Jobs	Change in Jobs (2016-2025)	% Change	2016 Earnings Per Worker	2016 Average Hourly Earnings
Construction	18,325	21,146	2,821	15%	\$51,609	\$24.81
Retail Trade	33,204	35,978	2,774	8%	\$29,802	\$14.33
Accommodation and Food Services	24,055	26,431	2,376	10%	\$16,125	\$7.75
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Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	9,602	11,635	2,033	21%	\$55,397	\$26.63
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Manufacturing	20,075	21,373	1,298	6%	\$62,895	\$30.24
Transportation and Warehousing	8,252	9,256	1,004	12%	\$56,404	\$27.12
Crop and Animal Production	13,070	13,963	893	7%	\$34,852	\$16.76
Management of Companies and Enterprises	1,629	2,064	435	27%	\$108,169	\$52.00

From the Western Oklahoma Planning Region Report (<http://oklahomaworks.gov/kenecon/>):

Wages by Industry:

- All of the top Industry earnings in the State of Oklahoma average are higher than Western Planning Region averages. The largest wage difference occurs in the “Utilities” industry. Statewide this position earns \$33,760 more than in Western Oklahoma.
- The industries in Western Oklahoma that compare closest to state averages are, “Management” and “Government”.
- “Information” is the only industry in the region that earn less than the state of Oklahoma’s yearly average earnings of \$50,825.

Ecosystems Impact in Western Oklahoma on Occupations and Salaries – The Oklahoma Department of Commerce identified five ecosystems in Oklahoma important to the economy to generate wealth, have employment growth potential, or where the state has a competitive advantage. These ecosystems are: Aerospace and Defense, Energy, Agriculture and Bioscience, Information and Financial Services, and Transportation and Distribution. In each ecosystem, there are critical occupations necessary for future growth and advancement. In addition to the five statewide ecosystems, there are ecosystems at the regional level important for regional economies.

Aerospace & Defense

Based on 2015 job numbers there are 22,700 jobs in the Aerospace & Defense Ecosystem in Western Oklahoma with average earnings of approximately \$58,600. As a projection of demand by 2025, total employment in the Aerospace and Defense ecosystem will increase to 23,495 jobs in Western Oklahoma, an increase of 795 jobs for the region.

The list below encompasses some of the critical occupations for the Aerospace and Defense ecosystem in Western Oklahoma. However, these occupations are not solely intended to serve the Aerospace and Defense ecosystem, they are driven by demand and individuals with these work backgrounds will have transferable skills to other ecosystems.

55-9999	Military occupations	\$17.22	N/A
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	\$15.99	Moderate-term on-the-job training
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	\$26.81	Long-term on-the-job training
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	\$35.02	Bachelor's degree
15-1151	Computer User Support Specialists	\$18.41	Some college, no degree
15-1132	Software Developers, Applications	\$31.14	Bachelor's degree

49-3011	Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians	\$26.07	Postsecondary non-degree award
17-2051	Civil Engineers	\$32.36	Bachelor's degree
15-1131	Computer Programmers	\$26.41	Bachelor's degree
17-2141	Mechanical Engineers	\$34.58	Bachelor's degree

Source: EMSI 2016.1

As previously mentioned, the critical occupations above are necessary for the Aerospace & Defense ecosystem to thrive. Just as important, these critical occupations are necessary for other industries as well. Other industries that demand these occupations include: Federal Government, support activities for oil and gas extraction, oil and gas field machine manufacturing, and other manufacturing, among others in Western Oklahoma.

Energy

Based on 2015 job numbers there are 26,400 jobs in the Energy Ecosystem in Western Oklahoma with average earnings of \$85,000. As a projection of demand, by 2025 total employment in the Energy ecosystem will grow to 32,420 jobs in Western Oklahoma, an addition of 6,020 jobs for the region.

The list below encompasses some of the critical occupations for the Energy ecosystem in Western Oklahoma. However, these occupations are not solely intended to serve the Energy ecosystem, they are driven by demand and individuals with these work backgrounds will have transferable skills to other ecosystems.

47-5071	Roustabouts, Oil and Gas	\$16.68	Moderate-term on-the-job training
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	\$19.08	Postsecondary non-degree award
47-5013	Service Unit Operators, Oil, Gas, and Mining	\$19.59	Moderate-term on-the-job training
47-5012	Rotary Drill Operators, Oil and Gas	\$23.89	Moderate-term on-the-job training
47-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	\$25.88	High school diploma or equivalent
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	\$15.99	Moderate-term on-the-job training
49-9051	Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers	\$23.12	Long-term on-the-job training
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	\$35.02	Bachelor's degree
47-2073	Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	\$17.35	Moderate-term on-the-job training
47-5011	Derrick Operators, Oil and Gas	\$19.15	Short-term on-the-job training

Source: EMSI 2016.1

As previously mentioned, these occupations are necessary for the Energy ecosystem to thrive. Just as important, they are necessary for other industries as well. Other industries that demand these occupations include support activities for oil and gas extraction, oil and gas construction, general freight trucking, and other oil and gas related occupations.

Agriculture & Bioscience

Based on 2015 job numbers there are 24,830 jobs in the Agriculture & Bioscience ecosystem in Western Oklahoma with average earnings of \$45,125.

As a projection of demand, by 2025 total employment in the Agriculture and Bioscience ecosystem will decrease to 23,970 jobs in Western Oklahoma, a loss of 860 jobs for the region.

The list below encompasses some of the critical occupations for the Agriculture and Bioscience ecosystem in Western Oklahoma. However, these occupations are not solely intended to serve the Agriculture and Bioscience ecosystem, they are driven by demand and individuals with these work backgrounds will have transferable skills to other ecosystems.

11-9013	Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers	\$12.82	High school diploma or equivalent
45-2092	Farmworkers and Laborers, Crop, Nursery, and Greenhouse	\$13.89	Short-term on-the-job training
45-2093	Farmworkers, Farm, Ranch, and Aquacultural Animals	\$11.02	Short-term on-the-job training
45-2091	Agricultural Equipment Operators	\$13.73	Short-term on-the-job training
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	\$19.08	Postsecondary non-degree award
51-3023	Slaughterers and Meat Packers	\$10.27	Short-term on-the-job training
51-3022	Meat, Poultry, and Fish Cutters and Trimmers	\$11.14	Short-term on-the-job training
51-9111	Packaging and Filling Machine Operators and Tenders	\$11.28	Moderate-term on-the-job training
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	\$35.02	Bachelor's degree
29-1131	Veterinarians	\$34.20	Doctoral or professional degree

Source: EMSI 2016.1

As previously mentioned, these occupations are necessary for the Agriculture & Bioscience ecosystem to thrive. Just as important, they are necessary for other industries as well. Other industries that demand these occupations include animal production, general freight trucking, and support activities for oil and gas extraction, among others in Western Oklahoma.

Information & Financial Services

Based on 2015 job numbers there are 13,540 jobs in the Information & Financial Services ecosystem in Western Oklahoma with average wages of \$62,050.

As a projection of demand, by 2025 total employment in the Information and Financial Services ecosystem will increase to 14,920 jobs in Western Oklahoma, an increase of 1,380 jobs for the region.

The list below encompasses some of the critical occupations for the Information and Financial Services ecosystem in Western Oklahoma. However, these occupations are not solely intended to serve the Information and Financial Services ecosystem, they are driven by demand and individuals with these work backgrounds will have transferable skills to other ecosystems.

43-3071	Tellers	\$11.18	Short-term on-the-job training
13-2072	Loan Officers	\$25.64	Bachelor's degree
13-2011	Accountants and Auditors	\$24.18	Bachelor's degree
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	\$14.05	Moderate-term on-the-job training
43-4131	Loan Interviewers and Clerks	\$13.46	Short-term on-the-job training
11-3031	Financial Managers	\$38.94	Bachelor's degree

15-1151	Computer User Support Specialists	\$18.41	Some college, no degree
49-2022	Telecommunications Equipment Installers and Repairers, Except Line Installers	\$21.39	Postsecondary non-degree award
13-2082	Tax Preparers	\$15.46	Moderate-term on-the-job training
41-3031	Securities, Commodities, and Financial Services Sales Agents	\$27.74	Bachelor's degree

Source: EMSI 2016.1

As previously mentioned, these occupations are necessary for the Information & Financial Services ecosystem to thrive. Just as important, they are necessary for other industries as well. Other industries that demand these occupations include commercial banking, consumer lending, universities, and accounting services, among others.

Transportation & Distribution

Based on 2015 job numbers there are 20,290 jobs in the Transportation & Distribution ecosystem in the Western Oklahoma Planning Region with average earnings of \$63,850.

As a projection of demand, by 2025 total employment in the Transportation and Distribution ecosystem will increase to 21,770, a gain of 1,480 jobs for the region.

The list below encompasses some of the critical occupations for the Transportation and Distribution ecosystem in Western Oklahoma. However, these occupations are not solely intended to serve the Transportation and Distribution ecosystem, they are driven by demand and individuals with these work backgrounds will have transferable skills to other ecosystems.

53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	\$19.08	Postsecondary non-degree award
53-7062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	\$11.19	Short-term on-the-job training
51-9041	Extruding, Forming, Pressing, and Compacting Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders	\$16.52	Moderate-term on-the-job training
41-4012	Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	\$24.84	Moderate-term on-the-job training
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	\$35.02	Bachelor's degree
53-3033	Light Truck or Delivery Services Drivers	\$13.14	Short-term on-the-job training
53-7051	Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	\$14.15	Short-term on-the-job training
43-5081	Stock Clerks and Order Fillers	\$9.77	Short-term on-the-job training
49-3031	Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists	\$17.46	Long-term on-the-job training
51-9197	Tire Builders	\$20.67	Moderate-term on-the-job training

Source: EMSI 2016.1

As previously mentioned, these occupations are necessary for the Transportation & Distribution ecosystem to thrive. Just as important, they are necessary for other industries as well. Other industries that demand these

occupations include general freight trucking, support for oil and gas extraction, and general warehouse and storage, among others in the region.

When creating this plan, the two areas were advised that choosing a single industry to focus on for an industry sector strategy was acceptable since the region didn't already have an established sector strategy process developed

Health care was viewed as an industry with existing and emerging in-demand occupations across the 33 counties with moderate to high wages for workers and requiring education, training, and/or advanced degrees in order to obtain, retain, and/or advance within the industry. Other industries and occupations feed into and support the health care industry.

Health Care (Regional Complementary)

Based on 2015 job numbers, there are 33,840 jobs in the Health Care ecosystem in the Western Oklahoma Planning Region with average wages of \$45,270. As a projection of demand, by 2025 total employment in the Health Care ecosystem will grow to 40,510 jobs in Western Oklahoma, an increase of 6,670 jobs for the region.

The list below encompasses some of the critical occupations for the Health Care ecosystem in Western Oklahoma. However, these occupations are not solely intended to serve the Health Care ecosystem, they are driven by demand and individuals with these work backgrounds will have transferable skills to other ecosystems.

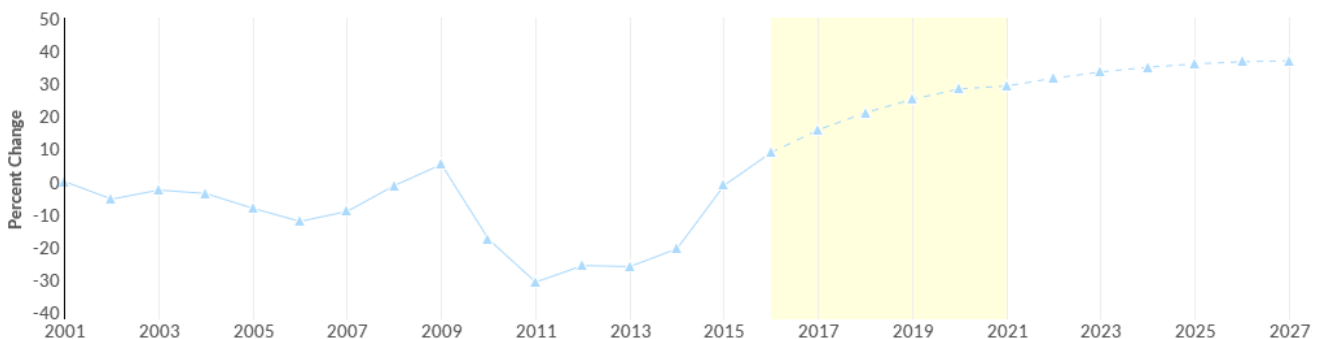
SOC	Industry	Median Hourly Earnings	Education Level
29-1051	Pharmacists	\$51.96	Doctoral or professional degree
11-9111	Medical and Health Services Managers	\$35.10	Bachelor's degree
29-1141	Registered Nurses	\$26.24	Associate's degree
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	\$17.25	Postsecondary non-degree award
31-9091	Dental Assistants	\$16.59	Postsecondary non-degree award
29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians	\$13.22	Moderate-term on-the-job training
31-9092	Medical Assistants	\$11.77	Postsecondary non-degree award
31-1014	Nursing Assistants	\$10.21	Postsecondary non-degree award
31-1011	Home Health Aides	\$9.26	Short-term on-the-job training
39-9021	Personal Care Aides	\$8.66	Short-term on-the-job training

Source: EMSI 2016.1

These occupations are necessary for the Health Care ecosystem to thrive. Just as important, they are necessary for other industries as well. Other industries that demand these occupations include general and medical hospitals, physician's offices, nursing care facilities, and home health care services, among others.

Emerging Industry

Wind Electric Power Generation was recognized as an emerging industry in the Region. For the 2016-2021 timeframe, EMSI projects a 47.2% increase in available jobs with average earnings per job at \$90,355.



Equal Opportunity Employers/WIOA Programs ~ Auxiliary aides and services available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

	Region	2016 Jobs	2021 Jobs	Change	% Change
•	Region	36	53	17	47.2%
•	Oklahoma	136	182	46	33.8%
•	United States	4,678	5,552	874	18.7%

EMSI Q2 2017 Data Set

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

Across the region, employers are continually seeking qualified talent for the existing jobs available but also to fortify plans for growth and expansion. Within the health care industry, for example, employers need applicants who have obtained the necessary skills and credentials to perform on the job such as a license provided by the State Board of Nursing. While every industry and in-demand or emerging occupation may not need formalized training or a lengthy training program for a credential in order to begin employment, resources are available to assist with needs like short-term prevocational services and on-the-job training. The region is working on better coordination and coupling of in-demand occupation lists amongst the two areas so as to focus on health care and develop a sector strategy that can influence the workforce development system.

The content and skill requirements of jobs are constantly changing, requiring employers to establish avenues for employees to continually upgrade their education and skills. In order for businesses to remain competitive in a global economy, they must find ways to develop new, more productive, higher value-added systems of production that employ highly skilled workers. The rapidly changing and more technologically advanced job skills require changes in the education and workforce training systems that are more flexible. This points to a growing demand for career pathways for ease of access into an industry and retraining of incumbent workers to address new processes. It is clear that workforce training must refocus to develop and implement avenues to lifelong learning for all workers.

Wind Electric Power Generation was recognized as an emerging industry in the Region. For the 2016-2021 timeframe, EMSI projects a 47.2% increase in available jobs with average earnings per job at \$90,355. There are many jobs available within the industry that are similar to other industries and jobs in the Region and are connected to the Demand Occupations lists of the two Workforce Boards.

Description	Employed in Industry (2016)	% of Total Jobs in Industry (2016)
Power Plant Operators	<10	18.6%
Wind Turbine Service Technicians	<10	16.9%
General and Operations Managers	<10	5.6%
Office Clerks, General	<10	5.1%
First-Line Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers	<10	4.1%

EMSI Q2 2017 Data Set

A review of O*NET OnLine www.onetonline.org for some of these occupations specific to wind technology

resulted in the chart below.

Occupation	Task	Knowledge	Skills	Abilities	Education Required	Median Wages (2016)
49-9081.00 - Wind Turbine Service Technicians	<p>Diagnose problems involving wind turbine generators or control systems. 🌿+</p> <p>Climb wind turbine towers to inspect, maintain, or repair equipment. 🌿+</p> <p>Test electrical components of wind systems with devices such as voltage testers, multimeters, oscilloscopes, infrared testers, or fiber optic equipment. 🌿+</p> <p>Start or restart wind turbine generator systems to ensure proper operations. 🌿+</p> <p>Troubleshoot or repair mechanical, hydraulic, or electrical malfunctions related to variable pitch systems, variable speed control systems, converter systems, or related components. 🌿</p>	<p>Mechanical — Knowledge of machines and tools, including their designs, uses, repair, and maintenance. +</p> <p>Computers and Electronics — Knowledge of circuit boards, processors, chips, electronic equipment, and computer hardware and software, including applications and programming. +</p> <p>Engineering and Technology — Knowledge of the practical application of engineering science and technology. This includes applying principles, techniques, procedures, and equipment to the design and production of various goods and services. +</p> <p>Physics — Knowledge and prediction of physical principles, laws, their interrelationships, and applications to understanding fluid, material, and atmospheric dynamics, and mechanical, electrical, atomic and sub-atomic structures and processes. +</p> <p>Public Safety and Security — Knowledge of relevant equipment, policies,</p>	<p>Repairing — Repairing machines or systems using the needed tools. +</p> <p>Troubleshooting — Determining causes of operating errors and deciding what to do about it. +</p> <p>Equipment Maintenance — Performing routine maintenance on equipment and determining when and what kind of maintenance is needed. +</p> <p>Critical Thinking — Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems. +</p> <p>Operation Monitoring — Watching gauges, dials, or other indicators to make sure a machine is working properly.</p>	<p>Deductive Reasoning — The ability to apply general rules to specific problems to produce answers that make sense. +</p> <p>Near Vision — The ability to see details at close range (within a few feet of the observer). +</p> <p>Oral Comprehension — The ability to listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences. +</p> <p>Problem Sensitivity — The ability to tell when something is wrong or is likely to go wrong. It does not involve solving the problem, only recognizing there is a problem. +</p> <p>Arm-Hand Steadiness — The ability to keep your hand and arm steady while moving your arm or while holding your arm and hand in one position.</p>	<p>High school diploma or equivalent</p> <p>Post-secondary certificate</p> <p>Associate's degree</p>	<p>\$25.13 hourly, \$52,260 annual</p>

		procedures, and strategies to promote effective local, state, or national security operations for the protection of people, data, property, and institutions.				
11-1021.00 - General and Operations Managers	<p>Review financial statements, sales or activity reports, or other performance data to measure productivity or goal achievement or to identify areas needing cost reduction or program improvement. +</p> <p>Direct and coordinate activities of businesses or departments concerned with the production, pricing, sales, or distribution of products. +</p> <p>Direct administrative activities directly related to making products or providing services. +</p> <p>Prepare staff work schedules and assign specific duties. +</p> <p>Monitor suppliers to ensure that they efficiently and effectively provide needed goods or services within budgetary limits.</p>	<p>Administration and Management — Knowledge of business and management principles involved in strategic planning, resource allocation, human resources modeling, leadership technique, production methods, and coordination of people and resources. +</p> <p>Customer and Personal Service — Knowledge of principles and processes for providing customer and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction. +</p> <p>Personnel and Human Resources — Knowledge of principles and procedures for personnel recruitment, selection, training, compensation and benefits, labor relations and negotiation, and personnel information systems. +</p> <p>English Language — Knowledge of the structure</p>	<p>Active Listening — Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times. +</p> <p>Coordination — Adjusting actions in relation to others' actions. +</p> <p>Monitoring — Monitoring/Assessing performance of yourself, other individuals, or organizations to make improvements or take corrective action. +</p> <p>Social Perceptiveness — Being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react as they do. +</p> <p>Speaking — Talking to others to convey information effectively.</p>	<p>Oral Comprehension — The ability to listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences. +</p> <p>Oral Expression — The ability to communicate information and ideas in speaking so others will understand. +</p> <p>Problem Sensitivity — The ability to tell when something is wrong or is likely to go wrong. It does not involve solving the problem, only recognizing there is a problem. +</p> <p>Speech Clarity — The ability to speak clearly so others can understand you. +</p> <p>Written Comprehension — The ability to read and understand information and ideas presented in writing.</p>	<p>Bachelor's degree</p> <p>Some college, no degree</p> <p>High school diploma or equivalent</p>	\$47.74 hourly, \$99,310 annual

		<p>and content of the English language including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar. +</p> <p>Mathematics — Knowledge of arithmetic, algebra, geometry, calculus, statistics, and their applications.</p>				
51-8013.00 - Power Plant Operators	<p>Adjust controls to generate specified electrical power or to regulate the flow of power between generating stations and substations. +</p> <p>Monitor power plant equipment and indicators to detect evidence of operating problems. +</p> <p>Control generator output to match the phase, frequency, or voltage of electricity supplied to panels. +</p> <p>Control or maintain auxiliary equipment, such as pumps, fans, compressors, condensers, feedwater heaters, filters, or chlorinators, to supply water, fuel, lubricants, air, or auxiliary power. +</p> <p>Control power generating equipment, including boilers, turbines, generators, or reactors, using control boards or semi-automatic equipment</p>	<p>Mechanical — Knowledge of machines and tools, including their designs, uses, repair, and maintenance</p>	<p>Operation Monitoring — Watching gauges, dials, or other indicators to make sure a machine is working properly. +</p> <p>Critical Thinking — Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems. +</p> <p>Operation and Control — Controlling operations of equipment or systems. +</p> <p>Speaking — Talking to others to convey information effectively. +</p> <p>Active Listening — Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.</p>	<p>Oral Comprehension — The ability to listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences. +</p> <p>Oral Expression — The ability to communicate information and ideas in speaking so others will understand. +</p> <p>Problem Sensitivity — The ability to tell when something is wrong or is likely to go wrong. It does not involve solving the problem, only recognizing there is a problem. +</p> <p>Deductive Reasoning — The ability to apply general rules to specific problems to produce answers that make sense. +</p> <p>Near Vision — The ability to see details at close range (within a few feet of the observer).</p>	<p>High school diploma or equivalent ?</p> <p>Post-secondary certificate</p>	<p>\$35.91 hourly, \$74,690 annual</p>

Along with specific credentials and training of the applicants/potential new hires, employers across all industries have continued to report the need of soft skills, support from the community with affordable housing and transportation, and reduction in turn-over or churning .

The impact self-employment and small business have in the local economy cannot be understated. While not fully addressed in the data reviewed, entrepreneurs are a vital slice of the economy. The region will strive to utilize labor market information provided through EMSI to better plan for the potential need of this cohort and support entrepreneurial efforts.

The region supports an industry partnership structure that enables the workforce development system to be nimble and responsive to the ever-changing needs of the region’s businesses. Collectively, the business needs in our region are as diverse as the geography. With the collaboration and leadership of the Area’s ecosystem industries, the region will be actively engaging partners with the secondary and post-secondary institutions to ensure that industry specific curriculum and skills are being developed (if a gap is identified) along the spectrum of needs from entry to senior level positions.

As a goal to better understand employment needs, the region intends to pilot a project with a local system to create a user friendly and easy-to-take survey of workforce needs. The results of the survey will become part of future plans and would help support workforce planning activities.

2. Provide an analysis of the knowledge and skills needed to meet the employment needs of the employers in the region, including employment needs in in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

Businesses in the region want qualified talent for their businesses – workers who have the knowledge, skills sets, and abilities that will meet and/or exceed their workforce needs and help the business maintain a competitive advantage and/or become globally competitive in the current and future markets. Soft skills and hard skills are both of major concern for businesses. Research using www.careerguide.org, Forbes, and O*Net Online about skills employers are seeking has shown that businesses desire employees who exhibit the following: problem solving and critical thinking skills, positive work ethic, appropriate life management skills (balance between personal and work life), strong oral and written communication skills, interpersonal skills (team work), information gathering and organizational skills, occupational and job-related skills, self-direction and personal initiative, and customer service skills.

Some of the top industries in the region include manufacturing, energy, construction, health care, and accommodation and food services, and agriculture. The knowledge and skills needed to meet the demands of the existing and emerging industries in the Western Oklahoma Planning Region range from less than a high school diploma to advanced degrees and certifications.

When creating this plan, the two areas were advised that choosing a single industry to focus on for an industry sector strategy was acceptable since the region didn’t already have an established sector strategy process developed.

When concentrating on the health care industry, the occupations that provide for moderate to higher wages require training and industry recognized credentials. Reviewing the occupations in the chart from question A. 1. a., the highest paying jobs that require at least some postsecondary training up to an Associate’s Degree perform similar tasks and require similar knowledge, skills, and abilities (information in the chart below obtained from O*NET www.onetonline.org).

Occupation	Tasks	Knowledge	Skills	Abilities
Registered Nurse	Administer medications to patients and monitor patients for reactions or side effects.	Customer and Personal Service — Knowledge of principles and processes for providing customer and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction.	Active Listening — Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.	Oral Comprehension — The ability to listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.
LPN	Administer prescribed medications or start intravenous fluids, noting times and amounts on patients' charts	Customer and Personal Service — Knowledge of principles and processes for providing customer and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction.	Active Listening — Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times	Oral Comprehension — The ability to listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.
Medical Assistant	Record patients' medical history, vital statistics, or information such as test results in medical records	Customer and Personal Service — Knowledge of principles and processes for providing customer and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction.	Active Listening — Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.	Oral Comprehension — The ability to listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.

What this shows is an opportunity to create a career pathway (ladder/lattice) that can assist with the upward mobility of lower wage job seekers through the health care system into higher paying jobs. The training opportunities in the area are available to assist in obtaining the needed skills and credentials for the next level.

The skills needed by business are clearly as complex as advanced training can provide but also as straightforward as needing employees to show up to work on-time. The region's ambition is that the available workforce is (1) endowed with the knowledge, skills, and abilities that will equip them to obtain, retain and advance in the jobs of the 21st century that will give them a good quality of life for their families, and (2) able to meet the needs of business for skilled works which will promote the businesses ability to remain locally, regionally, and globally competitive. Health Care training is currently offered at all our Technology Centers and Colleges and Universities

Western Oklahoma Region Educational Assets

Colleges, Universities, and Career Techs are vital in developing the workforce of Western Oklahoma. The region is home to several educational institutions that help develop the region’s workforce. These institutions help supply organizations and companies with the labor and skills necessary for today’s economy. Colleges, Universities, and Career Techs can work with employers in Western Oklahoma to find gaps in employee skills.

Career Techs

There are thirteen Career Techs in the Western Oklahoma Region area with eighteen locations:

- Autry Technology Center (Enid)
- Caddo-Kiowa Technology Center (Ft. Cobb)
- Canadian Valley Technology Center (Chickasha)
- Chisolm Trail Technology Center (Omega)
- Great Plains Technology Center (Lawton; Frederick)
- High Plains Technology Center (Woodward)
- Meridian Technology Center (Stillwater)
- Mid-America Technology Center (Wayne)
- Northwest Technology Center (Fairview; Alva)
- Pioneer Technology Center (Ponca City)
- Red River Technology Center (Duncan)
- Southwest Technology Center (Altus)
- Western Technology Center (Sayre; Weatherford; Hobart; Burns Flat)

Source: Oklahoma Career Tech

Colleges and Universities

There are eight colleges and universities in the region:

- Cameron University (Lawton; Duncan)
- Northern Oklahoma College (Stillwater; Enid; Tonkawa)
- Northwestern Oklahoma State University (Enid; Alva; Woodward)
- Oklahoma Panhandle State University (Goodwell)
- Oklahoma State University (Stillwater)
- Southwestern Oklahoma State University (Weatherford; Sayre)
- University of Science and Arts Oklahoma (Chickasha)
- Western Oklahoma State College (Altus)

Source: Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education

3. Provide an analysis of the regional workforce, including current labor force employment and unemployment data, information on labor market trends, and the educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment.

From a report generated using EMSI, the charts below provide information about the regions workforce.

Regional Trends



	Region	2016 Jobs	2026 Jobs	Change	% Change
●	Region	282,707	304,716	22,009	7.8%
●	Oklahoma	1,675,003	1,818,076	143,073	8.5%
●	United States	147,072,170	161,645,396	14,573,226	9.9%
282,707 Jobs (2016) above National Average		0%	7.8% change (2016-2026) Nation: 9.9%	\$48,038 Ave. earnings per job (2016) Nation: \$64,008	

The Western Planning Region counties combine for an estimated population of 741,680. This accounts for 19% of the total state population. Lawton is the largest city in the region with an estimated population of 97,020.

- According to 2015 Census estimates, Comanche County, home to Lawton, is the most populous county in the region with an estimated population of 124,650. Payne County is second largest with 80,850 people.
- Cimarron County in the panhandle is the least populated county in the region, with an estimated population of 2,220.
- Since 2010, and with so many counties, the region has experienced varied population growth. Seventeen of the counties in the region experienced population increase, led by McClain County at 8.1%. Sixteen counties experienced population decline, with Blaine losing the most at -17.7%.
- Ten counties had population gains of 4% or more – led by McClain (8.1%), Beckham (7.5%), Custer (7.4%), and Woodward (7.4%).
- Of the sixteen counties that lost population, only three lost more than 5%.

Western Oklahoma Planning Region Population Breakdown by Race:

- 73.2% of residents in the Western Oklahoma Planning Region identify themselves as White. This is more than the statewide average of 68%.
- With 39,550 people, Black is the second most populous group in Western Oklahoma. They account for 5% of the population.
- Two or More Races consist of 5% of the population. American Indian makes up 4.6% of the population, while all remaining races account for one percent or less of the population.
- Hispanics, which are categorized as an ethnicity by the Census bureau, make up 11% of the total population in Western Oklahoma. Hispanics actually consist of the 2nd largest minority group in Western Oklahoma with 78,650 people.

Educational Attainment in the Western Oklahoma Planning Region:

- 85.2% of people residing in the Western Oklahoma Planning Region have attained at least a high school degree. This is slightly below the statewide average of 86.6%.
- Western Oklahoma has educational attainment very close to the state averages. However, the Western Oklahoma Planning Region has lower percentages of individuals with “bachelor’s degree”, and “associate’s degree” than the state average
- Bachelor’s degree is the largest gap of post-secondary educational attainment between region and state averages, at 2%.
- At the secondary level, the Western Oklahoma Planning Region has a higher percentage of individuals whose furthest educational attainment is “less than 9th grade”, “9th to 12th grade” and “high school graduate” compared to the state average.

Western Oklahoma Planning Region Education Gap

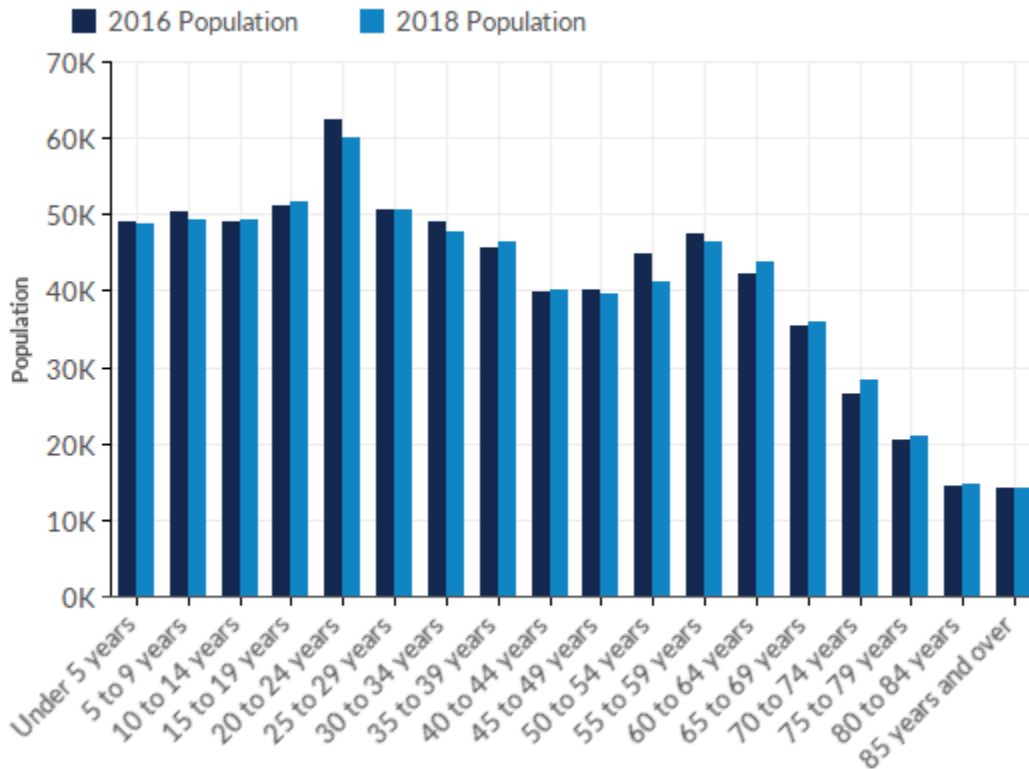
- By 2025, 23% of all new jobs in the Western Oklahoma Planning Region will require a high school degree or less, but 57% will require post-secondary training. Currently only 29% of individuals in the

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES by COUNTY – February 2019 (Not Seasonally Adjusted)



	December 2016			February 2019			Dec 2016	Feb 2019
	Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment	Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment		
Western WIA	202,041	193,468	8,573	196,832	190,920	5,912	4.3%	3.0%
South Central WIA	135,178	128,396	6,782	132,113	127,519	4,657	5.0%	3.5%

Population by Age Cohort



Age Cohort	2016 Population	2018 Population	Change	% Change	2016 % of Cohort
Under 5 years	49,081	48,727	-354	-1%	6.70%
5 to 9 years	50,388	49,229	-1,159	-2%	6.88%
10 to 14 years	49,007	49,225	218	0%	6.69%
15 to 19 years	51,133	51,525	392	1%	6.98%
20 to 24 years	62,399	59,938	-2,461	-4%	8.52%
25 to 29 years	50,684	50,624	-60	0%	6.92%
30 to 34 years	48,902	47,771	-1,131	-2%	6.68%
35 to 39 years	45,498	46,374	876	2%	6.21%
40 to 44 years	39,810	40,108	298	1%	5.44%
45 to 49 years	40,204	39,475	-729	-2%	5.49%
50 to 54 years	44,753	41,158	-3,595	-8%	6.11%
55 to 59 years	47,498	46,434	-1,064	-2%	6.49%
60 to 64 years	42,163	43,702	1,539	4%	5.76%
65 to 69 years	35,325	36,037	712	2%	4.82%
70 to 74 years	26,477	28,370	1,893	7%	3.62%
75 to 79 years	20,326	20,970	644	3%	2.78%
80 to 84 years	14,500	14,677	177	1%	1.98%
85 years and over	14,259	14,168	-91	-1%	1.95%
Total	732,407	728,513	-3,894	-1%	100.00%

The Department of Rehabilitation Services (WIOA Title IV CORE Partner) provided links to reports about Oklahomans with disabilities. One report by Cornell University in 2015 provided this data:

Age: In 2015, the prevalence of disability in OK was:

- 15.3 percent for persons of all ages
- 1.6 percent for persons ages 4 and under
- 6.0 percent for persons ages 5 to 15
- 6.2 percent for persons ages 16 to 20
- 14.2 percent for persons ages 21 to 64
- 31.6 percent for persons ages 65 to 74
- 53.3 percent for persons ages 75+

Disability Type: In 2015, the prevalence of the six disability types among persons of all ages in OK was:

- 3.2% reported a Visual Disability
- 5.0% reported a Hearing Disability
- 8.7% reported an Ambulatory Disability
- 5.7% reported a Cognitive Disability
- 2.7% reported a Self-Care Disability
- 6.1% reported an Independent Living Disability

Gender: In 2015, 15.4 percent of females of all ages and 15.3 percent of males of all ages in OK reported a disability.

Hispanic/Latino: In 2015, the prevalence of disability among persons of all ages of Hispanic or Latino origin in OK was 6.9 percent.

Race: In OK in 2015, the prevalence of disability for working-age people (ages 21 to 64) was:

- 13.5 percent among Whites
- 18.1 percent among Black / African Americans
- 3.5 percent among Asians
- 20.7 percent among Native Americans
- 15.0 percent among persons of some other race(s)

Employment: In 2015, the employment rate of working-age people (ages 21 to 64) with disabilities in OK was 35.4 percent.

Looking for Work: In OK in 2015, the percentage actively looking for work among people with disabilities who were not working was 6.4 percent.

Full-Time/Full-Year Employment: In OK in 2015, the percentage of working-age people with disabilities working full-time/full-year was 26.4 percent.

Annual Earnings: In 2015, the median annual earnings of working-age people with disabilities working full-time/full-year in OK was \$36,000.

Annual Household Income: In OK in 2015, the median annual income of households with working-age people with disabilities was \$38,600.

Poverty: In OK in 2015, the poverty rate of working-age people with disabilities was 27.7 percent.

Supplemental Security Income: In 2015, the percentage of working-age people with disabilities receiving SSI payments in OK was 18.8 percent.

Educational Attainment: In 2015, the percentage of working-age people with disabilities in OK:

- with only a high school diploma or equivalent was 37.3 percent
- with only some college or an associate degree was 33.7 percent
- with a bachelor's degree or more was 12.9 percent.

Veterans Service-Connected Disability: In 2015, the percentage of working-age civilian veterans with a VA determined Service-Connected Disability was 28.6 percent in OK.

Health Insurance Coverage: In 2015 in OK, 82.3 percent of working-age people with disabilities had health insurance.

A summary list showed employment rates by state of non-institutionalized working-age (ages 21 to 64) people with disabilities using data from the 2015 American Community Survey (ACS). The employment rate in the US for this population was 35.2% for people with disabilities and 78.3% for people without disabilities. Oklahoma was 35.4 with a disability and 77.8 without a disability.

The full report can be found at: http://www.disabilitystatistics.org/StatusReports/2015-PDF/2015-StatusReport_OK.pdf?CFID=76839&CFTOKEN=9e97bffcd05cf1c3-ED19302A-FB1C-8929-B10F0CB6E49079D3

The second report is attached as appendix D and can be found at: <https://www.statedata.info/bbstates/Oklahoma.pdf>

The second table on the report (Table 2) shows employment participation for working-age people ages 16-64 (shown below).

In order to move closer to the Governor’s goal of increasing the number of credentialed workers in the state, the Region will need to create an outreach plan to help residents become aware of training options that lead to industry recognized credentials as well as available jobs. The Workforce Boards in the Region can also connect with public school systems to assist with the efforts for drop-out prevention in order to increase the number of high school graduates specifically targeting minority populations, individuals with disabilities, job seekers with limited education/skill level, and/or barriers to employment.

4. Provide an analysis of workforce development activities, including providing the SWOT analysis that indicates how the planning region’s service delivery system is prepared to meet the community’s workforce development needs.

a. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the regional workforce development activities.

Table 2: Employment Participation for Working-Age People (Ages 16–64)

2008		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Number of people with no disability	1,948,069	1,962,244	2,021,363	2,041,943	2,063,751	2,076,143	2,071,696
Number of people with any disability	340,570	331,013	330,116	337,470	318,231	320,361	336,746
Number of people with a cognitive disability	134,132	134,381	132,831	133,863	129,916	122,344	124,860
Number of people with no disability who are employed	1,485,481	1,444,331	1,471,695	1,475,911	1,509,343	1,521,354	1,511,672
Number of people with any disability who are employed	144,323	129,152	123,860	118,637	105,865	114,684	122,513
Number of people with a cognitive disability who are employed	38,227	31,179	36,318	34,995	28,453	27,921	29,993
Percentage of people with no disability who are employed	76.3%	73.6%	72.8%	72.3%	73.1%	73.3%	73.0%
Percentage people with any disability who are employed	42.4%	39.0%	37.5%	35.2%	33.3%	35.8%	36.4%
Percentage people with a cognitive disability who are employed	28.5%	23.2%	27.3%	26.1%	21.9%	22.8%	24.0%

Source: American Community Survey (ACS)

Equal Opportunity Employers/WIOA Programs ~ Auxiliary aides and services available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

The self-assessment that was utilized in conjunction with the SWOT assisted the Region to focus on a system that is meeting the customer's needs and is accessible, current, innovative, and continuously improving.

The self-assessment tool was tabulated and the Region's respondents voted these items as high priorities, in the initial phase (The team has discussed this indicator but has not started planning), and were open to training:

- Governance - "The region has ascribed to our local workforce development board(s)'s strategic vision to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. This must include 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."
- Business Services – "Business services outreach is an integrated, collaborative process that is developed and shared among all the partners within the system. Someone is designated to coordinate the business services outreach program among our regional partners."
- Job Seeker Services – "Our partners have developed and are implementing their plan to eliminate duplication of core services."

With the submission and approval of this Regional Plan, the workforce boards will bring the partners into a more collaborative arena to understand what the plan's focus is and to align the Region's activities with the plans goals. The region is eager to form a committee to review 'system certification' efforts from each Board and data from the job seeker and business services matrices in order to focus on organizing integrated, collaborative processes for business outreach.

- STRENGTHS
 - ✓ Top Findings: Small Town Commitments, Variety of Industries , Military Bases - Ft. Sill, Vance, Resourcefulness, Already have Relationships established, Strong Partnerships, Brick and Mortar already exists, Strong Leadership
 - ✓ Supporting Findings: Career Technology Centers, Out of the Box Thinking, Diverse Populations, Regional Universities, Agriculture, Native American Tribes, Wind Energy and Other Natural Resources, Local Workforce Offices, Working already, Sharing = workforce enhancement, Customer Focused, Regional Mindset, Strong Economic Development agencies
- WEAKNESSES
 - ✓ Top Findings: Limited Transportation, Loss of Population / "limited" population (Funding Formulas affected by this), Budget Cuts, Funding, Access to Health care – Rural Health Care diminishing, Lack of Knowledge of other Services/Resources, Common Performance Measures – Who gets credit, Accessibility / ADA Compliance, Market Instability
 - ✓ Supporting Findings: Lack of Manufacturing, Boom or Bust Economy, Brain Drain, Marketing, Territorialism, Lack of Broadband, Logistics, Client Transportation, Lack of Workforce Personnel, Lack of affordable housing, Marketability of workforce system (can't use funds), Closure of current resources, No Draw for young people – Not hip/cool
- OPPORTUNITIES
 - ✓ Top Findings: Shared Data Systems would be useful for all partners, Dual Enrollment w/different funding streams & both meet performance as long as folks are eligible for the programs, More opportunities to better serve community because we're working together, Eliminate Duplication by taking a hard look at what each partner does well and refocusing efforts toward supporting the programs and staff who do the best at what is expected from our customers, Working / Increased Collaboration with tribes, Political Landscaped Change which may provide more flexibility and more options to partner with other programs that have feared connecting before, Better Trained Case Managers if all partners can share in cross-training and lend their expertise on specific topics (how to talk with businesses about

- workforce needs, how to manage a case most effectively, how to recognize drug addiction or domestic violence, how to serve people with a disability, etc.), Opportunities to “Fill in Gaps” on programs that are missing from communities, Apprenticeships and OJT opportunities
- ✓ Supporting Findings: Creative Advertising/Marketing, Job Fairs / Cooperative Agencies, Common Registration/Intake Systems, Dual Enrollment, Educate on all services available / across agencies, Agencies could share performance measures, More resources for employment, More transportation resources, “Team” Case Management, Dual Customer Approach – Biz needs = Job seeker needs, Forced innovative approach mentality, More educated workforce – TAA, Forces us to work more closely

- THREATS

- ✓ Top Findings: Sanctions for Poor Performance, Funding Cuts, Territorialism, Transient Workers, Duplication of Services, Redundancy, Over dependence on Oil & Gas Industry, Aging Population, Not being able to serve everyone
- ✓ Supporting Findings: Lower Commodity Prices, Unemployment rate versus funding, Perception that consolidation threatens small communities, Not being able to provide services across large geographical areas, Staff burnout with larger unmanageable areas, State staffs increasing while field staffs decreasing, Field morale: Asked to do more, with less; while state staff grows and does less

b. Describe the alignment of the regional education and training programs with the employment needs of regional employers.

Businesses in the Western Oklahoma Area want educated and trained highly qualified skilled workers for their businesses—workers who have the knowledge, skill sets, and abilities that will meet their workforce needs and help them retain the competitive advantage and/or become globally competitive in the 21st century. Businesses are concerned about worker skills, both soft skills and hard skills. Research has shown that businesses in this area, and in all areas of the state and Nation, want employees with the following: work ethic; personal life management skills; written and oral communication skills; interpersonal skills; problem-solving skills; math and reading skills; teamwork skills; information gathering skills; computer literacy skills; organizational skills; listening skills; time management skills; self-direction and initiative skills; customer service skills; resource management skills; occupational and job-related skills; and physical dexterity skills. In addition, businesses want workers who are responsible, loyal, dependable, trustworthy, and possess a positive attitude and integrity. In general, businesses think that the current workforce lacks many of those skills listed above, but that the most critical skills needed are: personal life management skills; reading, writing, and math skills; team player skills; listening skills; occupational skills and job skills. The Region’s goal is that all customers are equipped with the knowledge, skills (including soft skills), and abilities that will equip them to obtain and retain employment in jobs of the 21st Century that will give them a good quality of life for their families; and, will meet the need of businesses for skilled workers which will promote their ability to remain globally, regionally, and locally competitive. By continuing to build partnerships with education and training programs to create career pathways, education and training program providers will be at the table to listen to the business and industry needs and how we can properly align skill sets with employment opportunities. By having those employers present with the education program providers actual employment needs can be discussed and real solutions developed. The Western Oklahoma Region works with our local education entities to provide training in demand occupations. Both business led boards in our region help develop a demand occupation list based on current business needs.

Great Plains Technology Center has an example of a business led training. They provide a customized training program exclusively for Goodyear. The participants enter training at Great Plains and then do actual on the job training in the plant. Goodyear hires the participants at a training wage of \$15 per hour and when they complete the program of training, they increase their wages to \$30 per hour. South Central is currently working with Goodyear to develop this program into a registered apprenticeship program.

High Plains Technology Center has an example of business led training. Northwest Oklahoma is at the heart of wind development technology in the U.S., and HPTC is leading the region's renewable energy initiative. In Woodward, OK, HPTC's dynamic, comprehensive wind tech program partners with regional farms for realistic, hands-on training. Their facility also is equipped for training every type of wind technician whether they are brand new or been in the industry since inception, showcasing a dual-nacelle 35-foot indoor climbing tower for year round training, a 45M Direct Drive Turbine, and a 2.3 MW Nacelle. They certify technicians in almost any rescue device and offer the courses needed to certify your technicians with their certifications and training needs. They now are a GWO certified provider, the first and only in Oklahoma, allowing us to serve existing and new wind industry workers attain their GWO certification with training relevant to the GWO standards. Their GWO certified training modules include First Aid, Manual Handling, Fire Awareness as well as the refresher level for each course. HPTC'S 20 week full time program was developed and built by listening to wind companies as to what they expected their technicians to have to start their job without much guidance or training needed.

Meridian Technology Center has an example of business led training. When Asco Aerospace built a new facility in Stillwater, OK, they had a need for a workforce of highly skilled CNC machinists, surface treatment technicians and complex assembly. From its initial startup Meridian Technology Center has been a key partner with the company. Meridian's staff and instructors worked together blending courses from full-time programs, short-term adult, and career development classes to demonstrate the school's ability to create training that not only met Asco's immediate need for hiring but also to sustain a pipeline of qualified workers for future growth and expansion at Asco Aerospace USA, the first Asco operation in the United States.

c. Describe the region's capacity to provide the workforce development activities to address the education and skill needs of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment.

The public workforce system under the direction of the local workforce boards is responsible for serving a diverse population of business and job-seeking customers. The boards ensure that a full range of employment and training programs and services delivered through the Region's systems are accessible to and will meet the needs of displaced homemakers, low-income individuals, women, minorities, individuals training for non-traditional employment, veterans, public assistance recipients and individuals with multiple barriers to employment (including older individuals, people with limited English-speaking proficiency, and people with disabilities) through the Oklahoma Works partnerships and programs. All career and training services provided by the WIOA Title I Service Provider are available to all groups of people and accessible through the Workforce Centers. The boards are seeking new and easier ways to access these services possibly via other outlets using technology or satellite offices. There are no "special" services set aside for specific groups of individuals in the Western Region. At the time of this plans development, there are no specific nontraditional training and employment activities provided in this workforce investment area. The special needs of each of the above listed targeted groups are identified during the objective assessment/initial assessment process (service strategy design process) which is in place in each of the Area's Workforce Centers. The process to receive services is simple—a job seeker walks into an Oklahoma Works office to speak to a staff member and the assessment process begins. The main goal is to help the job seeker obtain employment. After receiving basic career services and the One Stop Operator or staff has made a determination that the customer is unable to obtain employment or is unable to retain employment or get a better job without more intensive services, a WIOA eligibility determination is made. If the job seeker is eligible and desires more intensive services, then the assessment process continues and they complete an application for enrollment into the WIOA Title I program best suited for their situation and needs. The WIOA Title I staff then go through a process with the customer of determining, through assessment, career planning, and counseling, what specific services the customer needs to obtain a job or get a better job.

Other CORE partners and other partners have similar processes as mandated by their specific funding streams when a customer seeks services. A goal is to have all customers take part in a similar intake process across the Region so that basic data about the customer can be shared easily and employment plans connected. This will help eliminate the pull on the customer from multiple programs to achieve all the goals all at once or to choose which program is a priority to avoid sanctions.

d. Describe the region's capacity to meet the employment needs of employers.

The knowledge and skills needed to meet the demands of the existing and emerging industries in the Western Oklahoma Area range from less than a high school diploma to advanced degrees and certifications.

Businesses in the Region want qualified talent for their businesses – workers who have the knowledge, skills sets, and abilities that will meet and/or exceed their workforce needs and help the business maintain a competitive advantage and/or become globally competitive in the current and future markets. Soft skills and hard skills are both of major concern for businesses. Research has shown that businesses desire employees who exhibit the following: problem solving and critical thinking skills, positive work ethic, appropriate life management skills (balance between personal and work life), strong oral and written communication skills, interpersonal skills (team work), information gathering and organizational skills, occupational and job-related skills, self-direction and personal initiative, and customer service skills.

The skills needed by business are clearly as complex as advanced training can provide but also as straightforward as needing the employee to show up to work on-time. The region's goal is that the available workforce is (1) endowed with the knowledge, skills, and abilities that will equip them to obtain, retain and advance in the jobs of the 21st century that will give them a good quality of life for their families, and (2) able to meet the needs of business for skilled works which will promote the businesses ability to remain locally, regionally, and globally competitive.

Through the well trained staff of all partners and the connections being established, fostered, and grown, the Region has the capacity to meet employer needs. In a world of shrinking budgets and staff attrition, it is even more vital to have all staff from all partners cross-trained not just in their specific program goals and requirements. The two local Areas in the Region are made up of mostly rural communities. As such, it has been imperative that all partners, agencies, educational facilities, and citizens rely on each other to get things done. In this respect, the Region is better equipped to meet the workforce needs of employers because we have been coordinating even before it was mandated and communities have learned not to rely on the state for clear directions or "procedures" on how to make things happen for the betterment of the community.

5. Based on the analysis above, describe the region's key workforce development issues, and possible solutions to be implemented within the region, to reach the region's economic and workforce development oriented vision and strategic goals.

The Western Oklahoma Region addresses the continual workforce demand changes by annually reviewing the Demand Occupation List by each Workforce Board and updating it to provide a skilled and ready workforce to employers.

The Western Oklahoma Region supports the development of career pathways as a method through which workers can move up the career ladder by completing short-term certificate training programs that lead to credentials and upward mobility in their career of choice. This laddering effect, over time, produces a better-trained and qualified workforce for local employers, as well as higher wages for employees, which, in turn, creates a positive economic impact on local communities and the state as a whole. The lack of a defined or developed career pathway for any industry is stunting growth for the Region. It is hoped that with the development of a Regional Sector Strategy the progress toward career pathways will be established. Career Pathways examples can be found in another section in the plan.

B. Descriptions of Regional Strategies

1. Briefly describe the activities and steps taken to develop this regional plan.

This regional plan is the result of years of workforce development efforts by the local areas striving to foster solutions to business needs. After the designation of the Western Oklahoma Planning Region by the Governor, a variety of outreach and planning efforts began. In July 2016 and continuing through March 2017, the two workforce areas began to focus their efforts to improve our understanding of the changing regional economic conditions, particularly identifying those that have created new areas of growth and opportunity in a variety of sectors and occupations. Each of the regions One-Stop Partners has been participating in an on-going system building and development process with participation from businesses, partners, local elected officials and board members from across the region. Through the urging and support of the CLEOs, a formal kick-off of the regional planning effort took place in September 2016 with a Regional Planning Self-Assessment Tool at the local level. The assessment tool was organized under the three standards categories (Governance, Business Services and Job Seekers Services) and includes corresponding indicators that are components of each element. The local areas combined responses to the tool were utilized in completing the Western Region SWOT analysis. Lead by the two workforce board chairs and CLEOs, a Western Region Workforce planning meeting was held in November 2016 with 30 local board members, local elected officials, and Core Partners. Specific feedback from the key impacted stakeholders and agencies was compiled into a regional SWOT analysis. Our regional leadership invited 103 Core Partners, local elected officials, and Workforce Board members to the SWOT analysis meeting from Western and South Central local areas. Additionally, our consultant met all the key players and began discussing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the Western region. We facilitated a discussion of distinguished and influential local leaders representing significant cross-sections of our WIOA stakeholders such as core One-Stop partners, community colleges and career techs, Department of Human Services, Adult Education, Veterans, Corrections, Veterans, Department of Rehabilitative Services, Oklahoma Employment Security Commission as well as key Private Sector employers. Feedback on the facilitated session was extremely positive. The final documentation from the SWOT analysis was sent to the Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development to meet a regional milestone.

As this plan was developed, we realized some suggested/potential steps were not fully executed. The Region is creating a plan of action to overcome those deficiencies. Here are some of the steps we plan to take and the timeline to complete them:

- Review the service matrices status and recommend local area action as needed – February 2018 (Service matrices have been reviewed, additional core and required partners have co-located. Still a need for a common intake system for all partners)
- Core Partner meetings to motivate alignment of workforce activities – February 2018 (Core Partner meeting are being held weekly within the centers and quarterly partner meetings that include all partners and additional resources in the community)
- Regional Strategic Planning session – March 2018 (Strategic Planning Session was held in Hinton and the results are shown in the SWOT analysis) This region was awarded a Sector Strategy Grant which allowed this region to have Sector Strategy Meetings across the region for Healthcare and Manufacturing.

We will continue to strengthen the partnerships among the region and each partner has committed to inculcate appropriate contributions based on Federal and State guidance to further improve and streamline Job Seeker and Business Services. By streamlining services, more customers can be served which will result in more credentials, Diplomas, and Certificates. The universal referral form and one-page application was developed. The region continues to promote the process to the partners and business to utilize the condensed process to get individual assistance so assist with them being employed and self-sufficient.

2. Describe the shared regional strategy to align available resources among the required, and any additional, partners within a planning region.

The regional partnership includes assigned partners, mandated partners and other key stakeholders, in addition to the two WDBs. WIOA Core Partners include, Title I, Wagner-Peyser, Adult Education, TANF, and Vocational Rehabilitation, Additional partners include LWDB members, Job Corps, community/technical college representatives, 4-year educational institutions, regional/local economic development representatives, Local elected officials, private industry employers, especially those representing the likely target industries.

Partners at the Comprehensive One Stops include: WIOA Title I, Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, Adult Education & Literacy (referral), TANF, ORO, AARP FOUNDATION, and Veteran's Services. Additional partners provide services from the One-Stop Centers based on needs and special projects available for career development and self-sufficiency.

The Western Region will work with core programs to continually expand in-house partnerships. Increasing in-house partnerships not only increases efficiency of funding through shared Resource Sharing Agreement costs, but it also helps maximize available services and increase diversity in center staff knowledge skills and abilities. The partners take great pride in the region and share a commitment to work together to implement the Regional Plan and continuously assess the workforce development system for improvement and innovation. Implementation will continue to focus on the vision by streamlining the workforce development system to avoid duplication and maximize services to customers. Key to streamlining is the continued integration of partners and their programs within the One-Stop Centers. Local resources are aligned across core programs in order to broaden service delivery, maximize leverage and minimize duplication.

Examples of existing alignment partners reported are:

- a. Adult Education (Title II) contracts high schools and career techs to provide Basic Skills Instruction to educate adults toward a GED or High School 21+ diploma.
- b. Co-enrollment of customers with multiple partners allows leveraging of shrinking funds. A customer may be co-enrolled with as many as 3-4 partners to provide counseling, support, tuition and follow up.
- c. Other resource alignment and leveraging with Title III and other partners are realized in joint job fairs, hiring events, and veteran outreach events.
- d. One-Stop Center staff provides on-site orientation, intake, job preparation and soft skills for adults, dislocated workers, youth, and adults/ students with disabilities.
- e. Partners closely coordinate a variety of vocational education financial aid sources including: Pell, Adult and Dislocated Worker ITAs, Youth, Trade Adjustment Assistance, & Vocational Rehabilitation funds. Staffs meet regularly to leverage funding options for customers.

The Western Oklahoma Region will expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment by remaining in conformance with the WIOA State Plan for the State of Oklahoma, Section VI, Program-Specific for Core Programs as written and as amended by Federal and State guidelines. This guidance includes Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Activities under Title I-B; Wagner-Peyser Program (Employment Services); Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Programs; and Vocational Rehabilitation.

The Western and South Central Workforce Investment Areas (Western Oklahoma Planning Region) also agree to share, as appropriate, administrative costs in accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA), 679.00 and forthcoming guidance from the Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development (OOWD), not published as of the date of this Regional Plan. The primary concern of WIOA and OOWD's concern for cost sharing with regionalization is two-fold. First and foremost, to ensure that workforce customers are receiving maximum funds to support their needs for employment/re-employment and ancillary services. This is driven by WIOA and the Governor of the State of Oklahoma's guidance, through OOWD, with a target of 40% to recipients by Program Year 2018 (PY 18). Second, with forecast reductions of federal and state funding, to ensure that each administrative and/or pooling of funds cost is vetted and reduced to a minimum required level commensurate with market service pricing, (i.e., lowest market cost of fiscal agency, employer of record, service provision, etc.)

The desired end-state is to “cost share” via a business model that will maximize participant funding while simultaneously reducing operational and overhead costs. These costs may include, but are not limited to: staffing, service provision, and human resources support. The Western Oklahoma Planning Region must consider the most cost effective options for our area, while remaining in compliance the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) circulars regarding avoidance of conflict of interest and procurement of services.

3. Describe how the planning region, with the collaboration of the local workforce development boards, will support the goals and strategies identified in Oklahoma’s Unified State Plan.

Goal 1: Preparing a skilled workforce

The goals for achieving the Governor and State’s vision for wealth generation, are both under the umbrella of Oklahoma Works, the workforce development initiative for the state, and specifically within the scope of WIOA at the state and local and regional levels.

Oklahoma goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including preparing youth and individuals with barriers of employment and other populations, and a goal for meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers will be supported by the Region.

In alignment with the Oklahoma State Plan Policy Strategies, Oklahoma Works thoughtfully crafted achievable goals and activities while envisioning more ways to enhance coordination throughout the region. The Boards will oversee the implementation of the regional plan, providing guidance and leadership for the regional workforce development system. This oversight will include a continuous improvement loop to gain partner feedback and measure performance outcomes. The feedback loop will be designed to ensure services are effectively meeting the needs of employers while transitioning residents to gainful employment, breaking the cycles of poverty and increasing economic equity for long lasting prosperity. The Core Partners, along with the two Boards, have developed a foundation of collaboration and anticipate the renewed regional partnership that will serve as a catalyst for realization of the vision as goals are accomplished.

The forum will be expanded to invite regional partners and will be used to align local resources in order to achieve the State’s strategic vision.

Key Economic Networks (KENs), under the Oklahoma Works initiative, are areas in which labor market data demonstrate geographic similarities with regard to occupations and commuting patterns. In the fall of 2015, the Governor led a tour of all nine KEN areas across the state to hear from local business leaders, local educators, workforce development board members, local agency staff from our workforce system partners, and the State retrieved qualitative data from each KEN regarding the workforce challenges in rural and urban areas of the state. (KENs under the new state Governor’s leadership may be dissipated as the new leadership rolls out the new plan for Oklahoma Workforce. The WOWDA’s KEN representative is vacant at this time.)

The Region will coordinate the development, alignment, and connection of education and training pipelines with the needs of the state’s regional economies by coordinating strategic priorities and plans across the system.

Goal 2: Data

The Region will integrate and use workforce and economic development data to inform policy, track progress, and measure success by using data to decrease labor supply and demand gap: utilize statewide data to decrease the skills gap by defining determinants and benchmarks along all levels of education and training that lead to employability in identified economic systems, evaluating and utilizing competencies and assessments, and identifying and working to minimize existing data gaps,

Goal 3: Partnerships

The Region plans to cultivate and maintain productive relationships between regional employers, educators, and other workforce partners to ensure an appropriately skilled workforce that meets the needs of employers.

We will use real-time demand data from local business leaders to guide workforce development. Expanding and strengthening local partnerships ensures we will meet the skilled workforce needs of our local employers.

Goal 4: Resources

We can best optimize use of resources and incentives to achieve the Oklahoma Works goal by identifying and recommending creative, cross-agency, and cross-sector funding models that support similar workforce programs and include agency programs that potentially benefit from public-private partnerships.

Goal 5: Meeting the needs of employers

As a Region, we intend incorporate as many of the Oklahoma Works strategies that created in partnership with all workforce system partner agencies representing specific populations to provide improved access and services to all clients.

The Western Oklahoma Region is implementing the goals and strategies of Oklahoma's Unified State Plan using the strategic guidance provided.

Oklahoma Works is designed to increase the wealth of all Oklahomans through providing education and training for citizens to obtain quality employment, beyond the scope of WIOA (this cuts across all agencies regardless of funding streams). Our rationale is that coordinating strategic priorities and plans across education, training, and industry will increase the wealth of all Oklahomans by providing employment opportunities for workers and ready availability of highly skilled talent for business and industry. The statewide initiative is built upon a coalition of businesses, educational institutions, state agencies, and other partners, and is an overarching state strategy, but is fully aligned with the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

4. Describe the development and implementation of joint regional service strategies for common requirements and policies for:

a. Work-based learning/training (customized training, incumbent worker training, and on-the-job training); and

Oklahoma continues to have an active statewide Career Pathways initiative with the goal of having a comprehensive system in place that leads students and out-of-school youth, dislocated workers, and incumbent workers through a full range of career exploration/counseling and education and training opportunities that correspond to employer needs, thus assuring a pipeline of appropriately skilled and credentialed workers for Oklahoma's companies.

More partners are moving closer to delivering services out of Workforce Centers while expanding and improving the offerings to workers and students. Even with the shrinking budgets of almost all education and training providers in the local system, resourcefulness has increased. Partners work closer than ever and partner in co-enrollment to maximize the options for a worker's pathway to advancement. These efforts are seldom made without multiple partner involvement. Coordinated efforts between Title I and other system partners are expanding and supporting learning opportunities for workers at all stages of their education or career paths.

Partners offer greater career and education guidance for adults through career and education planning workshops. Workshops are designed to help customers explore local and state labor markets, emerging and demand occupations and result in a training plan, and through delivery of basic skills instruction at Workforce Centers and Adult Basic Education locations, through coordinated preparation for post-secondary education, informing customers about financial aid and assisting with applications. The goal is to provide up-to-date information on program offerings and financial aid options. Partners increase the accessibility of training programs for adult workers by participating with Professional/Technical Education initiatives to help students navigate through and complete occupational training specific to the in demand industry in our region. For example, South Central has collaborated with Good Year and Great Plains Technology Center to place people

in internships and the team has developed a customized training program for industrial maintenance tech. A Registered Apprenticeship program with Good Year is currently being developed. Northwestern Oklahoma has collaborated with Meridian Technology Center and Asco to develop machinist training that can be tailored to the specific skills already obtained by the worker/job seeker. An On-the-job Training contract with Asco was established for front line workers at the plant while Meridian Tech provided supervisor and upper level management training. Enhanced accessibility to post-secondary programs will increase industry-recognized credentials. Partners improve training for adult workers with barriers to advancement by coordinating with DRS to assist them to increase the number of internships and community based employment and OJT for individuals with disabilities. **Update: South-Central is serving as the pilot for the Oklahoma Works For All Initiative and is working to increase the number of employment opportunities to individuals with disabilities.**

WOWDA began working to get the word out about the “best kept secret” (i.e., workforce resources). A universal referral form and one-page application were created to streamline the process and time it takes to get an individual enrolled and receiving services. WOWDA has printed tablets of these documents to hand out to business, educators and partners to refer individuals to WIOA services. Staff have also been conducting outreach to businesses, educators and other partners regarding all WIOA Services promoting the Occupational Skills Training and Work Based Learning.

WOWDA is taking a team approach to the sector strategies by getting all interested and key individuals together when addressing the needs of the business. This approach has been very successful in providing “wrap-around services” to businesses to address manufacturing and health care needs. The team includes: Western director and staff; business services representative; Office of Workforce Development Work Based Learning Liaison; One-Stop Operator; OESC staff; and, service provider staff. Other community and WIOA partners are invited as needed.

Another key to success is the business referring individuals they encounter in their communities who need additional skills to qualify for their positions. This type of involvement with the business allows them to be more vested in the individual and feel like they are hand-picked, which helps with retention of employees. WOWDA is also working on customized training and incumbent worker training policies.

One of the work-based learning initiatives the Regions’ Service Providers use is On-the-Job-Training (OJT) to provide the skills needed for job-seekers to be successful in the workplace. In addition, Service Providers coordinate and provide internships and incumbent worker training within the region. Efforts have begun to better connect youth and adult education students to these opportunities and expand Registered Apprenticeship options. Overall, these types of programs are an opportunity for growth under WIOA. **South Central has implemented an Incumbent Worker policy and hopes to expand our opportunities in working with businesses. The Western Region has increased our number of internships and Apprenticeship opportunities and continue to work closely with the Office of Workforce Development’s work-based learning coordinator for our region. WOWDA has successfully administered four On-the-Job-Trainings at Ditch Witch in Perry, OK and one at Aircraft Structure International Corp. (ACIS) in Enid, OK. There is a list of business where work experience contracts are signed and ready for WOWDA “Team” will continue to reach out to business to promote the Work Based Learning opportunities in the area.**

b. Training services using individual training accounts in a mutual manner. Include copies of any cooperative service delivery agreements.

It is clear that jobs of the 21st century require advanced skills.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, in §134(F) establishes the requirement that “training services...shall be provided in a manner that maximizes consumer choice in the selection of an eligible provider of such services,” and further establishes, in §134(G)(i) that “training services shall be provided through the use of individual training accounts...and shall be provided to eligible individuals through the one-stop delivery system.”

Training services must be linked to occupations that are in demand in the local area or in another area to

which an adult or dislocated worker (DLW) receiving services is willing to relocate. Training services shall be limited to individuals who are unable to obtain other grant assistance, including Federal Pell grants or require assistance beyond the assistance made available under other grant assistance programs.

Occupational Skills Training funding will be coordinated with other resources and accessed using an Individual Training Account (ITA). ITAs are issued for training programs of eligible training providers designed to teach the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to perform a specific job or group of jobs for which there is a demand. Education is encouraged in higher skill occupations and for nontraditional employment appropriate to the participant's needs and which contributes to their economic self-sufficiency. The training may be sequenced with or accompanied by other types of training such as OJT. ITAs are issued pursuant to the local directives which outline all requirements such as demand occupations listed on the Eligible Training Provider List. The ITA procedure ensures the trainee explores training provider options. The Western Region will explore the Incumbent worker training option and a directive will be developed if the option is chosen.

South Central has recently implemented an Incumbent Worker policy and hopes to expand our opportunities in working with businesses. WOWDA is working on the Incumbent Worker policy and is excited to see what OOWD issues for the state Incumbent Worker policy.

The Western Oklahoma Region will review current policies to ensure alignment throughout the region. We have not formed any cooperative service delivery agreements as of the date of this plans submission. Western and South Central have been working together to develop policy, so that there is alignment throughout the region.

5. Describe the development and implementation of joint regional services strategies for career pathways. List the career pathways, and, for each, describe:

As of the date when this Regional Plan was prepared for publication (March, 2017), the Governor's Council for Workforce and Economic Development (GCWED) had not yet announced a policy on the requirements for Career Pathways. (See Sector Partnership Case Study below)

The Region has not created a completed career pathways process but is collaborating with the South Central Area as part of the Western Oklahoma Planning Region and will follow that pattern once developed in order to best capitalize on best practices, staff time, partnerships, and clear guidance.

A good example of a career pathway ladder exist in healthcare. A participant can begin training as a CNA at most of the Career Techs throughout the region. Many of our career techs also offer CMA and LPN training. RN and APRN are offered through our community colleges and 4 year universities.

UPDATE: See Below the Sector Strategy Final Report

REGIONAL SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS CASE STUDY

REGION

Western Oklahoma Workforce Planning Region

AREA

Alfalfa, Beaver, Beckham, Blaine, Caddo, Cimarron, Comanche, Cotton, Custer, Dewey, Ellis, Garfield, Grady, Grant, Greer, Harper, Harmon, Jackson, Jefferson, Kay, Kingfisher, Kiowa, Major, McClain, Noble, Payne, Roger Mills, Stephens, Texas, Tillman, Washita, Woods and Woodward Counties.

BUDGET

\$40,000

HISTORY

In April 2012, 61% of the Oklahoma executives responding to the FallinforBusiness.com survey indicated that the availability of skilled labor was “fair or poor.” Certainly, this concern has not diminished and, in fact, according to the businesses surveyed, the need for skilled workers is on the rise.

The Sector Partnership Grant Award facilitated moving the Western Oklahoma sector strategy from conceptual to clearly defined; with realistic career pathways, offering multiple opportunities including classroom training, work experience, on the job training, internships and externships for traditional and not so traditional students, underemployed workers, job seekers ready to move from entry level to next level or midlevel positions by gaining new credentials and for WIOA identified special populations.

The South Central and Western Workforce Boards identified the health care industry as the primary opportunity for the first year of industry sector strategies, and manufacturing to be developed in year two. The local and regional plans identify the data and labor market information supporting this decision.

Health Care and manufacturing are viewed as industries with existing and emerging in-demand occupations across the 33 counties with moderate to high wages for workers and requiring education, training, and/or advanced degrees in order to obtain, retain, and/or advance within the industry.

Based on 2016 job numbers, there are 34,107 jobs in the health care ecosystem in the Western Oklahoma Planning Region with average wages of \$45,909. As a projection of demand, by 2025 total employment in the health care ecosystem will grow to 40,510 jobs in Western Oklahoma, an increase of 6,670 jobs for the region.

Using the same data, there are 20,075 manufacturing jobs in the Western Oklahoma Planning Region with average wages of \$62,895. As a projection of demand, by 2025 total employment in the manufacturing industry will grow to 21,373 jobs in Western Oklahoma, an increase of 1,298 jobs for the region.

PLANNING PROCESS AND PARTNERS

Employers, educators, employees and students across the region were engaged in the planning process using a human-centered design approach. This process typically consists of three phases: 1) inspiration—learning more about customer needs; 2) ideation—brainstorming creative, potential solutions in response to the identified needs; and, 3) implementation—testing potential solutions to determine what works and taking successful strategies to scale.

This approach represents a philosophy of iteration and learning from trial and error that must be maintained along with continuous communication, assessment and adjustments as needed based on customer experience and feedback. For both industries, engaging associations and other trusted intermediaries with existing relationships was key to engaging individual organizations and stakeholders.

Health Care

Ten semi-structured listening sessions were convened across the region to hear from employers and educators about workforce challenges related to hiring and retention; workforce quality; alignment with education/training programs; and, industry trends that may affect workforce needs over the next five to ten years. Approximately 153 individuals participated representing industry educators and employers (i.e., long-term care, hospitals, community health centers, public health, home health, mental health). Sessions were geographically dispersed to allow access for participants throughout the region, with locations in Altus, Chickasha, Duncan, Elk City, Enid, Guymon, Lawton, Ponca City, Stillwater and Woodward.

A follow-up survey was distributed broadly through both local contact lists as well as through the Oklahoma Hospital Association, Care Providers Oklahoma, Oklahoma Primary Care Association and Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse providers. Responses were collected from August 21 – September 05, 2018.

The survey was primarily aimed at reaching individuals who could not attend a listening session. However, session attendees were also welcome to reply. There were 84 respondents, 60 percent of whom (n=49) indicated they had not attended a listening session. Thus, input was collected from 202 individuals via listening sessions and the survey combined.

Regional planning sessions were convened in Lawton on November 6 and Enid on November 7, 2018. A diverse group of stakeholders representing employers, educators and workforce partners brainstormed creative strategies for addressing the identified workforce needs. The goal of this process was to list as many ideas as possible while deferring judgement on what is feasible and viable. Stakeholders addressed the following questions:

“How might we...

- increase access to education and training programs?”
- improve outreach to public schools?”
- increase preceptors for mental health/health in Western Oklahoma?”
- attract and retain healthcare industry jobseekers in rural communities?”
- improve recruitment and retention (generally)?”
- improve access to employment supports for jobseekers/employees?”
- be responsive to shifting workforce demands over the next 5-10 years?”

A final planning session was convened on April 4, 2019, with locations in Duncan and Woodward connected via video-conferencing. Stakeholders representing employers, educators, jobseekers and workforce partners assessed ideas identified during the brainstorming session for feasibility, sustainability and potential for impact. Ideas that met all three criteria were grouped into four main goals with stakeholder-identified strategies and tactics.

Manufacturing

Though initially slated for year two, the Western Region was able to develop sector strategies for manufacturing during the planning period. Five semi-structured listening sessions were convened across the region to hear from employers and educators about workforce challenges related to hiring and retention; workforce quality; alignment with education/training programs; and, industry trends that may affect workforce needs. Sessions were held in Duncan, Enid, Lawton, Ponca City and Weatherford from May 9 to May 16, 2019.

Key partners for engaging stakeholders included the Northwest and Southwest Manufacturing Alliances. These sessions include both a discussion of challenges and potential solutions. The results are grouped into were grouped into three main goals with stakeholder-identified strategies and tactics.

Stakeholder-Identified Goals and Strategies

Strategic plans were developed for each industry. While not listed in this report, a number of specific tactics were also identified by stakeholders and are included in the plans, along with key performance indicators to be tracked over time. The overarching goals and strategies are outlined below.

Health Care

Goal: Increase utilization of regional workforce board resources to meet health care workforce needs in Western Oklahoma.

Strategy: Increase awareness of workforce board resources via marketing (e.g., traditional, social and digital media; guerrilla marketing) and direct outreach to customers and stakeholders

Strategy: Integration of information regarding workforce board resources and appropriate referrals with stakeholder service and intake processes

Goal: Improve recruitment and retention of health care sector workforce in Western Oklahoma.

Strategy: Expand view of education and multiple pathways

Strategy: Increase implementation of “grow our own” tactics

Strategy: Increase number of health care employers hiring jobseekers with barriers to employment (e.g., fair chance, disabilities) when not prohibited by licensure restrictions

Strategy: Increase number of employers who pilot and champion workplace practices that improve retention (e.g., positive workplace culture, benefits, etc.)

Strategy: Develop and distribute a toolkit of pre-packaged, innovative ideas for employers to assist with recruitment and retention along with success stories and access to peer learning from other employers who have benefited (e.g., flexible benefits, staff sharing, rural health recruitment best practices, staff mentorship, customized contracts, finders fees)

Strategy: Increase community engagement in recruiting and retention

Strategy: Increase utilization of regional recruiting efforts with shared costs

Strategy: Increase utilization of quality soft/employability/professional skills training

Strategy: Improve access to mediation or training when professionals lose license

Goal: Increase access to education and training for developing the health care workforce in Western Oklahoma.

Strategy: Increase capacity of existing education and training infrastructure

Strategy: Increase number of distance learning opportunities for health care profession education and training (both synchronous and asynchronous)

Strategy: Increase number of physical locations for education and training in rural communities

Strategy: Increase utilization of work-based learning, registered apprenticeships, internships, on-the-job training and mentorships among participating healthcare industry employers

Strategy: Increase number and capacity of health/mental health preceptors

Strategy: Increase employer support of practices that improve access to education and training (e.g., flexible schedules, learning during work hours, education leave)

Strategy: Increase awareness of opportunities for cost match, loan repayment or other financial assistance opportunities (e.g., PMTC, TSET)

Goal: Improve connectivity to community and regional resources that support employment.

Strategy: Increase awareness among employers of existing resources for assistance with workplace programs/services (e.g., Oklahoma Child Care Resource and Referral Association provides assistance related to child care)

Strategy: Increase awareness among employers, educators and jobseekers/employees of existing resources/services

Strategy: Increase awareness of examples of innovative strategies for meeting support needs (e.g., library checking out clothing for interviews)

Strategy: Increase the proportion of stakeholders making jobseeker/employee referrals to appropriate resources/services

Manufacturing

Goal: Increase utilization of regional workforce board resources to meet manufacturing workforce needs in Western Oklahoma.

Strategy: Increase awareness of workforce board resources via marketing (e.g., traditional, social and digital media; guerrilla marketing) and direct outreach to customers and stakeholders

Strategy: Integration of information regarding workforce board resources and appropriate referrals with stakeholder service and intake processes

Goal: Improve recruitment and retention of manufacturing sector workforce in Western Oklahoma.

Strategy: Improve messaging related to manufacturing industry careers and pathways

Strategy: Increase implementation of “grow our own” tactics

Strategy: Develop and submit waivers in collaboration with the State where feasible for addressing existing limitations

Strategy: Increase number of manufacturing employers hiring jobseekers with barriers to employment (e.g., fair chance, disabilities)

Strategy: Increase utilization of quality soft/employability/professional skills training

Strategy: Increase availability of flexible training models (e.g., online, flexible windows of time)

Strategy: Increase utilization of work-based learning, registered apprenticeships, internships, on-the-job training and mentorships among participating manufacturing industry employers

Strategy: Develop and distribute a toolkit of pre-packaged, innovative ideas for employers to assist with recruitment and retention along with success stories and access to peer learning from other employers who have benefited (e.g., flexible benefits, staff sharing, staff mentorship, finders fees)

Goal: Improve connectivity to community and regional resources that support employment.

Strategy: Increase awareness among employers of existing resources for assistance with workplace programs/services (e.g., Oklahoma Child Care Resource and Referral Association provides assistance related to child care)

Strategy: Increase awareness among employers, educators and jobseekers/employees of existing resources/services

Strategy: Increase awareness of examples of innovative strategies for meeting support needs (e.g., library checking out clothing for interviews)

Strategy: Increase the proportion of stakeholders making jobseeker/employee referrals to appropriate resources/services

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

While the partner coalitions established for each industry will continue to implement tactics and strategies while tracking progress toward key performance indicators, both the South Central and Western Workforce Boards have made progress in responding to the challenges identified through this process.

South Central has instituted a new policy for customized training and incumbent worker training. Further, the Board has approved a policy that classifies health care industry jobs as critical demand occupations, raising the income requirements for participants entering that field.

Western began working to get the word out about the “best kept secret” (i.e., workforce resources). A universal referral form and one-page application were created to streamline the process and time it takes to get an individual enrolled and receiving services. Western has printed tablets of these documents to hand out to business, educators and partners to refer individuals to WIOA services. Staff have also been conducting outreach to businesses, educators and other partners regarding all WIOA Services promoting the Occupational Skills Training and Work Based Learning.

Western is taking a team approach to the sector strategies by getting all interested and key individuals together when addressing the needs of the business. This approach has been very successful in providing “wrap-around services” to businesses to address manufacturing and health care needs. The team includes: Western director and staff; business services representative; Office of Workforce Development Work Based Learning Liaison; One-Stop Operator; OESC staff; and, service provider staff. Other community and WIOA partners are invited as needed.

Another key to success is the business referring individuals they encounter in their communities who need additional skills to qualify for their positions. This type of involvement with the business allows them to be more vested in the individual and feel like they are hand-picked, which helps with retention of employees. Western is also working on customized training and incumbent worker training policies.

LESSONS LEARNED


The travel distance to regional sessions were challenging for partners at the far corners of the region. However, Career Tech partners assisted by connecting locations through video conferencing to reduce travel time and expense. The process provided insight into challenges

and barriers faced each stakeholder group, and informed a shared understanding of the various perspectives to drive development of the strategies and tactics included in the sector plans.

SUSTAINABILITY AND NEXT STEPS

In keeping with the human-centered approach used by the Western Oklahoma Workforce Planning Region, the stakeholder-identified goals, strategies and tactics are intended to guide small-scale testing of ideas with real-time feedback from customers. While the goals represent a longer-term focus, the strategies and tactics may evolve based on feedback and changing circumstances.

In order ensure responsiveness to evolving needs and influences, stakeholders requested and will continue to be engaged in an advisory and support capacity beyond the planning phase through a formal structure that is proactive; monitors performance; recommends necessary adjustments in strategy; looks at out-of-industry trends to inform workforce (e.g., gamer skills that translate to healthcare workforce needs); and, keeps customers at the heart of the process.

				
CAREERS	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	EDUCATION REQUIRED	PROGRAM LENGTH	PROJECTED SALARY
APRN	An Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) is at the top of the nursing ladder. APRNs are specialized RNs including Nurse Anesthetists, Nurse Midwives, Clinical Nurse Specialists, and Nurse Practitioners.	APRNs must hold a national certification, be state licensed, and hold a master's degree in one of the APRN specialties.	6 - 8 years	\$96,460
NURSE PRACTITIONER	Nurse Practitioners are specialized RNs who, among other things, diagnose and treat illnesses, prescribe medicine, order tests and x-rays, and promote health and disease prevention.	Nurse Practitioners must be state licensed and hold at least a master's degree (MSN) in nursing.	6 - 8 years	\$95,070
RN	Registered Nurses (RNs) provide a wide range of healthcare services: Everything from coordinating patient care to educating the public to providing emotional support to patient families.	RNs typically either earn a bachelor's degree (BSN) or an associate's degree (ASN) in nursing. They must be licensed.	ASN: 2 years BSN: 4 years	\$65,470
LPN/LVN	Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) and Licensed Vocational Nurses (LVNs) perform everyday nursing duties under the supervision of doctors and registered nurses.	LPNs and LVNs must finish a state-approved education program and earn a nursing license.	1 year	\$41,540
MEDICAL ASSISTANT	Medical Assistants help physicians, chiropractors, nurses, and other medical professionals with clinical and administrative duties. Medical Assistants aren't in nursing but have similar responsibilities to CNAs.	Medical Assistants typically complete a postsecondary certificate program.	9 months - 1 year	\$29,370
CNA	Certified Nursing Assistants have similar roles to nursing aides and orderlies. CNAs help other medical professionals in caring for patients in hospitals and long term care facilities.	CNAs must finish a state-approved education program and pass a proficiency test.	75 - 150 hours of training	\$24,400

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics (www.bls.gov)

Defining the Problem:

South-Central Oklahoma is seen as the leading region in the State of Oklahoma and Nationally (National Career Pathways Network) by those involved in Career Pathways development.

Based on these outcomes, SOIC refined its work plan to focus on only one issue—

Improving, impacting and connecting Oklahoma's education systems by championing the support and alignment of education to promote business growth and job creation, giving Oklahoma a strategic, sustainable advantage.

Defining Career Pathways:

One can research the term *Career Pathways* to better understand the meaning of the expression until exhaustion sets in. As mentioned, there is a great deal of information available on the Internet from sites such as Wikipedia, the United States Department of Education and the United States Department of Labor. Definitions on these sites will vary, but overall everyone seems to agree on the basic concept and definition.

Simply stated, a Career Pathway:

...is a framework for connecting a series of educational programs with integrated work experiences and supportive services thereby enabling *students and workers* to complete school and work and advance over time to better jobs and higher levels of education and training.

...is a systemic approach that ensures a pipeline of appropriately skilled and credentialed workers ready and available for Oklahoma businesses to hire.

...targets jobs in industries of importance to local economies.

...involves a great deal of career education. Some experts even suggest tying career education to subject matter as early as the five and six-year-old level.

Most importantly, a Career Pathway

...is NOT a program, but a systemic framework for a new way of doing business in our high schools, colleges and communities in support of the workforce needs of business and industry.

The U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, has produced a document* that states that Career pathway programs feature the following characteristics:

- 1) Sector Strategy
- 2) Stackable Education/Training Options
- 3) Contextualized Learning
- 4) Integrated Education & Training
- 5) Industry-Recognized Credentials
- 6) Multiple Entry & Exit Points
- 7) Intensive Wrap-Around Services
- 8) Designed for Working Learners

The Governor's Council for Workforce and Economic Development has adopted the following definitions for the development of a statewide Career Pathways initiative:

Career Pathways Definition

The term "career pathways programs" means a clear sequence of employer validated education coursework and/or training credentials and certifications that include the following components:

- Are aligned with the skill needs of industries important to local, regional, or state economies in which they are located, and reflect the active engagement of employers in targeted ecosystems regarding the skill requirements for employment or career progression in high demand occupations.
- Include the full range of secondary, adult education, and postsecondary education options, including registered apprenticeship, with a non- duplicative progression of courses clearly articulated from one level of instruction to the next, with opportunities to earn postsecondary credits and lead to industry-recognized [and/or] postsecondary credentials.
- Include curriculum and instruction strategies that make work a central con- text for learning (contextual learning) and help students attain work readiness skills.

- Include, as appropriate for the individual, integrated education and training that combine occupational skills training with adult education services, give credit for prior learning, and adopt other strategies that accelerate the educational and career advancement of the participant.
- Lead to the attainment of an industry-recognized degree or credential, which may include stackable credentials of value in the labor market and that articulate progressively to higher-level credentials or degrees.
- Help a worker enter or advance within a specific sector or occupational field, regardless of their skills at the point of entry.
- Include academic and career counseling, wrap-around support services particularly at points of transition, and support the development of an individual career plan.
- Are organized to meet the particular needs of adults, including childcare, accommodating work schedules with flexible and non-semester based scheduling, alternative class times and locations, accessible learning formats, and the innovative use of technology.
- Have the goal of increasing an individual's educational and skills attainment and employment outcomes.

a. The phase of development (conceptual, in initial implementation, being sustained, or, expanding)

Career Pathways can be considered to be well beyond conceptual and implementation in the Region. Although, a successful program is in place, we will begin working with the existing career pathways team to create ladders and lattices. The ladders and lattices is still in a conceptual phase.

Duncan, OK, in August of 2011, was the first city in Oklahoma to have successfully launched a Career Pathways program. Lawton, Oklahoma launched their Career Pathways program in 2016. Currently meetings are being held to implement career pathways in the Southwest area in a multi-community effort.

A project taking shape in the Western Area is an early exposure to career opportunities which is slated to take effect summer 2017. The project began as a way to introduce high school students to the construction industry by the HIREs committee of the Northwest Oklahoma Alliance of which the NOWB is an active member. HIREs stands for Helping Individuals Reach Employment Success. Through this project, high school teachers will participate in tours of area career technology centers to learn more about the available training programs that lead to jobs and the skills necessary to graduate from those training programs. The afternoon will involve several tours of the major employers in the community. The goal of the project is to support teachers by providing them with information about career options for their students who can then translate their coursework into potential job opportunities. The project is also forecasted to help students stay involved in school to graduate, connect to available resources, and make positive career choices.

Communities across the state have followed this lead and implementation occurs community by community. A pure definition would say that we are seeing expansion of the programmatic in the Western Oklahoma Region.

To promote Career Pathways to all public schools in the Western Oklahoma Region by supporting job shadowing, encouraging schools to participant in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) events occurring in the region, coordinating with Southern Oklahoma Impact Coalition Pathway Team to promote the Career Pathways model used by Duncan Public Schools in other Schools in the region, and creating a resource book of companies that would be interested in job shadowing.

b. Workforce Demand (need) – Describe the business workforce need being addressed by the strategy. Indicate the industry(s) and occupations being represented, how the need was determined, and the occupational skills to be addressed.

One business workforce need being addressed is to increase certification of Registered Nurses (RNs) in the Western Region. Based on regional ecosystem industries and workforce and economic development data, found in ONET and CareerOneStop, RNs are a specific occupation in demand in our Western Region.

The occupational skills addressed are to assess patient health problems and needs, develop and implement nursing care plans, and maintain medical records; administer nursing care to ill, injured, convalescent, or disabled patients. RNs may advise patients on health maintenance and disease prevention or provide case management. Registered nurses usually take one of three education paths: a bachelor's degree in nursing, an associate's degree in nursing, or a diploma from an approved nursing program. Registered nurses also must be licensed.

In 2009, the Southwest Oklahoma Impact Coalition (SOIC) concluded a multi-year major task of conducting in-depth personal interviews with nearly 600 businesses and industries in the southwest region of the state utilizing a tool that allowed all the collected data to be aggregated into one information profile. This data was then examined to determine and prioritize major barriers and obstacles to growth and expansion for the purpose of developing a work plan to address these growth-confining issues. Sectors interviewed included manufacturers, service industries, wholesale and retail trade, raw materials production, utilities, convention and tourism and construction. Virtually every type and size of business was interviewed.

The outcome of these surveys was that —across the board— business and industry owners identified the *lack of skilled and trained workers* as the number one barrier to growth in their particular sector. Due to the economic down- turn, in 2010 SOIC conducted focus groups with the manufacturing, health care and energy sectors to validate that the concern still existed and the results showed it did. By definition of a regional area as defined by OWDI #1-2017, the barriers should remain consistent across the entire region.

We will continue our focus on Healthcare, manufacturing, Energy, Aerospace, Information and Financial, and Transportation.

c. Relevance – Indicate the connection between the demand and the priority(ies) for the region.

In 2011, Governor Fallin's Task Force on Economic Development and Job Creation, found that while "Oklahoma has pockets of excellence, but no systemic effort that connects career exploration, career guidance and counseling, mentoring career pathways and related programs to the skills and credentials that are needed by business."

In April 2012, 61% of the Oklahoma executives responding to the Fallin for Business.com survey indicated that the availability of skilled labor was "fair or poor." Certainly, this concern has not diminished and, in fact, according to the businesses surveyed, the need for skilled workers is on the rise.

Coordinated efforts between Title I and other system partners are expanding and supporting learning opportunities for workers at all stages of their education or career paths. Partners offer greater career and education guidance for adults through career and education planning workshops. Workshops are designed to help customers explore local and state labor markets, emerging and demand occupations and result in a training plan. Our One-stops focus on training that is on our Demand Occupations list. The demand occupations lists are created using data sources from the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, EMSI, and the Office of Workforce Development.

d. Strategy – Identify the sector partners and the role of each.

Each Western Oklahoma community has its own Business & Industry, Education/Training, Economic Development, Government and service provider array, so a cookie cutter approach does not work. However, Business and Industry, through economic development and community organizations must engage the secondary and post-secondary education structure to solidify first a communications relationship and following that an approach to identifying specific workforce needs and finally creating workforce development solutions through education and training. Our goal will continue to be the sponsorship and collaboration effort through our local and regional economic development and community organizations to refine our strategy for career pathways development into the future. We are still working on industry sector teams and developing the career ladders and lattices. [See additional sector work information under question 5. Page 32.](#)

e. Funding – Describe available resources that will support the strategy.

The Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development has provided no funding for Career Pathways development as of the publication of this Local Plan. We currently support charging staff time and travel from our existing WIOA grants to support career pathways development and activities. [See additional sector work information under question 5. Page 32.](#)

Despite this challenge, the Western Region is thinking strategically about how to focus on creating a comprehensive system for career pathways. The primary strategy will be to increase and enhance sector partnerships to educate employers about the importance of developing career pathways, share the opportunities that workforce center has available to support this development, and create a systemic flow of information between businesses, workforce centers, and higher education institutions.

Our regional area will continue to utilize Title I Youth, Adult and Dislocated Worker funds in partnership with other entities that provide workforce services, adult and basic education, and rehabilitation services. Together these partner entities expand the access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment. This facilitates the development of career pathways and co-enrollment into core programs, and improves access to activities leading to recognized postsecondary credentials, including industry-recognized certificates and certificates that are portable and stackable.

For Example, In Duncan, the majority of the career pathways programs are supported by the Economic Development Agency. Since the Duncan model has been in place and business views it as a valuable asset, business is contributing to the process as well through internships.

Lawton is in the beginning stages of career pathways and have received donations from local business to pay for the kickoff event and teacher tours.

f. Unfunded Critical Elements – Identify any critical elements for the identified strategy that must be done for the success of the strategy that cannot be met with available resources. This may include: the expansion of an existing strategy, in any phase, from one LWDA to others in the region; the need to procure new training vendors; planning sessions involving multiple partners; training of One-Stop staff; and development of regional data collection systems.

The Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development has provided no funding for Career Pathways development as of the publication of this Local Plan. We currently support charging staff time and travel from our existing WIOA grants to support career pathways. All elements of Career Pathways are critical to support WIOA and the state plan. [See additional sector work information under question 5. Page 32.](#)

The Western Region will continue to identify and leverage cross-agency, cross-program resources. We continue to work with the partner programs to help pay infrastructure cost of our workforce centers. Funds are critically low to host meetings of partners for planning sessions face-to-face so alternate means may have

to be established like conference calls or virtual meeting. One major player in the system is WIOA Title I and since there isn't a state funded agency or clear mechanism to train the Title I staff the increased cost in training will cause problems with the Workforce Board budgets.

6. Describe the coordination of economic and workforce development within the region including:

a. Current economic development organizations engaged in regional planning;

The Western Oklahoma Region works closely with our local and regional economic development agencies. We are current members or directors of regional economic development organizations such as:

- Oklahoma Southwest Alliance, a 20-county regional economic development organization.
- Northwest Oklahoma Alliance, a 19-county regional economic development organization.
- Panhandle Region Economic Development Coalition, a regional economic development organization covering the panhandle of Oklahoma and Southwest Kansas
- SWODA-South Western Oklahoma Development Authority
- Oklahoma Economic Development Authority
- Woods County Economic Development Authority
- SET-Stronger Economies Together/I-40 Corridor
- Western Oklahoma Family Care Center
- Various community industrial authorities

We also have at least one local economic developer on the two boards in the Western Region. All of these agencies and our local economic developers are a part of the regional planning. They participate extensively on Board committees and during meetings, and are invited to be a part of the regional planning meetings and provide valuable input. Since Workforce Development is a key building block for Economic Development, we lend our expertise and assistance as needed to economically grow and sustain our communities.

b. Education and training providers involved with economic development;

Several of our communities already have developed close relationships between the education and training providers and economic development through the implementation of career pathways. We will use those already created partnerships to begin our sector strategy development.

Duncan, for example, through its national recognized career pathways program, brings together Duncan Area Economic Development Foundation(DADEF), South Central Oklahoma Workforce Board, Southwest Oklahoma Impact Coalition, Local Businesses and the training providers including Red River Technology Center, Cameron University and Duncan Public Schools. DADEF is the convening entity and meets on a regular basis to make the connection between Education and Business. Some examples of what has been done are:

- Teacher Tours
- Internship Programs
- STEM Labs
- STEM programs in the K-12 System
- CO2 Car Races
- Business leaders coming into classrooms to talk about careers

A project taking shape in the Western Area is an early exposure to career opportunities which is slated to take effect early summer 2017. The project began as a way to introduce high school students to the construction industry by the HIRE committee of the Northwest Oklahoma Alliance of which the NOWB is an active member. HIRE stands for Helping Individuals Reach Employment Success. Through this project, public school

teachers will participate in tours of area career technology centers to learn more about the available training programs that lead to jobs and the skills necessary to graduate from those training programs. The afternoon will involve tours of the major employers in the community such as Covington Cycles, CF Industries, Head Country, Cook Shack, MJ&H Fabrications, Tool & Die Shop, USG-Southard, and Great Salt Plains Health. The goal of the project is to support teachers by providing them with information about career options for their students who can then translate their coursework into potential job opportunities. The project is also forecasted to help students stay involved in school to graduate, connect to available resources, and make positive career choices. All of these programs require business and Training Providers to work together and build closer relationships.

a. Current businesses involved with economic development organizations; and,

Western Oklahoma planning region is in the beginning stages of sector strategy development. Although we have identified health care as our first sector strategy, the discussion with our economic development organizations regarding the businesses involved with economic development in the region has not taken place. We will begin our sector strategy meetings and framework by October 2017. [See additional sector work information under question 5. Page 32.](#)

b. Targeted businesses from emerging sectors/industries.

Western Oklahoma planning region is in the beginning stages of sector strategy development. Although we have identified health care as our first sector strategy, we have not yet developed a list of targeted businesses in the region but plan to include:

- Assisted living facilities
- Local community hospitals clinics

Upon completion of this plan, the western planning region will develop a complete list of partners. Those partners will meet and begin the framework by October 2017. [See additional sector work information under question 5. Page 32.](#)

7. Describe the development and implementation of joint regional services strategies for industry sector partnerships/strategies. List the industry sector partnerships and, for each, describe:

Sector strategies and career pathways are being developed to support and align with the five ecosystems (economic systems) of the state: Aerospace and Defense, Agriculture and Biosciences, Energy, Information and Financial Services and Transportation and Distribution, to ensure Oklahomans are exposed to those in-demand careers in wealth generating industries. In addition to the five state-dictated ecosystems, it is pertinent to include the complimentary ecosystem of health care which is projected to have the highest growth in Oklahoma at 11%. Registered Nurses and Nurse's Aides are two of the fastest growing occupations in the state and the western Oklahoma region. These occupations, especially Registered Nurses, are high demand, high growth occupations that offer high wages. In all projected occupations by 2020, health care will be the industry with the highest growth.

The Western Oklahoma Region has selected Health care as the primary sector strategy industry focus. The Western Region engages local business members by being a business led and business driven boards. Board staff work closely with business members to listen to their needs when developing policy and determining demand occupations. We will use the newly developed sector strategy framework to help further meet business needs.

The Western Regional Planning Area is creating a Sector Strategy Framework. The region will use this framework to develop sector strategies. Sector Strategies are on-going and the region will expand its sector strategies as we receive changing guidance from the state. We will use current data to review high wage, high demand occupations and carefully select the industries sectors to begin our focus. [See additional sector work information under question 5. Page 32.](#)

a. The phase of development (conceptual, in initial implementation, being sustained, or, expanding)

The phase of development is conceptual at this time for the Western Region. Sector partnerships are a key driver for success in the Western Region because the nature of these communities requires collaboration and partnership for the success of the community. One strategy of the Western Region will be to formalize the partnerships through MOUs and other formal agreements when appropriate, but it's also important to recognize that the informal sector partnerships play a large role in workforce development in the Western region.

The Western Planning Region developed a sector strategy framework to begin working on regional sector strategies. We plan to focus on the health care industry as the first sector strategy and our goal is to have the health care sector strategy completed by July, 2018. We will then expand our sector strategy framework to include the other high demand-high wage occupations including [Update: Healthcare strategies and framework is completed, we will continue to work on strategies to increase the number of people entering the healthcare industry.](#)

Based on 2015 job numbers there are 33,840 jobs in the Health Care ecosystem in the Western Oklahoma Planning Region with average wages of \$45,270. As a projection of demand, by 2025 total employment in the Health Care ecosystem will grow to 40,510 jobs in Western Oklahoma, an increase of 6,670 jobs for the region.

The list below encompasses some of the critical occupations for the Health Care ecosystem in Western Oklahoma. Update: [As a result of our sector work, South Central has implemented policy to increase the income eligibility requirements on all healthcare occupations on the demand occupation list. Anyone entering a healthcare occupation can be served under category 4 of the priority of service policy. WOWDA has implemented the use of the Priorities as per Federal, State and Local guidance to increase the number of individuals being served for occupations such as Nursing as well as using the Career Pathways to upskill individuals seeing promotion or higher paying jobs.](#)

SOC	Industry	Median Hourly Earnings	Education Level
29-1141	Registered Nurses	\$26.24	Associate's degree
31-1014	Nursing Assistants	\$10.21	Postsecondary non-degree award
39-9021	Personal Care Aides	\$8.66	Short-term on-the-job training
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	\$17.25	Postsecondary non-degree award
31-1011	Home Health Aides	\$9.26	Short-term on-the-job training
31-9091	Dental Assistants	\$16.59	Postsecondary non-degree award
31-9092	Medical Assistants	\$11.77	Postsecondary non-degree award
29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians	\$13.22	Moderate-term on-the-job training
11-9111	Medical and Health Services Managers	\$35.10	Bachelor's degree
29-1051	Pharmacists	\$51.96	Doctoral or professional degree

Health Care was identified as our most critical industry. According to www.onetonline.org a sample of key skills needed in health care occupations are:

- **Speaking** — Talking to others to convey information effectively.
- **Active Listening** — Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.

- **Reading Comprehension** — Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents.
- **Social Perceptiveness** — Being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react as they do.
- **Monitoring** — Monitoring/Assessing performance of yourself, other individuals, or organizations to make improvements or take corrective action.
- **Service Orientation** — Actively looking for ways to help people.
- **Coordination** — Adjusting actions in relation to others' actions.

When completing our framework, we will look at the skills of all occupations that meet our demand occupation requirements.

We will then use the framework to develop industry sectors for the following:

- Aerospace and defense
- Energy
- Agriculture and Bioscience
- Information and Financial Services
- Transportation and distribution

b. Workforce Demand (need) – Describe the business workforce need being addressed by the strategy. Indicate the industry(s) being represented, how the need was determined, the occupational skills to be developed, the number of jobs being addressed, and the timeframe(s) associated with the need.

Based on 2015 job numbers there are 33,840 jobs in the Health Care ecosystem in the Western Oklahoma Planning Region with average wages of \$45,270. As a projection of demand, by 2025 total employment in the Health Care ecosystem will grow to 40,510 jobs in Western Oklahoma, an increase of 6,670 jobs for the region. Health care occupations combined have more high-skilled, high-wage openings than any other industry.

*information provided by the Office of Workforce Development in the Western Planning Region document.

The Western Region looked at the following information to determine workforce need:

- We looked at occupations most in demand in our region.
- We then compared those openings to occupations that lead to a self-sufficient wage.
- Healthcare has the highest number of projected job openings in our region. The majority of healthcare occupations result in a self-sufficient wage. Occupations that do not meet a self-sufficient wage, are on a career path to higher wage occupations.

Other occupations that we will address in the future are:

- Aerospace and defense 22,700 openings
- Energy 26,400 openings
- Agriculture and Bioscience 24,830 openings
- Information and Financial Services 13,540 openings
- Transportation and distribution 20,290 openings

c. Relevance – Indicate the connection between the demand and the priority(ies) for the region.

Where workforce center staff have been hugely valuable is in getting program recipients ready for work, the Department of Rehabilitative Services and workforce centers have always worked closely in this region because their partnership allows staff to work together on career fairs and to help recruit participants jointly.

Sector Strategies are beginning in our region and we will expand our sector strategies as we receive changing guidance from the state. We will use current data from OESC, EMSI and the Office of Workforce Development to review high wage, high demand occupations and carefully select the sectors to begin our focus. Our region will not just look at demand because many of the occupations that have the highest number of job openings, are low wage and do not require training. [See additional sector work information under question 5. Page 32.](#)

d. Strategy – Identify the sector partners and the role of each.

WIOA provides opportunities for more sector partnerships with the K-12 school system since there is a stronger focus on youth. The workforce center staff needs to focus on talking to students during senior year and to provide presentations to juniors and seniors in the classroom. For rural workforce centers with limited staff, it is often difficult to have staff out in the community talking to businesses because it would require closing the workforce office, primarily with offices with only one staff member. In addition, many employers have a mistaken perception that the workforce centers are solely for unemployment benefits, so marketing and outreach opportunities are needed to continue to engage employers. One future strategy will be for the Western Region to have workforce center staff explore new ways to increase outreach, marketing, and direct connections with small businesses over the next four years. An additional strategy will be to coordinate the updating of Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) plans through the sector partnerships represented in the regional planning group. This effort is an opportunity for partners to connect, collectively describe their individual community strategy, share drafts, and give feedback before submitting to identify areas for collaboration or joint funding. One area of opportunity is in apprenticeship programs - there is a lack of presence for these programs in the Western Region, so one component of this plan will be to engage programs from the region or other major regions nearby to recruit these programs to the Western Region. With support at the statewide level, the Western Region can continue to increase its marketing and branding efforts to create additional name recognition and drive demand from employers to engage in partnerships. It will be important to connect workforce trends in this area directly to businesses so they can respond appropriately. [Update: Both local areas received grants to assist with new signage and marketing of the Oklahoma Works and American Job Center.](#)

The business board members will lead the partners in the development of Sector Strategies. Sector Strategy collaborators in Western Oklahoma include: Business and Industry, Workforce Development Boards and Service Providers, Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, one-stop centers, students and parents/guardians, State Department of Education (K-12), Adult Education, Higher Education, Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education, Department of Rehabilitation Services, Department of Human Services, After School Network, Oklahoma Manufacturing Alliance, Veteran's Affairs, Private staffing agencies, Professional, trade and labor organizations, Community-based organizations, Faith-based organizations, Department of Corrections, Oklahoma Office of Juvenile Affairs, Economic Developers, Chambers of Commerce, Regional Economic Development Organizations, Minority organizations (tribes, Hispanic, traditionally black institutions), Elected officials - local and state, Oklahoma Department of Commerce, Department of Corrections, and Private foundations.

Roles for each of the sector partners will vary by input from the directors and members with collected workforce data that guides our local areas employment and workforce skill set needs. Again, our region selected the Health care sector. Our regional hospitals and health care producing education and training institutions are willing to collaborate with producing a skilled workforce to fill health care positions in Western Oklahoma. The next steps will be to convene business, education and partner agencies to help fill the gap in our top industries. Once the group is established, they, as a group will determine the need for MOU's, meetings or partnerships.

e. Funding – Describe available resources that will support the strategy.

Our regional area will continue to utilize Title I Youth, Adult and Dislocated Worker funds in partnership with other entities that provide workforce services, adult and basic education, and rehabilitation services. Together these partner entities expand the access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment. The same partners are also willing to provide staff time to working with business on developing sector strategies. At this time, we have no other resources to support the strategy.

The state can play several broad roles to sustain strategies, either by providing funding (state and/or federal) directly to regions, and/or by helping regions to develop the capacity at the regional level to fund their initiatives. However, the Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development has provided no additional funding for Sector Strategy development as of the publication of this Regional Plan. [See additional sector work information under question 5. Page 32.](#)

f. Unfunded Critical Elements – Identify any critical elements for the identified strategy that must be done for the success of the strategy that cannot be met with available resources. This may include: the expansion of an existing strategy, in any phase, from one LWDA to others in the region; the need to procure new training vendors; planning sessions involving multiple partners; training of One-Stop staff; and development of regional data collection systems.

The unfunded critical elements in the Western Region is funding of personnel in the Workforce Centers. The Case Managers within the Workforce Centers are to assist the client in attaining the necessary credentials and receive the supportive services available to achieve their career pathway. The Governor’s Council for Workforce and Economic Development has set a state goal of 40% of WIOA local funding spent on client training dollars only. This percentage does not include supportive services, personnel, and lease/rental of Workforce Centers. The 40% is not feasible at this time, so work must be done as a region on cost sharing to meet the state goal.

The Western Region will continue to identify and leverage cross-agency, cross-program resources.

The Western Oklahoma Region’s Sector Strategy initiative is still in its beginning stages. It would be critical to fund all phases, including the expansion of an existing strategy, in any phase, from one LWDA to our region; the need to procure new training vendors; planning sessions involving multiple partners; training of One-Stop staff; and development of regional data collection systems. As industry sector work groups are formed, each group will work as a team to identify any resources available to support the strategy. [See additional sector work information under question 5. Page 32.](#)

8. Describe efforts that have taken place or anticipated efforts to assess the need for and establish regional services strategies, including the use of cooperative service delivery agreements.

The Western planning region has not developed any regional service strategies or cooperative service delivery agreements but recognize the need. Our vision will be 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 region’s economy. In realizing this vision, key industry leaders, workforce, education, and economic development partners will come together to develop a plan at the regional level that will outline strategies for aligning resources and investments to meet the common goal for developing regional talent. The Western Planning region will use our sector strategy framework to develop the health care sector strategy as identified by the region as critical industry. We will focus on the health care industry for the first year and then expand to other in demand industries as they are identified by the region. [See additional sector work information under question 5. Page 32.](#)

In addition, describe the strategies and services that will be used to:

- a. Engage employers in workforce development programs, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations;

The Local Workforce Boards in the Western Oklahoma Planning Region bring together leaders from business, government, education, and non-profit sectors, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations at quarterly board meetings, to jointly develop ways to coordinate workforce development regional services strategies. Additionally, our Board works to develop creative solutions that expand and improve our region's workforce, providing better jobs for workers and a skilled workforce for business and industry.

The Western Region business board members include:

F4 Land and Cattle	Southwestern Medical Center	Goodyear Tire and Rubber
Lasill Aviation	Fort Sill Training Complex	Cotton Electric
Family Dollar	Bank of Commerce	Delaware Nation Industries
Luckinbill, Inc.	Seaboard Foods	Wilkins Nursing and Rehabilitation
Pioneer Telephone	Panhandle Telephone	Alliance Health Woodward
MidAmerica Door	Express Pros	Woodward Iodine
OG&E	Supported Community Lifestyles	Quality Integrated Services, Inc.
McDonalds	AEP/PSO	Bar-S
Merrifield Office Supply	Boeing	Great Plains Regional Medical Center
Altus Airforce Civilian Corp	Sports Chassis Freightliner	

2017 and 2019 Board meetings for South Central are held in January, March, June and September

2017 and 2019 Board meetings for Western are scheduled in January, April, July, and October

- b. Provide business services to employers;

The Western Oklahoma Planning Region is examining business service opportunities to employers based on a larger footprint and forecasted funding increases to provide:

- Business Start-Up Assistance/Services: Job postings, referrals, customized recruitment, and interview facilities
- Business Expansion Assistance/Services: Job postings, referrals, customized recruitment, interview facilities, internships, OJT, and work experience
- Business Retention Assistance/Services: Services listed above under Business Expansion assistance plus employer workshops (topics tailored to the needs of local business), referrals to partner agencies
- Business Information Exchange: labor market information, employer forums, and job fairs
- Employee Recruitment Assistance/Services: Job Postings, customized recruitment, job descriptions, prescreening, interviewing, and job fairs
- Employee Training Services: Skill upgrades, internships, classroom training, internet-based training, OJT, customized training

Layoff Assistance: "Rapid response" orientations of available services to laid-off employees through the Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development.

The above services will be provided in our local one stop centers in collaboration with our center partners. Our One Stop operators will work with our partner agencies to determine what services are existing and any new services that could be provided.

c. Manage regional rapid response activities;

Rapid Response activities, the responsibility of the Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development's Rapid Response Team and are fully supported by the Western Oklahoma Region and the area's one-stop system partners. When mass layoffs or plant closures occur the state Rapid Response Team notifies the board staff which takes immediate steps to augment the state team with its designated Rapid Response members and members of the Business Services Team, to quickly respond to the plant closure/mass layoff in order to help workers find another appropriate job to return them to the workforce as quickly as possible. Quick coordination between state and local team members is believed by the board to be vitally important because by rapidly responding to the situation, the pain and anguish of affected dislocated workers can be minimized. This state and local partnership works extremely well. Meetings with affected employers and workers are scheduled at the convenience of the employer—day or night, whenever possible, prior to the closure or layoff, onsite at the company, and on company time.

At these meetings, and/or when they visit an area Workforce Oklahoma Center, information on services focus on ensuring that affected workers are aware of all the services that are available—Unemployment Insurance, childcare assistance, health insurance information, job search assistance, labor market information, financial and stress management assistance, and training services assistance. Most importantly, laid-off workers or workers facing impending layoff are also informed of the board's Targeted Industries by board staff, Business Services Team representatives, and one-stop leadership management teams during the Rapid Response meetings, and/or when they come to a center for assistance. If affected workers are unable to find employment, then training services will be offered by WIOA Title I or other center partners if eligibility is met. If, for instance, an affected worker does find employment, but it pays a wage less than 80% of their wage or salary equivalent at the time of layoff, training services will be provided. In either case, however, training will only be approved and funded if the training program leads to employment in one of the board's Targeted Industry Demand Occupations. The region is committed to helping dislocated workers get back on their feet as quickly as possible, but would like to see them obtain new employment in occupations that are deemed most in demand in the area. In addition, to the services already mentioned, Job Fairs are scheduled frequently in the region to specifically assist this targeted group or any other person who wants employment.

d. Incorporate relevant secondary and post-secondary education programs and activities within the one-stop delivery system;

All Local Workforce Boards in the Western Oklahoma region have members and representatives from both Secondary and Post-Secondary education programs. Our area works closely with our board members as well as our public schools, technology centers, and regional colleges and universities.

- South Central Oklahoma Workforce Board works with Duncan public schools, Red River Technology Center, Cameron University, Duncan Area Economic Development Foundation and local business on career pathways. The group is currently working on a high school internship program to further enhance the career pathway initiative already in place.
- South Central Oklahoma Workforce Board works with Lawton public schools, Great Plains Technology Center, Cameron University, The Lawton Chamber, local core partners and local business on career pathways. Lawton held a career pathway kickoff event in June of 2016. Lawton is currently holding a hands-on soft skills event in several of the Lawton High Schools. This event brings business into the classroom to help teach students how to dress, interview skills, and what employers expect from employees.
- Northwest HIREs Teach Tour Project A project taking shape in the Western Area is an early exposure to career opportunities which is slated to take effect summer 2017. The project began as a way to introduce high school students to the construction industry by the HIREs committee of the Northwest Oklahoma Alliance of which the NOWB is an active member. HIREs stands for Helping Individuals Reach Employment Success. Through this project, high school teachers will participate in tours of area

career technology centers to learn more about the available training programs that lead to jobs and the skills necessary to graduate from those training programs. The afternoon will involve several tours of the major employers in the community. The goal of the project is to support teachers by providing them with information about career options for their students who can then translate their coursework into potential job opportunities. The project is also forecasted to help students stay involved in school to graduate, connect to available resources, and make positive career choices.

e. Incorporate within the one-stop delivery system the adult education and literacy activities under WIOA Title II, including the review of applications submitted under Title II;

All Regional Workforce Board's Workforce Centers work closely with the Title II Adult Education and Literacy programs to provide access to our centers. Title II services, such as GED preparation classes, are offered in our centers. If needed, our WIOA Talent Development Specialist can co-enroll Title II customers (if eligible) to further their education requirements. Workforce Boards will review the Title II applications and determine if the local application is in alignment with their local plans. The workforce boards will return their recommendations to the ODCTE, who will then use that information to determine who will be the ABE providers within that workforce area.

Adult Basic Education (ABE) offers Adult Education and Literacy activities, including career services that will assist adults in obtaining skills that --

- (A) are necessary to becoming full partners in the educational development of their children; and
- (B) lead to sustainable improvements in the economic opportunities for their family.¹

Career services provided by ABE include:

- ✓ English language acquisition programs
- ✓ Integrated education and training programs
- ✓ Financial literacy services
- ✓ Career planning
- ✓ Development of learning skills
- ✓ Development of communication skills
- ✓ Development of interviewing skills
- ✓ Development of punctuality
- ✓ Development of personal maintenance skills
- ✓ Development of professional conduct
- ✓ Career counseling, as appropriate
- ✓ Initial Assessment of Skill Levels

Pursuant to Section 203(4) of WIOA, eligibility for these services includes any person:

- (A) who has attained 16 years of age;
- (B) who is not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law; and
- (C) who—
 - (i) is basic skills deficient;
 - (ii) does not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and has not achieved an equivalent level of education; or
 - (iii) is an English language learner.

Access.

The services of the ABE will be available to the American Job Center network in Western Oklahoma through a direct linkage.

Referrals.

ABE identifies customers -- including students, family members, and businesses -- who are in need of additional career services, referrals may be made to our affiliate American Job Centers

It is recommended that customers should call the American Job Center first to make an appointment. Walk-in customers are also accepted, although the availability of resources may be limited or delayed.

As a general rule, career services for job-seekers are limited to individuals who are eligible to work in the United States. There may be additional limitations, depending on the service. For example, some individualized services are only available to individuals who meet certain eligibility criteria related to family income, work history, etc.

Pursuant to the Jobs For Veterans Act, eligible veterans and covered spouses receive priority of service.

f. Incorporate within the one-stop delivery system the provisions of vocational rehabilitation services under Title IV;

All efforts in the Western Oklahoma Planning Region will be made to be in compliance with guidance as referenced in the WIOA Plan for the State of Oklahoma, Program-Specifics for Vocational Rehabilitation; further, "The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA, Sec. 102(b)(D)(iii). Each center has been accessed for accessibility and are currently taking steps to correct any issues. The entire system wants to provide access for all.

Oklahoma Works Workforce System Access for All Certification Process

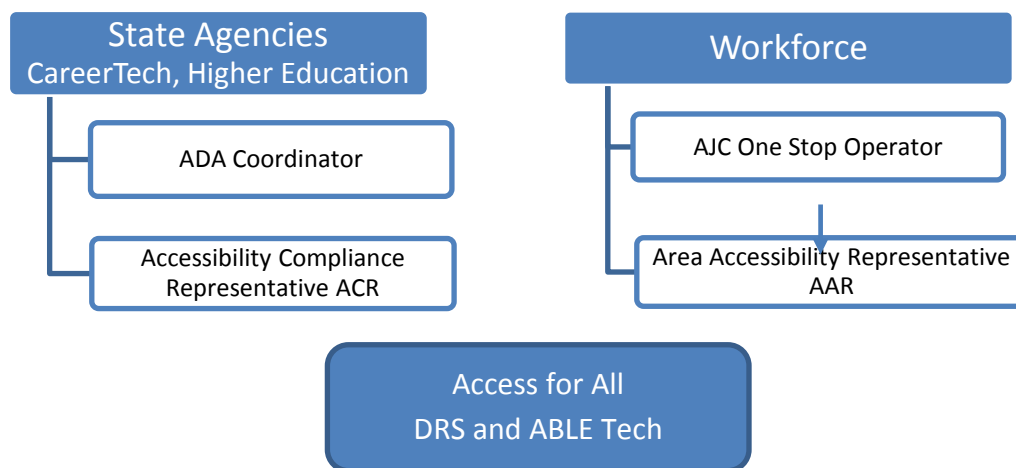
There are two parts to the Oklahoma Works Workforce System Access for All (referred to as "Access for All" from this point on) Certification in Oklahoma. One considers accessibility in the physical space and the other considers accessibility in technology. Both focus on the environments that Job Seekers interact with when participating in services provided through the Oklahoma Works Workforce System Partners. In the end, Oklahoma Works Workforce System Partners and Workforce Areas will work through an Access for All Accessibility Process.

The [Roadmap for Physical and Technology Accessibility Standards Certification](#) specifies steps required to attain certification under the Access for All initiative. The Roadmap provides an outline of the required steps and introduces some of the tools available to help Entities work toward certification.

As Entities move toward certification in either physical or ICT accessibility, Access for All anticipates that there will be times when a physical location or ICT resource cannot be made accessible quickly. The Access for All Equally Effective Alternative Access Plan will help Entities to detail the plans that they will implement when a Job Seeker with a disability tries to use those physical locations or ICT resources.

A key component of the Access for All certification is the presence of a local coordinator who is the point of contact between Workforce System Entities and Access for All. This role varies based on the type of Entity.

- State agencies should have an ADA Coordinator identified. The ADA Coordinator typically oversees an agency’s efforts to identify and remove barriers that keep job seekers with disabilities from accessing programs, services and activities or from practicing effective communication. The ADA Coordinator in the Access for All initiative will serve as point of contact and agency subject matter expert on physical and program access.
- State agencies should also have an Accessibility Compliance Representative, or ACR. The ACR focuses on an agency’s information and communication technology (ICT) accessibility efforts. The ACR in the Access for All initiative will serve as point of contact and agency subject matter expert on information and communication technology access.
- Entities such as American Job Centers shall designate an Area Accessibility Representative, or AAR. The AAR is unique to Entities that do not otherwise have an ADA Coordinator or ACR identified. The AAR in the Access for All initiative serves as a coordinator and point of contact between the Entity and Access for All in both physical and ICT access. The AAR may be asked to coordinate activities related to certification as well. American Job Centers maintain a one-stop operator; it is recommended that the one-stop operator also be appointed as the AAR.



Any questions about the Access for All certification process or the above roles are welcome. Entities may [submit questions about the Certification process online](http://bit.ly/AccessQuestion) (<http://bit.ly/AccessQuestion>).

Physical Accessibility

Access for All will assist the Oklahoma Works Workforce System Partners in working toward certification of their physical locations in the following ways. Access for All will assess physical locations and review them for compliance with the ADA Standards for Accessible Design and make recommendations for ways in which any noted deficiencies may be corrected. Access for All will work with the Oklahoma Works Workforce System ADA Coordinators or their designees to design and implement a systematic process for ensuring that leased and purchased spaces are thoroughly reviewed for compliance with the ADA Standards prior to taking possession.

At the Workforce System Area level, each Area will designate an Area Accessibility Representative, or AAR. Access for All will work with each AAR to provide them the training they will need in order to identify the physical accessibility barriers most commonly encountered in most locations. Areas for which training shall be provided include:

- Parking Areas

- Accessible Routes
- Ramps
- Entrances and Doors
- Signage
- Interior Spaces
- Bathrooms

The AAR can contact Access for All to request information and guidance for situations outside their levels of expertise. Ensuring that knowledge of design requirements are distributed among the Workforce System will help in preventing and ameliorating barriers for physical access.

You can [submit questions about the Certification process online](http://bit.ly/AccessQuestion) (<http://bit.ly/AccessQuestion>).

Information and Communication Technology Accessibility

Access for All looks at the processes and people involved in creating accessible technology environments for Job Seekers. In state agencies, the Career and Technical Education system and higher education institutions the Certification asks for each entity to report its designated Accessibility Compliance Representative, or ACR. The ACR serves as the point of contact between the entity and Access for All, as well as being the point of contact within the entity. The AAR's role is different than that of the ACR. An AAR will serve primarily as a coordinator of activity between the Workforce System Area and Access for All.

Access for All will assist the Oklahoma Works Workforce System Partners in working toward certification in technology accessibility by providing a framework. This framework consists of tools to help to identify and prioritize technology tools offered to Job Seekers. This will capture all of the technology that Job Seekers use, whether they come from within an entity or from outside of the entity. Then, each entity will answer a questionnaire that asks about policy and processes to help to make sure that accessibility is always part of the conversation about technology use. Based on the technology inventory and questionnaire (see "Resources" below), Access for All will work with each entity that seeks certification to detail the entity's efforts in the context of five areas, where applicable:

- Policy and Procedure
- Procurement and Acquisition
- Web sites and Software
- Non-web Content (Word, PowerPoint, PDF, for example)
- Multimedia

Access for All will help to define the full scope of the entity's certification steps and to set achievable goals within that scope. Ultimately, certification steps for entities that seek certification depend on the kind of technology that the entity serves up to Job Seekers.

You can [submit questions about the Certification process online](http://bit.ly/AccessQuestion) (<http://bit.ly/AccessQuestion>).

Additional Access for All Certification Resources

- The ADA Physical Accessibility Checklist is available in two formats: [ADA Checklist in Word](#) and [ADA Checklist in PDF](#). This accessibility checklist has been provided to assist in identifying key aspects of accessibility for site locations. It conforms to the latest accessibility guidelines contained in the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design. It has helpful notes and visual aids to guide the individuals utilizing it to be better able to accurately assess a given location for compliance with the Standards.
- [ICT Accessibility Checkpoints](#) look at process and policy that support an independent and sustained ICT accessibility effort.

- Tools are available to help to guide you through the certification process in more detail. Each tool fits into a different timeframe in the ICT accessibility certification process.
 - Information and Communication Technology Inventory
 - This asks that the Entity identify all of the technology that it uses to provide access to programs, services or activities or to communicate with all Job Seekers. The inventory asks to identify the tool, the Entity that owns or administers the tool, and the importance of the tool to the Job Seeker’s work with the Entity.
 - Access for All ICT Accessibility Program Questionnaire
 - This guides the Entity through a set of questions that help to identify challenges and opportunities in beginning and sustaining activities around ICT accessibility. The questionnaire helps to more specifically measure where an Entity is with respect to ICT accessibility processes, training and administration. It will be used to track progress over time as well.

UPDATE:

WOWDA has purchased “Access for all Bags” for all Affiliate Centers in the area. The Comprehensive Center was already equipped with an “Access for all Bag”. The next step is to purchase the established and upcoming Specialty Centers the basic Access tools for their customers. The Weatherford Oklahoma Works Center is 100% ADA compliant and all other center in the WOWDA are under an EEAAP and will continues to work towards the 100% compliance mark.

Surveys to Employers, Employees and Job Seekers

Access for All will assist with a survey that asks employers, service provider employees and job seekers about their experience with the Workforce System. Access for All will assist by providing survey questions that ask these audiences specific questions about their readiness and satisfaction with employers and the Oklahoma Works Workforce Development System.

Surveys will begin to circulate to these audiences during the Fourth Quarter of Program Year 2018 (April-June, 2018). **Surveys are in place and results of surveys are reported at all board meetings.**

Department of Rehabilitation Services has drafted a cooperative agreement and it has been sent to the partner agencies for review. This agreement will be executed as soon as it is released.

g. Strengthen linkages between the one stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs; and,

Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 20-15, states:

“UI programs play a vital role in the comprehensive, integrated workforce system by providing income support benefits to eligible individuals, who continue to be important customers of the workforce system.”

The partners in Western Oklahoma’s workforce development system have a continuing interest in strengthening the linkages between our system and the unemployment insurance programs authorized under state and federal law.

Training and Employment Guidance Letter 16-16, Attachment II, goes on to identify some of the needs of UI claimants and how they are met by a properly-designed workforce development system:

- Provision of information and assistance regarding filing claims under UI programs, including meaningful assistance to individuals seeking assistance in filing a claim.

- The American Job Center has current labor market information and provides a wide array of re-employment services free of charge.
- Employment Service staff can refer claimants to job openings in the local area, or in other parts of the State or country if the claimant is willing to relocate.
- Referral to various training programs.
- Assistance in establishing eligibility for programs of financial aid assistance for training and education programs not provided under WIOA.
- If job openings in current field are limited, can offer testing and counseling to determine other appropriate jobs for the claimant.
- Claimants who believe they have special needs or considerations, such as physical needs, which may prevent them from getting a job, can be referred to other agencies for help with those needs.

h. Ensure priority for adult career and training services will be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient.

Under WIOA, priority must be given to veterans, recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient in the provision of individualized career services and training services. Priority must be provided regardless of the level of funds received by the local Board. The One Stop Center Operator/Manager is given a copy of the priority of services policy. Each board has a local policy that follows WIOA regulations.

Veterans and eligible spouses continue to receive priority of service for all WIOA programs. Because WIOA programs are statutorily required to provide priority for public assistance, low-income and basic skills deficient individuals, priority at the local Workforce Centers must be provided in the following order:

1. First, to veterans and eligible spouses who are also recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals or individuals who are basic skills deficient would receive first priority for services provided with WIOA adult formula funds.
2. Second, to non-covered persons (that is, individuals who are not veterans or eligible spouses) who are included in the groups given priority because of being recipients of public assistance, low income or basic skills deficient.
3. Third to veterans and eligible spouses who are not included in the group of public assistance, low income or basic skills deficient.
4. Last, to non-covered persons outside the groups given priority under this policy.

WIOA provides federal funds to assist states and local workforce development systems to increase the employment, retention, earnings and occupational skill attainment of workers, particularly those individuals with barriers to employment. Oklahoma and the Area have programs and supports in place in serving individuals with barriers to employment through the Oklahoma Works initiative and partnerships and local collaborative efforts with economic development organizations, community based organizations, and faith based organizations.

All One-Stop Centers have been given clear strategies for providing veterans and eligible spouses of veterans, recipients of public assistance, low income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient with the highest quality service at every phase of services offered. This can range from basic functions of the One-Stop System, such as assistance with job search and identification of needed skills, to more customized initiatives such as creating career pathways, with corresponding competency assessments and training opportunities, or other strategies which allow covered persons to advance their careers in high growth sectors of the economy.

The policy above would be followed if two or more people walked into a center at the same time seeking training services.

9. Describe how administrative cost arrangements have been coordinated, including pooling funds for administrative costs, as appropriate.

The Western and South Central Workforce Investment Areas (Western Oklahoma Planning Region) agree to share, as appropriate, administrative costs in accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA), 679.00 and forthcoming guidance from the Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development (OOWD), not published as of the date of this Regional Plan. The primary concern of WIOA and OOWD's concern for cost sharing with regionalization is two-fold. First and foremost, to ensure that workforce customers are receiving maximum funds to support their needs for employment/re-employment and ancillary services. This is driven by WIOA and the Governor of the State of Oklahoma's guidance, through OOWD, with a target of 40% to recipients by PY2018. Second, with forecast reductions of federal and state funding, to ensure that each administrative and/or pooling of funds cost is vetted and reduced to a minimum required level commensurate with market service pricing, (i.e., lowest market cost of fiscal agency, employer of record, service provision, etc.)

The desired end-state is to "cost share" via a business model that will maximize participant funding while simultaneously reducing operational and overhead costs. These costs may include, but are not limited to: staffing, service provision, and human resources support. The Western Oklahoma Planning Region must consider the most cost effective options for our area, while remaining in compliance the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) circulars regarding avoidance of conflict of interest and procurement of services.

The information above was included in Milestone #3 and was accepted by the Office of Workforce Development 02/23/2017. We currently have no Administrative cost pools in place as a region.

10. Describe the coordination amongst the planning region for the provision of transportation, including:

Coordination amongst the Western Oklahoma Planning Region for the provision of transportation is currently minimal at best. The provision of transportation and other supportive services could be better coordinated and enhanced through a regional agreement with transportation providers (e.g. transportation authorities) and other providers of support services (e.g. Department of Human Service offices, etc.).

a. An outline of transportation issues related to workforce development and ways the region will address identified needs.

Transportation has been and continues to be a challenge and barrier for many individuals seeking employment in the Western region. There are limited public transportation options: Lawton Area Transit, Red River Transportation, Washita Valley Transportation, OSU-Stillwater Community Transit System, Enid Transit, local independent taxi services, and supportive services available for eligible participants of department of human service, department of rehabilitation services, and WIOA Title I programs. There is not a comprehensive system that addresses the full range of transportation needs faced by individuals. The transportation options available are limited on the hours of service that may not accommodate an employer's schedule. Due to the scarcity of public transportation resources, there are many private transportation companies and some community action agencies providing limited transportation services to their clients. Just as WIOA provides supportive services and/or training costs to its clients, Department of Human Services (DHS) and Vocational Rehabilitation do, as well. Co-enrollment of participants in multiple programs allows for the sharing of resources as one entity may cover training costs and another federal/state program covers the supportive services costs, or vice versa.

An opportunity that would enhance the provision of transportation services in the region would be arrangements with faith-based organizations to utilize their buses/vans during the week when many set idle.

Churches, Mosques and Synagogues may be interested in serving their communities in this way. Of course, faith-based organizations could also be approached to provide other supportive services such as meals, access to clothes closets, food closets, etc. Churches, Mosques and Synagogues are aware of needs in their communities, but may not know how to get involved. Marketing plans and materials and MOUs could be shared between the current local areas.

There are several Sovereign Native American Nations within the Western Oklahoma Planning Region. Coordination, planning and sharing of services may be an option; however, as they are Sovereign Nations, it would be on a purely voluntary basis and could require state-level compact arrangements.

Information provided by the OOWD showed commuter patterns for the Western Planning Region that 82.7% live and work in the region, 10.6% live in the region, but commute outside the region for work, and 6.7% live outside the region, but commute into the region for work. One thing of interest was – and the US Census Bureau staff, who collect this data, may need to note changes in work structure to capture this nuance – that several of that 10.6% who reported working outside the region were extreme distances away from their reported work site; one reported working in Anchorage, Alaska while several worked in Virginia, DC, Florida, Georgia, etc. Clearly, the survey is capturing teleworkers as well as those employees who physically travel to either another Oklahoma county outside the region or to the border counties in other states. With a trend toward teleworking, the world has gotten much larger in terms of finding employment.

b. Whether the provision of transportation services can be enhanced, and if so, how.

In 10d below, we address the processes that we will take to enhance the transportation services in our area.

c. What organizations currently provide or could provide transportation services – list

- Southwest Transit – Provides demand response service for seniors and persons with disabilities in Altus, Hollis, Mangum, and Granite. Service between Altus and Lawton are provided three times a week.
- Lawton Area Transit – In Lawton City Limits only
- Red River Transportation - Demand Response public transportation service is provided in selected cities within the counties of Roger Mills, Beckham, Custer, Washita, Kiowa, Tillman, Cotton, Jefferson, Stephens, Woodward, Caddo, Carter, Comanche, Ellis, Dewey, and Canadian. Red River also provides contractual services to businesses, schools and health providers. All services are open to the public.
- Washita Valley Transportation - Demand response service is provided to the towns of Chickasha, Rush Springs, Alex, Bradley, Ninnekah, Minco, Tuttle, Amber, Pocasset, and Verden in Grady County.
- OSU-Stillwater Community Transit System - OSU-Stillwater Community Transit OSU-Stillwater Community Transit provides transit service from 6:20 a.m. to 10:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, throughout the academic year.
- Enid Transit, a public transportation service for the City of Enid and provided demand response service. All services are open to the public.
- Local independent taxi services
- Supportive services through DHS, DRS, WIOA Title I

d. An established process to promote coordination of transportation supportive services delivery.

If the region has determined regional coordination of transportation not to be appropriate for the planning region at this time, discuss how that determination was made.

The Western Region will coordinate these activities in the following manner:

- The first step will be to survey the Title I partners to determine the types of transportation services each program provides to its participants. We will find out how many participants receive transportation services, by type and by program, during a given time period – for example during a program year. We will also attempt to determine if some transportation needs have been unmet because of a lack of resources in our region.
- We will then attempt to determine the approximate dollar value of these services. This will give us an indication of the potential for cost savings through closer cooperation on the delivery of Transportation services. Another factor to consider is the number of participants in each program and whether they have the same needs. The Western Oklahoma region is very expansive. It encompasses thirty-three counties and more than 33,153 square miles. Ensuring that transportation services are available throughout the entire area will be a major challenge.
- After the survey has been completed and other data gathered, a summary of this information will be shared with our WIOA Title I partners and with the leadership of our local workforce development boards.
- A Transportation and Supportive Services task force will be formed for the purpose of identifying specific opportunities for cost sharing. The task force members will explore the feasibility of jointly procuring some supportive services (including transportation services). They will also consider the option of entering into a resource sharing agreement or other type of joint-use agreement.
- The purpose of this coordination project is not to force the partners into any pre-defined strategy. Rather, it is to explore similar service needs and identify effective service delivery options. The local board's management of this project will emphasize a business-minded approach to the coordination of services. We will not support any strategy that detracts from the timely and effective delivery of supportive services to the participants who need them.

11. Describe the coordination amongst the planning region for the provision of other appropriate supportive services in the planning region, including:

a. A copy of the Job Seeker Wrap Around Services Service Matrix

The South Central and Western Workforce Boards, in their local plans, have attached the job seeker service matrix.

b. Whether the provision of supportive services could be enhanced, and if so, how.

Supportive Services provided by the WIOA Title I program will be minimal as best. Due to the requirement approved by the Governor's Council for Workforce and Economic Development of 40% of our local WIOA funding to be spend directly on Training (Not to include Supportive Services), our program will be unable to set aside Supportive Service funding for our Region. Our region will work closely with other partners to provide as much support as possible. We will use the same strategy as transportation services to provide all supportive services. See 10d above.

c. What organizations currently provide or could provide supportive services. –

- Department of Human Services
- Department of Rehabilitation Services
- WIOA Title I

- Community clubs and organizations
- Charities and foundations
- United Way
- Oklahoma Career Tech
- Senior Community Service Employment Programs
- Housing Authorities
- Great Plains Youth and Family Services
- Faith Based Organizations
- Community Action Agencies

d. Establishing a process to promote coordination of supportive services delivery.

The Region utilizes several different paths to promote coordination of supportive service delivery.

South Central requires that the Service provider use information from www.211oklahoma.org to determine if needed supportive services are available from any source other than WIOA Title I funds.

Western WIOA Title I Service Provider and One Stop Operator are charged with coordination of resources for participants. Policies have been put into place to assist with the minimum requirements of services like supportive services. The combination of policies the Board has developed is supposed to help guide the front line staff and the One Stop Operator from the program design, assessment, and individual employment plan/individual service strategy develop through service provision, exit and performance. Everything developed (contract, policies, etc.) are conceived to “force” the staff to coordinate with other resource to provide wrap-around services and not remain silo’d in through process just around their small program coffers. The NOWB has strongly encouraged the WIOA Title I Staff and One Stop Operator to use information from www.211oklahoma.org to determine if needed supportive services are available from any source other than WIOA Title I funds. The service provider creates a resource guide each quarter reviewing available resources.

Our region will review and update current local policy to coordinate Supportive Services in the most effective way possible. **Both local areas have reviewed and updated supportive service policies.**

e. If the region has determined regional coordination of support services not to be appropriate for the planning region at this time, discuss how that determination was made.

12. Describe the process to develop, and, the finalized agreement concerning how the region will collectively negotiate and reach agreement with the Governor on local levels of performance for, and report on, the performance accountability measure described in WIOA Section 106(c) for local areas or the planning region.

During the Regional Planning process described above, representatives from both local planning areas, have agreed to address the process concerning how the region will collectively negotiate and reach agreement with the Governor on local levels of performance for, and report on, the performance accountability measure described in WIOA Section 106(c) for local areas or the planning region. Specifically, this process for the Western Oklahoma Planning Region is to follow the Oklahoma Governor’s Council for Workforce and Economic Development’s guidance through the Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development on local levels of performance for the performance accountability measures described in WIOA Section 106(c) for local areas or the planning region when provided and approved by the Governor’s Office.

TEGL 26-15 adds that, in addition to the State negotiated levels of performance, States must work with local workforce development areas to establish performance goals for WIOA Title I programs. The local board, the chief elected official, and the Governor must negotiate and reach agreement on local levels of performance based on the State negotiated levels of performance. In negotiating the local levels of performance, the local board, the chief elected official and the Governor must make adjustments for the expected economic conditions and expected characteristics of participants to be served in the local area, using the statistical adjustment model developed at the Federal level as a tool. In addition, the statistical adjustment model must be used at the end of the program year to adjust negotiated local levels of performance in order to reflect the actual economic conditions experienced in the local area and the characteristics of participants served.

The local areas in our region all used the above TEGL and statistical model provided at the federal level to negotiate local performance with the state. The Western region will share local negotiated performance and collectively work together to meet the performance as a region.

13. The process the planning region undertook to provide input to the development of the plan, and a 30-Day public comment period of the regional and local plans, prior to submission.

The Western Regional Plan was developed with input from board members, elected officials, one-stop partners, and the public. The plan describes the Region's role in aligning and integrating workforce development service strategies and resources. One-stop partners from a variety of agencies and programs participated in the development of the plan. Partners include: Oklahoma Department of Career and Technical Education, Oklahoma Department of Human Services, Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services, Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, Economic Development organizations, Native American WIOA programs, Senior Community Service Employment programs, SCSEP and more.

Gaining public comment on the regional plan has been taking place all through the course of development from partners and businesses. The process for the Western Oklahoma Planning Region's development of its Regional Plan and the subsequent 30-Day Public Comment period is subordinate to and followed the timelines provided by the Oklahoma Governor's Council for Workforce and Economic Development's guidance through the Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development through coordination efforts between the required, participating State Agencies as provided and approved by the Governor's Office.

Additionally, the Local Workforce Boards, as appropriate, may post the local and regional plan links in newspapers, on their individual websites, and email the plans to all board members, local and regional partners for comment. All Comments will be reviewed and addressed as appropriate and will be included in the final regional plan.

Each Local Area in the Multi-Area Planning Region must also complete a Local Area Plan (See Attachment B for the template) and submit as an addendum to the regional plan.

Signatures for the Regional Plan - Include signatures on the signature page of **all** of the local workforce development board chairpersons, local workforce development board directors, and the local chief elected officials for all the workforce development areas within the region. The State will not approve a regional plan

and attached local plans if all required signatures are not included. Please add/remove signature access as needed for the number of local areas in your region.

By signing the regional plan, all signatories attest that:

- They submit this plan on behalf of the region and the local areas within that region;
- The planning was done with leaders throughout the region and represents the collective thinking of those regional representatives;
- The information contained herein is true and accurate to the best of their knowledge;
- The regional plan and accompanying local plans represent the local workforce development boards' efforts to maximize resources available under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and to coordinate these resources with other State and Local programs in the planning region;
- They will operate the local system in accordance with the regional plan, their respective local area plan, and applicable federal and state laws, regulations, policies and rules; and,
- That all assurances have been met.

Workforce Board Chairs

LOCAL AREA	PRINTED NAME	SIGNATURE	DATE
South Central	Shane Bowers		
Western	Dennis Luckinbill		

Workforce Board CLEOs

LOCAL AREA	PRINTED NAME	SIGNATURE	DATE
South Central	Randy McLemore		
Western	C J Rose		

Workforce Board Executive Directors

LOCAL AREA	PRINTED NAME	SIGNATURE	DATE
South Central	Trina Southard		
Western	Christi Porter		

- **Local Area Partners signatures are included in the local Plans.**