



Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Region 4 Plan

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires local boards and chief elected officials (CEOs) in each planning region to engage in a regional planning process that results in the preparation and submission of a single Regional Plan. Regional Plan must include a description of the following:

1. A description of the planning process undertaken to produce the Regional Plan, including a description of how all local areas were afforded the opportunity to participate in the regional planning process.

Prosperity Region 4 consists of thirteen counties in West Michigan. Collectively, this includes two Michigan Works! Agencies, 14 American Job Centers, and two affiliate sites.

[Michigan Works! West Central's](#) (MWWC) service area includes: Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Newaygo, Oceana, and Osceola counties, while [West Michigan Works!](#) (WMW) serves Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Montcalm, Muskegon, and Ottawa Counties.

Planning for the region occurs in many different facets and includes the convening of local area employers, industry councils, community-based organizations, economic development organizations, talent development initiatives, and educational providers. Although much of this work is localized, both agencies remain committed to the broader, regional perspective as evidenced in the following ways. [Talent 2025](#) works as a catalyst to ensure an ongoing supply of world-class talent for West Michigan. The organization illuminates gaps, evaluates leading practices, and advocates for the implementation of those leading practices to make West Michigan a top 20 employment region by the year 2025

Through the leadership of 12 [board of directors](#), over 100 [CEO council members](#), six [Talent 2025 staff](#), and eight workgroups focused on regional initiatives for early childhood development, K-12 education, K-12 post-secondary completion, workforce development, returning citizens, talent demands, workforce diversity and inclusion, and HR councils, West Michigan Region 4 has identified the goals and strategies reflected in this plan.

Adult Learning Partners of West Michigan (ALPWM) is a networking group made up of approximately 70 members representing the 13-county region to bring together professionals committed to sharing 'best practices' used to serve the adult population in need of a high school diploma, General Education Development (GED), English as a Second Language (ESL), remediation education, vocational education, credentials, certifications, as well as job readiness and employability skills training. ALPWM meets monthly and plays a vital role in the Region 4 planning process.

Also vital to the planning process is the Region 4 [Offenders Success](#) program. MWWC oversees this program and both agencies actively participate with the quarterly Steering Team meetings, proactively targeting service provision to meet the identified needs of returning offenders, thereby reducing their risk of recidivism and enhancing their employment opportunities.

[The West Michigan Veteran Coalition](#) (WMVC) connects both Region 4a and 4b by identifying solutions for gaps in veteran services, reducing duplication of efforts and simplifying connections with local resources. WMVC has four areas of concentration including education, employment, health care, and quality of life. In addition to participating in bimonthly meetings and being an active resource for veterans seeking education and employment services, WMW is also represented on the Board of Directors.

Additionally, Michigan Works! West Central and West Michigan Works! collaborate on statewide workforce initiatives, National Emergency Grants (NEG) applications and promote Going Pro Talent Funds (GPTF) throughout the region.

These types of partnerships provide consistency while recognizing the unique needs of our communities and employers. Stakeholders representing both Region 4a and 4b are encouraged to participate in joint training sessions in relation to regional planning and continue to analyze and discuss joint data and service delivery approaches while remaining intentional about the importance of “regional thinking.” Each partner agency has shared draft planning information and convenes as needed to exchange ideas and discuss proposed goals, priorities, and industry needs.

2. An updated and thorough analysis of regional labor market data and economic conditions for the WIOA planning region. Including an analysis of existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations, and the employment needs of employers in those existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations. The analysis shall include:

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

The information provided below reflects the data as we knew it before the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted economic conditions in March of 2020. We will continue to monitor labor market information in the months to come and make the appropriate pivots as new data emerges and we begin to understand the new workforce needs.

Current labor market information (LMI) for West Michigan, provided by the DTMB, Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives, and Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), shows that construction and manufacturing, along with professional and business services are leading all industries in talent needs and that education and health services, transportation and utilities, along with leisure and hospitality are following slightly behind. Private sector jobs continue to grow overall with the greatest change from 2013-2019 for a growth of 17%. This was 7.1 percentage points greater than the state. West Michigan outperformed the state in private sector job growth in every industry except for health care.

Table 8 - Private Industry Employment Trends - 2013 - 2019

INDUSTRY	SECOND QUARTER 2013	SECOND QUARTER 2015	SECOND QUARTER 2017	SECOND QUARTER 2019	2013-2019 NUMERIC CHANGE	2013-2019 PERCENT CHANGE
Total Employment	578,849	618,904	655,957	677,081	98,232	17.0%
Construction	23,789	27,172	30,648	33,133	9,344	39.3%
Education and Health Services	95,107	100,584	106,548	110,004	14,897	15.7%
Financial Activities	26,607	26,296	27,772	28,591	1,984	7.5%
Information	6,282	6,091	6,346	6,445	163	2.6%
Leisure and Hospitality	59,611	62,547	65,701	67,625	8,014	13.4%
Manufacturing	134,980	145,981	154,966	159,962	24,982	18.5%
Natural Resources and Mining	11,183	12,606	12,528	12,062	879	7.9%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	20,533	20,939	21,951	22,945	2,412	11.7%
Professional and Business Services	86,228	93,239	103,349	108,001	21,773	25.3%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	113,236	122,701	125,570	127,240	14,004	12.4%

Source: DTMB, Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW)

High-demand occupations within West Michigan’s construction industry include job titles such as carpentry, civil engineers, cost estimators, plumbers, heating and air mechanics and installers, and first line managers and laborers. The Construction Workforce Development Alliance of West Michigan (CWDA) was created by the Associated Builders and Contractors Western Michigan Chapter (ABCWM), American Subcontractors Association of Michigan (ASAM), and Home Builders Association of Greater Grand Rapids (HBAGGR) and includes a collaborative of partners including workforce development, educators and construction employers. Although this council is primarily serving Region 4b, there is room for expansion based on employer need.

High-demand occupations within West Michigan’s manufacturing industry include automotive, aerospace, pharmaceuticals, food production, machinery manufacturing, plastics product manufacturing, and machine shops. Region 4 is a key stakeholder in facilitating and maintaining the Discover Manufacturing council that includes employers, community partners, and training providers who all share the mission of expanding talent throughout West Michigan.

Recent projects of this council include Manufacturing Week, MiCareerQuest, promotion of Going Pro Apprenticeship Readiness pilot program, Adopt a School program, Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) Employer Collaborative, M-CAM Mobile Manufacturing Lab, a partnership with Talent 2025 to conduct demand forecasting and better connect educational curriculum to employer needs, and the development of an updated Discover Manufacturing website (www.discover-manufacturing.com) that allows students, parents, educators, and employers to stay connected and engaged in manufacturing.

Agribusiness, the business of agricultural production, can be identified throughout high-demand occupations in the construction, manufacturing, and information technology sectors. With its continuous growth, it is becoming an emerging sector of its own with high-demand occupations within West Michigan that include many cross-industry careers. Occupational opportunities include maintenance mechanic, food processing and production, tractor-trailer truck driver, first line supervisors, computer and IT services, and general farm labor. Within the health care industry the high-demand job titles include: physicians, surgeons, dentists, technicians, registered nurse (RN), licensed practical nurse (LPN), physician assistants, home health aides and medical assistants. These occupations continue to show regional growth and Michigan Works! West Central and West Michigan Works! are collectively focused on growing the talent pipeline in this area.

The professional occupation includes higher skilled and educated positions such as mathematical analysis, architecture, and art and designer.

West Michigan is also focused on the transportation and utilities industry and is addressing employer needs by participating in state-led conversations that include employers, training providers, and workforce development staff regarding innovative ways to recruit, train, and retain qualified candidates. Both Michigan Works! West Central and West Michigan Works! offer training scholarships and career services for individuals under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) who are interested in pursuing this career choice to include those who are considered hard-to-serve and re-entering citizens.

These occupations include employment opportunities for high school completers through those holding graduate or professional degrees. This trend aligns well with the goals of WIOA and will allow career pathway development and apprenticeship opportunities for those individuals who are accessing the workforce system.

Private sector jobs continue to grow overall with the greatest change from 2013-2019. West Michigan outperformed the state in private sector job growth in every industry except for health care.

As of the second quarter of 2019, approximately 17,300 jobs were advertised online in West Michigan, according to the Conference Boards' Help Wanted online database. This is a decline of 4,300 ads since the 1st quarter 2016. The top job advertisements were for retail salespersons with registered nurses and customer service representatives close behind.

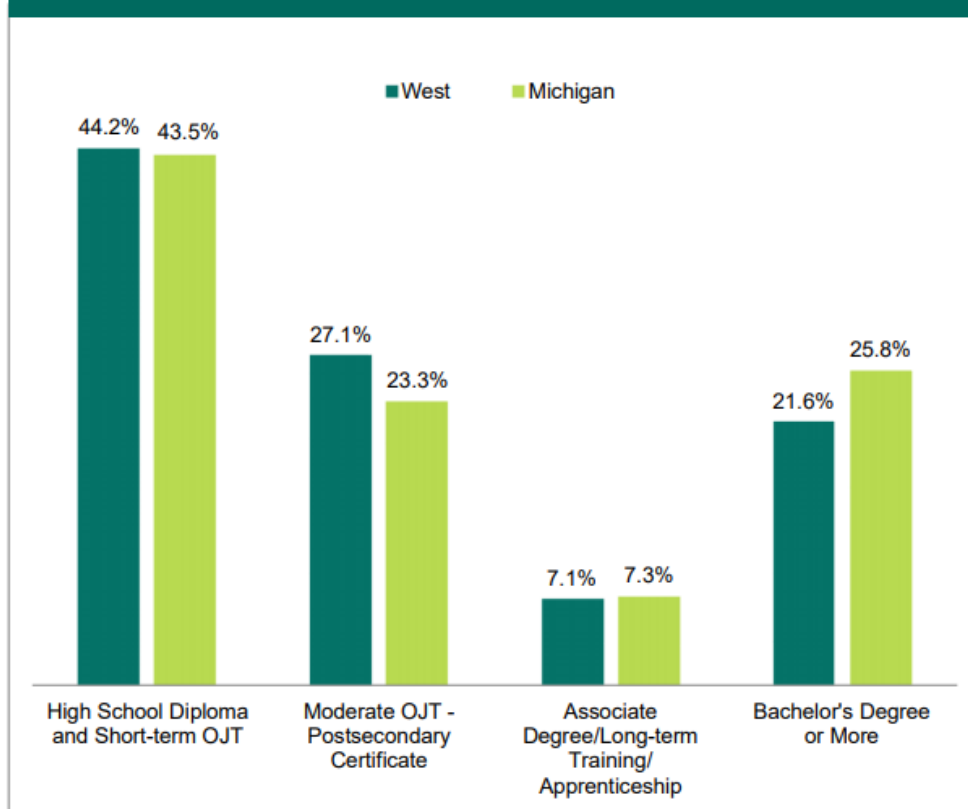
ONLINE ADVERTISED JOB POSTINGS, WEST MICHIGAN

JOB TITLE	NUMBER
Retail Salespersons	593
Registered Nurses	579
Customer Service Representatives	540
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	472
Sales Rep., Whlsl & Manu., Exc. Tech. & Sci. Prod.	404
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	373
Laborers & Freight, Stock, & Material Movers, Hand	318
Managers, All Other	277
Software Developers, Applications	276
Production Workers, All Other	241

Source: The Conference Board, Help Wanted OnLine® Database

The analysis on the projected occupational growth rates is suggesting that 44% of West Michigan jobs will still only need a high school diploma or less with short term or on-the-job training. Thirty-four percent of the jobs will require an associate degree, post-secondary training, some college with no degree, or a high school diploma or less accompanied with an extensive apprenticeship or on-the-job training experience. Approximately 21% of the jobs will require a bachelor's degree or higher. These projections mirror the projections for the State of Michigan overall, however the growth rate in West Michigan will supersede the state average before arriving at these outcomes. Occupations requiring a bachelor's degree or higher are expected to grow 8.5% from 2016-2026. This expected growth is 2.5 percentage points greater than the statewide projected growth. High school and short-term on-the-job training is projected to grow 12.8% during the period.

PROJECTED 2026 OCCUPATIONAL EMPLOYMENT BY EDUCATION (SHARE OF TOTAL)



Source: DTMB, Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives

When comparing high-demand, high-wage jobs with educational requirements, heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers are expected to have the most annual openings according to the Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives. Software developers are showing the greatest growth percent with a high median hourly wage. General and operational managers are showing the highest wages but the least amount of growth. This completed research confirms that pay level is directly correlated with the level of formal education and/or the length of the job training or apprenticeship.

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

An analysis completed by the State of Michigan's Department of Technology, Management and Budget Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives provides the population estimate for West Michigan Prosperity Region 4 was at 1,613,924 people in 2019 (US Census Bureau). This is a 4.1% increase over 2013-2019, while the statewide population showed an increase of only 0.7%. The data shows that much of the increase was in Kent County, totaling more than 30,000 new residents. While West Michigan as a region was growing during this time (2013-2019) Mecosta, Osceola, and Oceana showed the least amount of growth.

Table 1 - Population Trends - 2013 - 2019

AREA	2013	2015	2017	2019	2013-2019 NUMERIC CHANGE	2013-2019 PERCENT CHANGE
West Michigan Prosperity Alliance	1,549,658	1,571,649	1,596,609	1,613,924	64,266	4.1%
Allegan	112,009	114,112	116,368	118,081	6,072	5.4%
Barry	59,090	59,426	60,682	61,550	2,460	4.2%
Ionia	63,991	64,056	64,284	64,697	706	1.1%
Kent	624,303	637,164	649,278	656,955	32,652	5.2%
Lake	11,396	11,697	11,981	11,853	457	4.0%
Mason	28,668	28,738	28,996	29,144	476	1.7%
Mecosta	43,260	43,005	43,258	43,453	193	0.4%
Montcalm	62,794	62,763	63,527	63,888	1,094	1.7%
Muskegon	172,273	172,447	173,645	173,566	1,293	0.8%
New aygo	47,869	47,882	48,320	48,980	1,111	2.3%
Oceana	26,298	26,323	26,422	26,467	169	0.6%
Osceola	23,322	23,177	23,267	23,460	138	0.6%
Ottawa	274,385	280,859	286,581	291,830	17,445	6.4%
Michigan	9,913,065	9,931,715	9,973,114	9,986,857	73,792	0.7%
United States	315,993,715	320,635,163	324,985,539	328,239,523	12,245,808	3.9%

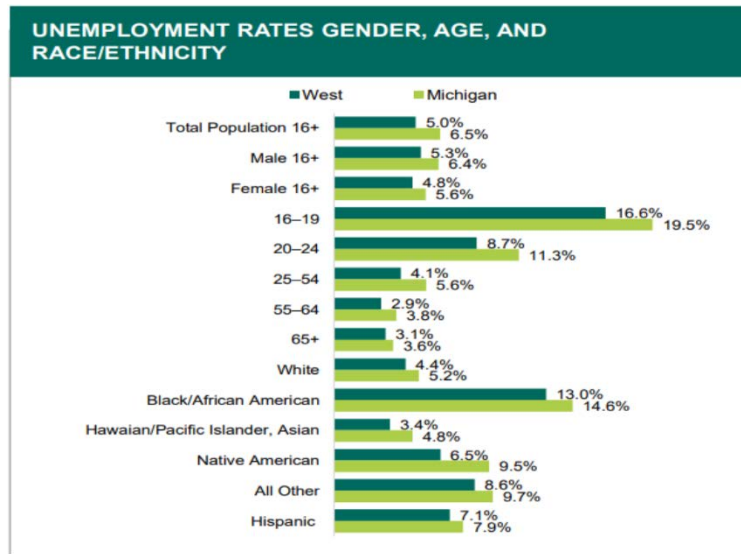
Required: WIOA Act, Section 108, (b), (1), (A)

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Annual Population Estimates

Further research conducted by this same source demonstrates the current workforce trends within Region 4. The data below will provide an accurate analysis of the labor force by demographics and education attainment levels.

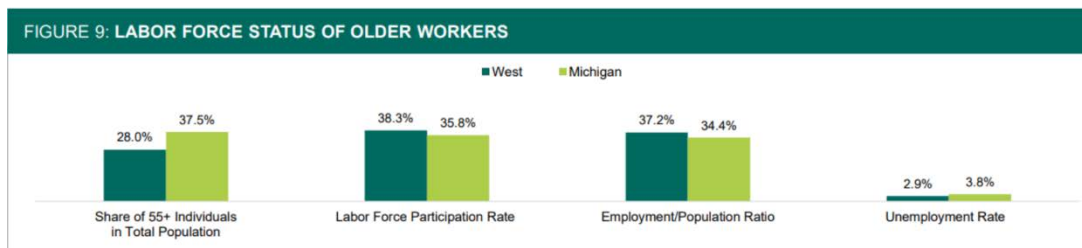
On par with the increase in population, the labor force has also increased for a total workforce population of 833,100. With this increase, the area still maintained unemployment trends that followed both the State of Michigan trends and the United States trends of steady decrease since 2013. From 2013-2019, West Michigan went from a 7.2% unemployment rate to a 3.3% unemployment rate landing 0.8% below the Michigan average and 0.4% below the United States average.

Looking at jobless rates by demographics, West Michigan experiences rates below the state average in every category except African American and Some Other Race category. Males age 16 and over show a slightly higher unemployment rate than females age 16 and over; however, this rate is still below the state average in both categories. West Michigan's highest jobless rates are found within the subcategory of males age 16-19 showing almost 17.3 %, females age 16-19 showing 16 % and Black/African American showing 13%. This rate was 1.6percentage points less than the rate statewide for African Americans.



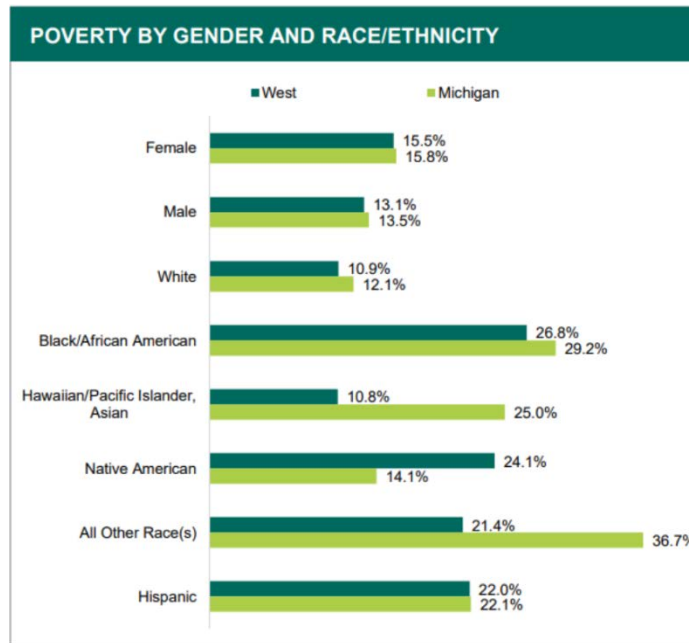
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014-2018 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

When looking at the data provided by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2012-2016 American Community Survey five-year estimates, the number of older workers staying in the labor market longer in West Michigan is slightly higher than the state average. During 2014-2018, this group has had a 39% workforce participation rate (employed or seeking work). Overall, the total population and labor force rates remain slightly higher than the state average. The jobless rate of older workers in West Michigan is nearly a full percentage point lower than the state rate, at 2.9%.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014-2018 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

Poverty rates for West Michigan are just slightly below the state average with an estimated 14% of residents living below the poverty line. When broken down by demographics, West Michigan is close, but below the state averages in all categories with the biggest exception being Native Americans which is showing a poverty rate of 10% higher. The data also shows a larger percentage difference in West Michigan between white, 11% falling below the poverty line, and Black/African American, 27% falling below the poverty line.

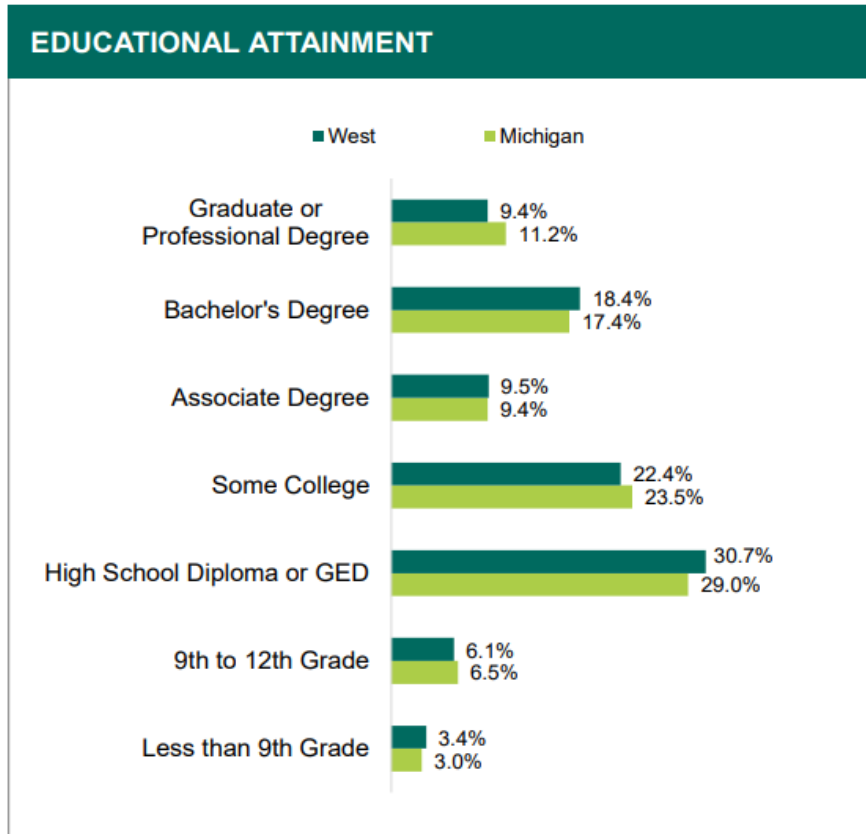


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014-2018 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

According to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, roughly 31,738 assistance program registrants resided in West Michigan as of June 2019. This number is down by 15,119 individuals since June 2017. Over 56% of the assistance program registrants were white, while only 19% were Black or African American. Both female and male registrants were close with females making up almost 59% in Michigan, compared to the males making up 41%.

Individuals with a reported disability account for 198,036 of West Michigan’s population. The demographic characteristics are like the state average with the biggest variance being between the white (86%) and Black /African American (7%) populations. The percentage of male and female individuals with disabilities in West Michigan is on par with the state average in both categories with the male to female share in the region being 49% to 51%. Those of Hispanic ethnicity had a higher share (5.9%) in West Michigan than in the state (3.6%).

Educational attainment is based on the number of residents 25 years and older. In Michigan, that number includes 1,021,053 residents. Overall, the attainment rate for West Michigan is consistent with the overall state average; however, individuals holding bachelors’ degrees outperform the state average by 1% and individuals with a high school diploma or GED outperform the state average by almost 2%. The chart below demonstrates the educational attainment levels through 2014-2018 for West Michigan in comparison to the State of Michigan.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014-2018 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

- **An analysis of workforce development activities in the region, including available education and training opportunities. This analysis must include the strengths and weaknesses of workforce development activities in the region and the region's capacity to provide the workforce development activities necessary to address the education and skill needs of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment, and the employment needs of employers in the region.**

Although West Michigan has experienced population increases, a steady decrease in unemployment rates until the Covid-19 pandemic, and slightly better than state averages in most of the workforce trends, it remains a region in need of intentional workforce development.

Although the West Michigan region appears to be ahead of the state in many areas, we know there are pockets that remain of high poverty rates, low educational attainment, and high unemployment - pockets either geographically or based on demographics. This includes seeking ways to provide access to those not currently utilizing the welfare reform or other workforce systems, provide one stop barrier removal services in coordination with existing and newly sought out community partners, better prepare individuals to attend various training opportunities, and finding ways to increase the labor force by re-engaging people with disabilities who are otherwise capable of working. Michigan Works! West Central and West Michigan Works! are relentlessly pursuing innovative and relevant solutions to these

challenges through unique partnerships and resources to meet individual and employer needs.

Using sector strategies, the Region 4 Michigan Works! agencies continue to convene and connect to create a network of partners to meet the demands of the region's current employers as well as the emerging industry needs in order to achieve a skilled workforce.

As previously mentioned, industry councils have been established within the region to help identify employer needs from the industry-wide perspective. These councils allow for the identification of best practices and shared strategies as well as increased articulation of what areas employers may need workforce development assistance.

Key roles of each of the industry sector councils include:

- Information conduit: sharing trends and best practices affecting talent.
- Talent initiatives: leading, supporting and promoting talent initiatives throughout West Michigan.
- Training needs: sharing current training needs with educational partners to develop curriculum, create career pathways and nurture a supply chain of talent.
- Networking: promoting networking among employers, educators, workforce development and economic development professionals for the purpose of developing a skilled workforce.

Educating youth and enhanced outreach activities allow for a better understanding of what the regional economy looks like and what career opportunities are in existence post high school or following post-secondary education. Building the talent pipeline will increase the skilled talent pool and retain young people in our area. [MiCareerQuest](#), a region wide career exploration event for youth, Jobs for Michigan Graduates (JMG) and the Summer Youth Work Experience program are all examples of current workforce development activities targeted at increasing the local labor force and addressing the education and skill gaps in our region.

West Michigan is also focused on identifying and advocating to provide more meaningful and efficient services to individuals with disabilities. These initiatives include addressing the infrastructure improvements needed to lessen the barriers brought by housing, transportation, and internet access as well as increasing the training and employment opportunities that are available to this population. Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) is a core partner and representatives are co-located inside many of the service centers. In addition, West Michigan has established relationships with Michigan Bureau for Blind Services, Disabilities Advocates, Disability Network, Mid-Michigan Industries and Disability Connections. These agencies are sharing resources and are at the table investigating ways to share common intakes, assessments, and making direct connects to opportunities.

In rural areas or where public transportation is unavailable, support services, such as gas cards or auto repairs, may be provided to assist individuals with getting to and from workforce development activities including education and employment. Though the causes of transportation barriers are different, these barriers exist in both urban and rural areas of the region.

Adult education and literacy programs are made available through established and emerging partnerships with local providers. Some of the West Michigan Region 4 service centers provide instruction and testing onsite or through direct services. In areas that have expanded resources, community conversations and informational tours are taking place to increase awareness of workforce development services. In some communities, Michigan Works! staff conduct workshops and initiate career coaching as part of the educational curriculum.

Short term occupational skills training and higher education opportunities are also available throughout the region and are funded with local WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth allocations for those who qualify. Region 4 works closely with training providers to ensure that the supported programs lead to an industry recognized credential and that the credential falls in line with employer demand. Recent initiatives have also shown that training providers including community colleges are responsive to the development and delivery of a curriculum that directly addresses the skill gaps.

The geographic factors of Region 4 present the greatest weakness to both the rural communities and employers. Although some training opportunities are offered online, many are only available in the urban areas, making transportation a barrier that often discourages individuals from pursuing occupational skill training or higher education. Commuting patterns suggest that many people living in the rural areas are working in urban locations; however, there is still a large gap presented for both employers and residents when they are not able to obtain the skills needed to live and work in the same community. Efforts to better assess training needs and accessibility of training programs are being made in collaboration with the West Michigan industry councils, higher education providers, vocational training partners, Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS), adult education providers, veterans services, and other community partners.

Work-based training is available and is a viable option that allows individuals to learn the skills that employers need without attending an occupational skill based or higher education training. Depending on the desired skill, the training type and the length of the training, this may assist residents with employment opportunities that will require an education attainment of high school diploma through associate degree (approximately 80% of projected jobs). Work-based training can be funded with local WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker allocations, and for those who qualify this is a very desirable option.

Work-based training opportunities include:

- ***On-the-job Training:*** intended to provide a participant with the knowledge and skills necessary for the full performance of the job. OJT is a critical tool that can help job seekers enter successful employment. The term “on-the-job training” means training by an employer that is provided to a paid participant while engaged in productive work in a job that:
 - Provides knowledge or skills essential to the full and adequate performance of the job.
 - Provides reimbursement to the employer of up to 75% of the wage rate of the participant for the extraordinary costs of providing the training and additional supervision related to the training.

- Is limited in duration as appropriate to the occupation for which the participant is being trained, taking into account the content of the training, the prior work experience of the participant, and the service strategy of the participant, as appropriate.
- ***Pre-Apprenticeship Training:*** designed to provide work experiences that can help participants obtain the skills needed to be placed into a registered apprenticeship.
- ***Registered Apprenticeships:*** designed to combine paid learning on-the-job and related technical and theoretical instruction in a skilled occupation. This training is an important component of the education and training services that the workforce system can provide to its participants and should be used as a strategy to train and employ job seekers. Registered apprenticeships offer job seekers immediate employment opportunities that usually pay higher wages and offer continued career growth.
- ***Incumbent Worker Training:*** designed to assist employers with training current workers in specific circumstances to meet the needs of employers and increase the skill level of workers.

3. A description of regional service strategies that have been or will be established because of coordinated regional analysis and delivery of services, including the use of cooperative service delivery agreements, when appropriate. Regions may consider:

- Existing service delivery strategies that will be expanded, streamlined, or eliminated.

In addition to the analysis of workforce development activities in the region, including available education and training opportunities mentioned. Hope Network's Wheels to Work program provides an opportunity to expand services across the region. This program provides transportation to designated "hubs" through an area based on employer needs. Wheels to Work is currently operating in Kent and Muskegon counties but is looking to expand to other areas within Region 4, including Newaygo County. With employer interest increasing, this program is a possible solution to both employers' needs to decrease turnover due to lack of reliable transportation and enabling talent to access reliable transportation.

MWWC and WMW both partner with Michigan Career and Technical Institution (MCTI). MCTI, in coordination with Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS), provides valuable region-wide training programs for adults with disabilities. A food tech apprenticeship program at MCTI, that included employers in Oceana County, created the opportunity for both Michigan Works! agencies to strategize efforts and join in recruitment of the targeted population. This was an opportunity to work collaboratively and respond to the needs of employers using the apprenticeship model to create and maintain jobs in the region.

- **New service strategies necessary to address regional education and training needs.**

Both Michigan Works! West Central and West Michigan Works! actively participate in and attend monthly meetings with the Adult Learning Partners of West Michigan (ALPWM), a region-wide collaborative that includes adult education providers from all thirteen counties. This allows the region to share information with adult education providers.

Career Education Advisory Councils (CEAC) are active in both regions and specifically address the education and training needs for youth. Career and Technical Education (CTE) partners participate in these as well fostering the development of job skills training throughout the region.

- **Strategies to address geographic advantages.**

Region 4 consists of a diverse geographic opportunity to tailor services to the needs of the individuals served. There are areas of Region 4 that are quite urban and other areas are rural. Many people in rural parts of the region are commuting to urban areas for training and to participate in the workforce. Supportive service policies are written specifically to adjust to the needs of the geographical area served. Training opportunities will almost always require the need for travel and is factored into suitability for training discussions. Efforts are made to respond to the needs through collaboration with partners such as Veteran's Career Advisors (VCA), Michigan Rehabilitation counselors, adult education providers, institutions of higher learning and other partners based upon the needs of the participant.

- **Approaches to improve services to individuals with disabilities, veterans, youth, or other hard-to-serve populations.**

In several service centers across the region Michigan Rehabilitation counselors are co-located within the MWWC and MWW service centers. All individuals who are in need and may be eligible are referred to MRS counselors. Staff are also familiar with Michigan Career and Technical Institute programs tailored to suit individuals with disabilities. In our continuous efforts to grow our partnership we strive to co-enroll individuals into both organizations' programs as we have identified that we share the same populations. MRS has been involved in some of the rapid response meetings that take place throughout the region and routinely attends community events that take place in the region. Staff have participated in the transitional council meetings that coordinate services for individuals with disabilities who will soon be graduating. This provides an opportunity to share information about services offered by different agencies within the local communities.

Veteran Career Advisor (VCA) are shared across the region. Additionally, county employed Veterans Service Officers services are accessed whenever the need arises within the region.

- **Strategies to connect the unemployed with work-based learning opportunities.**

Collaboration has been a continued effort across the region to establish new USDOL Registered Apprenticeships, engage employers and training institutes in the process to a greater extent. National Apprenticeship Week is promoted across the region to raise awareness about apprenticeships through social media posts and coordinated activities in area schools.

Youth can build relationships with local employers using work experiences. Smaller businesses in the region offer a unique opportunity to learn about running your own business and these opportunities are a focus for work experience sites. Businesses also have an opportunity to develop the skill set of future employees.

On-the-job training opportunities are shared with employers as a service that can be accessed to provide work-based training opportunities to people who are learning a new skill or specific employer processes.

- **Strategies to integrate existing regional planning efforts among core partners.**

Regional service strategies are currently being developed through the guidance and direction of the Career Education Advisory Council (CEAC) and Talent 2025 to ensure the upcoming talent pipeline is exposed to in-demand industries and have the knowledge required to access training for those occupations. These efforts include partners from adult education, training providers, community colleges, and employers.

In many instances the ISDs rely on Michigan Works! to assist in connecting them to employers and employer training needs. Additionally, Michigan Works! coordinates with school districts and tech centers to take part in events such as student career days and job fairs.

Other planning efforts include the regional collaboration through the West Michigan's Veteran Coalition bi-monthly meetings, the Adult Learning Partners of West Michigan (ALPWM) monthly meetings, and the Offender Success Steering Team quarterly meetings.

As mentioned, Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) has representation co-located in many of the One-Stop Service Centers across Region 4. This connection integrated referral processes, barrier removal strategies and allows for MRS and the Michigan Works! agencies to share best practices.

Job Corp is a core partner that provides high school diploma (HSD), high school equivalency (HSE), job training, and certificate opportunities to youth ages 16-24 years old. Although the residential facility that is within the West Michigan service area is located in Grand Rapids, they are considered a valuable resource for youth throughout the region.

Additionally, both MWWC and WMW have implemented a direct service delivery system for Workforce Innovative Opportunity Act (WIOA), Partners Accountability Training and Hope (PATH), Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), and Wagner Peyser (WP). This allows for one point of contact for partner agencies, enabling stronger integrated strategies with core partners.

4. A description of plans for the development and implementation of, or the expansion of, sector initiatives for in-demand industry sectors or occupations for the region.

Regionally, Michigan Works! Agencies (MWAs) convene employers along with education providers, economic development organizations, and other groups associated with workforce development to solve talent challenges. Local industry clusters are formed based on local needs and are led by employers.

An industry cluster is a geographic concentration of related employers, industry suppliers and support institutions in a product or service field. Michigan's Industry Cluster Approach (MICA) creates a framework in which many employers within a single industry jointly engage with the workforce system to identify their talent demand and challenges.

Much of the work being done to address talent demand issues is happening through industry sector collaboration, or industry councils. Councils bring together employers, workforce agencies and other partners such as training institutions and economic development agencies to create regional, sector specific workforce strategies. Creating a continuous flow of information between key players ensures the labor supply is aligned with employer demand.

- **Current in-demand industry sectors and occupations within the region.**
- **Which sectors are regional priorities, based upon data-driven analysis.**

Key industry clusters for Region 4 include the following with manufacturing and health care remaining the primary sectors when looking at data from the regional analysis.

- Agriculture
 - Construction and energy
 - Health care
 - Information technology
 - Manufacturing
-
- **The status of regional collaboration in support of the sector initiatives.**
 - **Current sector-based partnerships within the region.**

In addition to the work both agencies are convening locally, both agencies work with [The Right Place](#), a West Michigan economic development organization, who offers confidential and comprehensive business services in many counties throughout the region.

The regional industry council representing manufacturing is [Discover Manufacturing](#). Discover Manufacturing's roots extend to the Right Place Manufacturers Council and their workforce development work group. The Manufacturers Council has focused on sharing best practices among manufacturers since the early 1990s with the goal of maintaining West Michigan's leadership in advanced manufacturing practices.

Collaboration in support of Discover Manufacturing is a partnership between Michigan Works!, community colleges, higher education institutions, economic developers, and of course, manufacturers.

Discover Manufacturing is uniquely positioned to positively impact the talent needs of manufacturers. By organizing and aggregating the voice of manufacturers from throughout the West Michigan labor shed, the workforce development and educational partners can respond in both the short-term with available talent, as well as long-term by adding or adjusting training programs and curriculum to meet manufacturers' needs. Discover Manufacturing specifically focuses on the talent needs of manufacturers in West Michigan's Region 4.

Recently, Region 4a has also implemented and convened an employer-led collaborative in health care. The partnership between Regions 4a and 4b was instrumental in bringing this to fruition. Within the health care sector we have several shared employers (specifically hospitals) across the entire region.

When it comes to talent, [Hello West Michigan](#) focuses on in demand sectors with employers engaging through memberships. They offer several initiatives such as *Rethink West Michigan* and have been instrumental in promoting West Michigan as a place where business thrive, and people want to live and work. Both WMW and MWWC are close partners with Hello West Michigan.

- **The extent of business involvement in current initiatives.**

Businesses involved in development, implementation of and expansion of sector initiatives include all the employer partnerships noted through the regional collaboration as well as the local industry councils and the small business owners in each of our communities.

- **Other public-private partnerships in the region that could support sector strategies.**

Other partnerships that support sector strategies include community colleges, career tech centers, adult learning providers, organizations committed to community support initiatives, and agencies with a similar mission.

5. A description of any administrative cost arrangements that currently exist or that will be established within the region, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate. Regions may consider:

- **Current or proposed resource leveraging agreements.**
- **Establishing a process to evaluate cost sharing arrangements.**

While MWWC and WMW continue to collaborate on multiple projects, with one or the other agency acting as the fiduciary, there are no overarching arrangements or intent to pool funds for administrative costs at this time. MWWC and WMW continue to share lessons learned and best practices throughout the region.

6. A description of how transportation and other supportive services, as appropriate, currently are coordinated or will be coordinated within the region.

Transportation and other support services are primarily identified based on the availability of resources in the local area and needs assessment of the individual. Although there is not currently a means of transportation that is accessible universally for all Region 4 commuters, MWWC and WMW remain committed to seeking timely solutions for those in need by utilizing a direct contact at each of the agencies.

- **Whether the provision of transportation or other supportive services could be enhanced, and if so, how and establishing a process to promote coordination of supportive services delivery.**

Reliable transportation as well as access to quality childcare and education remains a struggle for many individuals in our region, particularly in rural areas. Addressing these barriers has been a primary focus of the [Talent 2025 Workforce Development Working Group](#). By prioritizing the insights into the personas of our workforce, this workgroup asked a series of “how might we” questions that allows insight, continued focus, ideation, and intervention in their impacted areas.

Childcare Trade-offs *how might we:*

- Influence public policy to incent the private sector to assist with in-house childcare?
- Make childcare an advantage for the child as well as the caregiver?
- Work toward changing the threshold when childcare assistance ends with new employment?

It’s More Than Moving People *how might we:*

- Find ways to utilize other resources (church vans, Wheels to Work program, carpool networking)?
- Influence transportation options to be more uplifting and less stigmatized?
- Equip commuters to obtain transportation on their own terms and not as a favor or obligation?

Uncovering My Skills *how might we:*

- Connect job seekers’ skills from one job to another (i.e. a forklift driver does have customer service skills)?
 - Elevate untraditional strengths as a foundation for strong resumes?
 - Help build confidence in transferable skills and celebrate the successes job seekers have already achieved?
- **What organizations currently provide or could provide supportive services?**

Organizations that currently provide services or are seeking to expand services to our region include:

- [Great Start Readiness Program \(GSRP\)](#); A Michigan state-funded preschool program for four-year-old children with factors which may place them at risk of educational failure.

- [Hope Network Wheels to Work program](#); a program designed to help employers get their employees to work, efficiently and affordably. This program currently provides transportation solutions to Kent and Muskegon counties with plans to expand to Newago and beyond.
- [Michigan Mobility plan](#); Michigan needs a vision for a 21st-century transportation system that will support user needs for improved safety, infrastructure conditions, and system reliability to drive statewide economic investments. The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) is developing an integrated, performance-based 2045 State Long-Range Transportation Plan (Michigan Mobility 2045) to guide implementation of this vision.

7. A description of how workforce development services currently are, or could be, coordinated with economic development services and providers within the region, and a description of the strategies that have been or will be established to enhance service delivery as a result of the coordinated regional analysis of such services. Regions may consider:

- **Current economic development organizations engaged in regional planning.**

West Michigan Works! and Michigan Works! West Central have formed a regional prosperity collaboration that is in line with the Regional Prosperity Initiative (RPI). Through the guidance and direction of the Career Education Advisory Council (CEAC), Talent 2025, and The Right Place, Michigan Works! West Central and West Michigan Works! have come together to develop a regional prosperity plan. This will ensure that businesses have the skilled talent they need, educators are providing the training and credentials that match these needs, and that individuals, including those with disabilities, have current labor market information and access to viable training opportunities to close the skills gaps. Through the development of industry sector councils and the support of community partners and employers who have united to form industry sectors, Region 4 will continue to prosper by increasing business and talent attraction. The MWAs will work closely with economic development and MEDC to assure employer councils and associations, as well as individual employers, are aware of services and opportunities for their operations.

- **Education and training providers involved with economic development.**

Many training providers, ALPWM members, and CEAC committees are valued contributors to the economic development in West Michigan. The following education and training providers are also represented on our Workforce Development Boards:

Michigan Works! West Central

- Ferris State University
- Mecosta Osceola ISD
- Mason-Lake Adult Education

West Michigan Works!

- Ottawa Area ISD
- Muskegon Community College
- Northview Public Schools
- Grand Rapids Community College
- Montcalm Community College

- **Current businesses involved with economic development organizations.**

Many regional and local business are valued contributors to the economic development in West Michigan. The businesses are also represented on our Workforce Development Boards:

Michigan Works! West Central

- Lake-Osceola State Bank
- Reed City Group
- Whitehall Industries
- GEO Northlake Correctional Facility
- Yoplait/General Mills
- Michigan Rehabilitation Services
- Consumers Energy
- Bucher Hydraulics
- United Auto Workers - Grand Rapids
- Osceola County Community Development
- Leprino Foods
- Peterson Farms
- Fremont Area Community Foundation
- Arbre Farms
- Michigan Dept. of Corrections
- Five-Cap, Inc.
- Spectrum Health
- Plumbers, Fitters, and Service Trades #174 - Grand Rapids
- Michigan Freeze Pack
- Dept. of Health and Human Services
- Nestle Nutrition/Gerber

West Michigan Works!

- Berends Hendricks Stuit
- Wolverine Coil Spring
- Ottawa Area ISD
- Haworth
- Muskegon Area First
- Suburban Inns

- Second Act, LLC
- Department of Health & Human Services
- ITC Holdings, Inc.
- Goodwill Industries of West Michigan
- Hastings Manufacturing Company
- West MI Plumbers and Fitters
- Barry County Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development Alliance
- The Employers' Association
- Ottawa Kent Insurance
- Ventra
- Heart of West Michigan United Way
- Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc.
- West Michigan Chapter
- Perrigo
- Cascade Engineering
- Holland Board of Public Works
- DTE Energy
- The Right Place
- Lakeshore Advantage
- Mobius Coaching
- Autocam
- West Michigan Electrical JATC
- Mercy Health
- Meijer Inc.
- Spectrum Ventures
- LLC
- Hines Corporation
- Michigan Rehabilitation Services
- Grand Rapids Foam Technologies

- Targeted businesses from emerging sectors/industries.

Manufacturing and health care are the key industries that continue to dominate both Regions 4a and 4b collectively. Agriculture, construction and energy, information technology are industries that the region has identified as key sectors.

8. A description of how the region will collectively negotiate and reach agreement with the Governor on local levels of performance for, and report on, the performance accountability measures described in the WIOA Section 116(c), for the local areas or the planning region. Regions may consider:

- **The process to be used for determining regional performance goals.**

Michigan Works! West Central and West Michigan Works! both participated independently with Michigan Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO) to negotiate the performance goal through program year 19/20. These negotiations were based on historical performance and local economic conditions.

Performance levels for future programs have not been set or negotiated at this time. Both areas have updated their respective local plans to reflect the negotiated rates.