

Region 8 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Combined Regional Plan

For the Period of July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2024

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REGION 8 COMBINED REGIONAL PLAN 2020-2024

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OVERVIEW

Region 8 of northeast Louisiana submits its Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Combined Regional Plan for the period of July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2024 in accordance with Section 106 of WIOA which provides for the identification of Workforce Development Regions. This document is submitted by Region 8 that consists of the following parishes: Caldwell, East Carroll, Franklin, Jackson, Madison, Morehouse, Ouachita, Richland, Tensas, Union and West Carroll; and was prepared in collaboration with Workforce Development Board-81, Workforce Development Board SDA-83, Inc. and its core partner agencies. Region 8 believes that collaboration and coordination of efforts in all areas is a key to success in ensuring that workforce needs of businesses and job seekers are met. Region 8 will collaborate to collect, analyze and use labor market information to make strategic decisions.

The Region 8 Combined Plan fully aligns with the Governor's strategic vision and guidance for the state's workforce development system. The process for gathering information from stakeholders included meetings of committee work groups, workforce board meetings, and partner meetings. In addition, the local boards made the plan available through electronic means and in open meetings to ensure transparency to the public.

Today's economic landscape and workforce, specifically with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, is constantly changing and the demands shift on a regular basis. One of the goals in releasing the plan, as was a goal of the State of Louisiana, is to provide a reliable guide focused on creating and sustaining good jobs while identifying strategies that support future-oriented education and training for Region 8 citizens. This vision has continued the mission with which Gov. Edwards charged the people of Louisiana. That shared mission of "Putting Louisiana First" and making it possible for all Louisiana citizens to be healthy and prosperous has guided the preparation and evolution of this plan and the State plan.

Louisiana's and Region 8's economy is evolving. Parallel to our evolution are the changing requirements and demands of our state and nation, resulting in a shift in the business needs and skills demand to meet businesses' demands today and in the future.

Region 8, in alignment with the State, envisions a workforce system that will provide pathways for all Louisianans, including individuals who are receiving public assistance, the unemployed or underemployed, those who are deficient in basic skills, as well as persons with disabilities, including disabled veterans, and others who have significant barriers to employment. All will have access to education, training and supportive services needed to prepare for and secure high-demand occupations that pay family-sustaining wages.

Chapter 1: ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS – REGION 8

Region 8 believes the submission of this combined plan meets the requirements described in Regional and Local Planning Guide August 2020, OWD Policy 4-14: Use of WIOA Funds for Statewide Employment and Training Activities, and OWD Policy 2-23: Integrated Service Delivery Policy w/attachment.

The Louisiana Workforce Commission’s Labor Market Information (LMI), Louisiana Occupational Information System (LOIS) Scorecard is the state’s Virtual Labor Market Information web portal. This interactive site provides users with access to the latest Louisiana labor force, wages, population, industry employment, training schools, training programs, Scorecard for completion rates, Youth Web Portal, projections, demographics, nonfarm employment, employer database, unemployment claimants, industry staffing patterns, licensed occupations, demand occupations, and career products.

ANALYSIS OF THE:

1. ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF REGION 8

Analyses of economic conditions drive the required vision and goals for the State’s and Region 8’s workforce development system and alignment strategies for workforce development programs to support economic growth.

a. TARGETED INDUSTRIES, HIGH-IMPACT INDUSTRY CLUSTERS, AND IN-DEMAND OCCUPATIONS

LARGEST ANNUAL OCCUPATIONAL OPENINGS BY DEGREE TYPE

Bachelor's Degree	Star Rating	Annual Total Openings	2018 Annual Average Wage	Associate's Degree	Star Rating	Annual Total Openings	2018 Annual Average Wage	Post-Secondary Vocational	Star Rating	Annual Total Openings	2018 Annual Average Wage
General and Operations Managers	4	150	\$104,618	Registered Nurses	5	180	\$61,763	Nursing Assistants	2	280	\$20,386
Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	5	140	\$44,925	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	4	160	\$35,309	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	3	260	\$28,949
Accountants and Auditors	5	80	\$65,331	First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers	5	130	\$44,800	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	4	220	\$35,216
Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	4	80	\$49,826	Property, Real Estate, and Community Association Managers	5	30	\$44,678	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	5	190	\$35,315
Management Analysts	5	50	\$62,882	Loan Officers	5	30	\$50,331	Customer Service Representatives	4	180	\$28,753
Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	4	40	\$47,669	Computer Network Support Specialists	5	20	\$55,715	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	4	130	\$38,128
Financial Managers	5	30	\$100,682	Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	4	20	\$44,200	Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing,	4	130	\$57,846

LARGEST ANNUAL OCCUPATIONAL OPENINGS BY DEGREE TYPE											
								Except Technical and Scientific Products			
Sales Managers	5	20	\$115,428	Physical Therapist Assistants	5	20	\$56,508	Teacher Assistants	2	120	\$19,758
Construction Managers	5	20	\$101,977	Chemical Plant and System Operators	4	20	\$72,853	Cooks, Restaurant	2	100	\$21,714
Medical and Health Services Managers	5	20	\$99,379	Administrative Services Managers	4	10	\$81,070	Childcare Workers	2	100	\$19,493

Diagram 1: Occupations with the Most Projected Annual Openings by Education Level

Diagram 1 lists the occupations with the most projected annual openings by education level, along with their star rating from Louisiana Star Jobs. Many professional and technical services occupations make the list, as that industry continues rapid growth. Engineering, construction and health care occupations also top the lists as they represent an increased need for a highly skilled workforce.

The table below (Diagram 2) lists targeted industries and their associated high-impact industry clusters, as well as their associated in-demand occupations in Region 8. Regional Labor Market Area 8: Monroe anticipates 8 percent growth through 2026. Three (3) industries that anticipate the most growth are: Health Care and Social Assistance (13.2% increase), Accommodation and Food Services (12.6% projected increase), and Retail Trade (942 jobs).

TARGETED SECTORS OF REGION 8	
W/HIGH-IMPACT INDUSTRY CLUSTER	IN-DEMAND OCCUPATIONS
Health Care and Social Assistance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambulatory Health Care Services • Hospitals • Nursing and Residential Care Facilities • Social Assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered Nurses • Licensed Practical Nurses • Community and Social Service Specialists, All Other
Accommodation and Food Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation • Food Services and Drinking Places 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Service Managers • Chefs and Head Cooks • First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers • Light Truck and Delivery Services Drivers
Retail Trade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Material and Garden Equipment and Supplies Dealers • Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores • Electronics and appliance Stores • Food and Beverage Stores • Furniture and Home Furnishings Stores • Gasoline Stations • General Merchandise Stores • Health and Personal Care stores • Miscellaneous Store Retailers • Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealer • Nonstore Retailers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail Salesperson • First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers • Butchers and Meat Cutters • Pharmacy Technicians • Pharmacists • Parts Salespersons • Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics

TARGETED SECTORS OF REGION 8	
• Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, and Music Stores	

Diagram 2: Targeted industries and Their Associated High-Impact Industry Clusters w/Associated In-Demand Occupations

The majority of in-demand jobs in these industries are entry-level, require a minimum of a high school diploma and are lower wage occupations. However, for youth entering the Region 8 workforce, these jobs provide experience to begin building a work history, earning a standard living wage and are first steps in a career pathway.

b. INDUSTRIES AND OCCUPATIONS WITH FAVORABLE LOCATION QUOTIENTS

High location quotients (LQs) indicate sectors in which Region 8 has high concentrations of employment compared to the State average. The sectors with the largest LQs in Region 8 include Manufacturing, Education and Health Services. The majority of the parishes (9 of 11) follow the State's concentration of employment in the Natural Resources and Mining industry (average LQ of 5.37). Union Parish has a location quotient of 3.34 in Manufacturing and Ouachita Parish has a LQ in Education and Health Services of 1.35.

(Source: U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; Last Modified January 02, 2020-December Employment Location Quotient)

c. INDUSTRIES AND OCCUPATIONS WITH FAVORABLE DEMAND PROJECTIONS BASED ON GROWTH

The Monroe region's long term employment projections suggest that the annual average workforce demand to increase by 8.2 percent. Diagram 3 shows industry and occupational projections in the Monroe RLMA.

Industry Title	NAIC	2016 Average Employment	2026 Projected Employment	Employment Change Through 2026	Share of Total Growth Through 2026
Health Care and Social Assistance	62	22,772	25,789	3,017	31.9%
Accommodation and Food Services	72	9,113	10,261	1,148	12.1%
Retail Trade	44-45	14,806	15,748	942	9.9%
Administrative and Waste Services	56	5,174	6,099	925	9.8%
Other Services, Except Public Administration	81	9,218	9,988	770	8.1%
Educational Services	61	10,543	11,123	580	6.1%
Construction	23	4,656	5,090	434	4.6%
Government	90	8,217	8,457	240	2.5%
Finance and Insurance	52	4,609	4,823	214	2.3%
Agriculture, Fishing, Forestry, and Hunting	11	4,131	4,219	88	0.9%

Diagram 3: Industry and Occupational Projections in the Monroe RLMA

d. INDUSTRIES AND OCCUPATIONS WITH FAVORABLE DEMAND PROJECTIONS BASED ON REPLACEMENTS (EXITS + TRANSFERS)

The annual transfers are those number of jobs needed to fill those workers who are retiring. The chart below reflects both types of replacements, exits and transfers, combined to indicate the total annual openings these workers will leave behind. The chart includes the top twenty-five (25) occupations with the most openings after exits and transfers.

Occ. Code	Occupational Title	Annual Exits	Annual Transfers	Annual Total Openings Due to Exits and Transfers
00-0000	Total, All Occupations	5,930	7,690	13,620
41-2011	Cashiers	350	340	690
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	250	320	570
39-9021	Personal Care Aides	300	230	530
35-3021	Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food	230	240	470
35-2021	Food Preparation Workers	170	180	350
53-7062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	120	210	330
35-3031	Waiters and Waitresses	120	190	310
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	150	140	290
43-6014	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	140	140	280
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	140	140	280
31-1014	Nursing Assistants	140	120	260
41-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	70	130	200
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	70	100	170
45-2092	Farmworkers and Laborers, Crop, Nursery, and Greenhouse	40	130	170
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	70	100	170
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	90	70	160
43-5081	Stock Clerks and Order Fillers	70	90	160
37-2012	Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	90	70	160

Occ. Code	Occupational Title	Annual Exits	Annual Transfers	Annual Total Openings Due to Exits and Transfers
35-1012	First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	50	100	150
53-3033	Light Truck or Delivery Services Drivers	60	90	150
29-1141	Registered Nurses	90	60	150
49-9071	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	60	80	140
41-4012	Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	40	90	130
43-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers	50	80	130
43-4171	Receptionists and Information Clerks	60	70	130
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	60	70	130
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	30	100	130

Diagram 4: Industries and Occupations with Favorable Demand Projections Based on Replacements (Exits + Transfers)

e. INDUSTRIES AND OCCUPATIONS CONSIDERED MATURE BUT STILL IMPORTANT TO THE ECONOMY

A mature industry is an industry that has passed both the emerging and growth phases of industry growth. At the beginning of the industry lifecycle, new products or services find use in the marketplace. Many businesses may spring up trying to profit from the new product demand. Over time, failures and consolidations will distill the business to the strongest as the industry continues to grow. This is the period where the surviving companies are considered to be mature. Eventually, growth will slow as new or innovative products or services replace this industry offering and begin a new industry lifecycle.

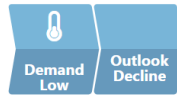
Earnings and sales grow slower in mature industries than during the growth and emerging industries phases. A mature industry may be at its peak or just past it, but not yet in the decline phase. While earnings may be stable, growth prospects are few and far between as the remaining companies consolidate market share and create barriers for new competitors to enter the sphere.

At the maturity stage, the majority of companies in the Manufacturing industry are well-established and the industry has reached its saturation point. These companies constantly attempt to moderate the intensity of competition to protect themselves, and to maintain profitability by shifting their business models. At this stage,

manufacturing companies have realized their maximum revenue, profits, and cash flows because customer demand is fairly high and consistent. These products have become more commonplace and popular among the general public, and their prices are fairly reasonable, as compared to new products.



[Manufacturing](#)



f. INDUSTRIES AND OCCUPATIONS CONSIDERED EMERGING

Diagram 5 provides employment growth projections expected to experience the greatest growth by 2026. The highest growth occupation according to these projections will be Health Care and Social Assistance. The establishments in this sector perform activities such as: providing nursing care, personal care, assistants to other medical personnel, and receiving and giving information.

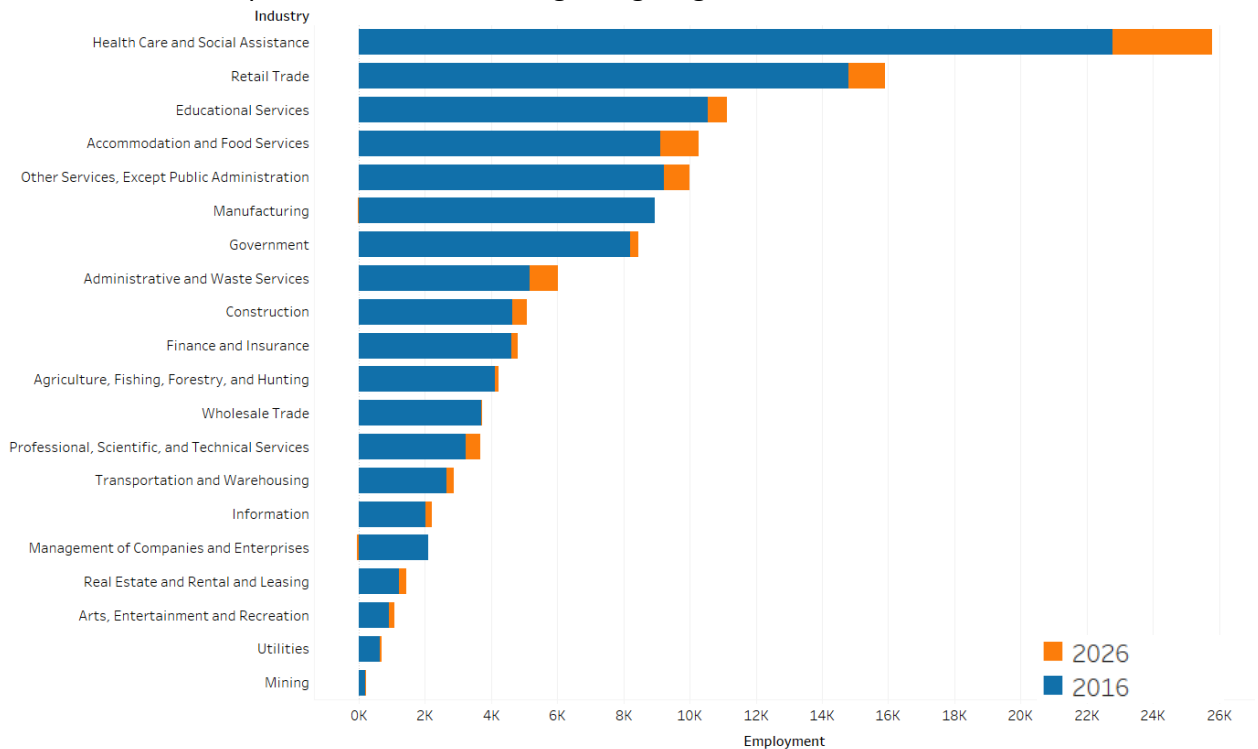


Diagram 5: Industries Considered Emerging in Region 8

INDUSTRIES AND OCCUPATIONS CONSIDERED EMERGING IN REGION 8	
INDUSTRY	IN-DEMAND OCCUPATIONS
Health Care and Social Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Care Aides • Registered Nurses • Licensed Practical Nurses • Office Clerks • Medical Assistants

INDUSTRIES AND OCCUPATIONS CONSIDERED EMERGING IN REGION 8	
Retail Trades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail Sales Person • Cashiers • Stock Clerks and Order Fillers • Food Preparation Workers • Light Truck or Delivery Services Drivers
Accommodation and Food Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooks, Fast Food • Hosts and Hostesses, Restaurant, Lounge, and Coffee Shop • Bartenders • Light Truck or Delivery Drivers • Cooks, Institution and Cafeteria

Quick Facts

Fueled by the aging of the baby boomers, the Health Care and Social Assistance Industry is projected to grow by 3,017 between 2016 and 2026. This growth is broken down further into the Ambulatory Health Services, Hospitals, Nursing and Residential Care Facilities, and Social Assistance Industries. Nearly three quarters of the growth is attributable to hospital workers and emergency care professionals, 64.1 percent. The number of job vacancies in this sector also show strong demand for workers in the Education and Health Services sector.

g. SOURCES OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND DATA

The lists of occupations with the most projected annual openings by education level Diagram 1, along with their star rating from Louisiana Star Jobs, was sourced from Louisiana Workforce Commission's (LWC) HiRE system by using Labor Market Information>Employment Projections. (http://www.laworks.net/LaborMarketInfo/LMI_employmentprojections.asp).

This information was provided by Monique Breaux, Economic Development Research Analyst, with Louisiana Workforce Commission's Research & Statistics/Office of Occupational Information Services.

The targeted industries were also provided by LWC's Research & Statistics/Office of Occupational Information Services. The high-impact industry clusters, as well as their associated in-demand occupations in Region 8, were gathered from HiRE's Wages and Labor Data under the Industry data tab. Changing the area selection to 8th Regional Labor Market Area, each industry was selected, then that industry expanded to show the industry clusters in that targeted industry. Going back to Wages and Labor Data, LOIS was selected to access the Employment Projections for each industry. This selection was used to determine the in-demand occupations for each industry.

U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; Last Modified January 02, 2020-December Employment Location Quotient was used to determine which industries have favorable location quotients.

Again, it was with the aid of LWC’s Research & Statistics/Office of Occupational Information Services that Diagram 3: Industry and Occupational Projections in the Monroe RLMA was made available.

Industries and Occupations with Favorable Demand Projections Based on Replacements (Exits + Transfers), Diagram 4, is a manipulation of the data in the *Monroe-Northeast-Regional Labor Market Area 8 Long Term Projections for All Occupations to 2026*. The annual total openings in the chart are the sum of the annual exits and the annual transfers. The chart was condensed to include only the top twenty-five (25) occupations.

LOIS provided the chart (Diagram 5) of Industries and Occupations Considered Emerging in Region 8 as a download from Labor Market Facts: Questions on Industries in Your Local Area>What industries are predicted to have the most future job openings in an area? To get the occupations considered emerging, the Employment Projections for each industry was accessed. This selection was used to determine the in-demand occupations for each industry.

2. EMPLOYMENT NEEDS OF EMPLOYERS IN EXISTING AND EMERGING INDUSTRIES AND OCCUPATIONS IN REGION 8

The Monroe region has a focus on three industries – Health Care and Social Assistance, Accommodation and Food Services, and Retail Trade. The Health Care and Social Assistance industry – a backbone of the state’s economy – is the largest contributor to long term growth, accounting for 31.1 percent of total forecasted growth in Region 8 through 2026.

However, looking at job postings provides insight into real time employment needs. The most frequently requested occupation group over the past twelve (12) months (August 2019 – August 2020) is for Office and Administrative Support Occupations.

Occupation Group Description (O*Net)	Total Job Orders	Total Job Openings	Total Job Referrals
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	263	926	3,874
Production Occupations	255	777	3,285
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	78	697	600
Community and Social Services Occupations	109	623	565
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	221	604	2,379
Health care Practitioners and Technical Occupations	551	553	870
Health care Support Occupations	108	412	1,613
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	115	255	1,218
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	164	181	1,090

Sales and Related Occupations	120	142	1,438
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	124	125	673
Building & Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance Occup.	77	117	882
Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	26	112	202
Construction and Extraction Occupations	76	111	615
Management Occupations	106	106	450
Architecture and Engineering Occupations	73	81	282
Personal Care and Service Occupations	30	69	339
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	47	47	99
Protective Service Occupations	45	46	262
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occ	42	42	379
Education, Training, and Library Occupations	14	16	14
Military Specific Occupations	1	10	24
Legal Occupations	9	9	29

Looking at long term occupational projections provides insight into the employment needs and provides an opportunity to ensure qualified candidates are being trained to meet employment demand. Occupations related to Health care Practitioners, Technicians and Support are projected to experience the greatest growth. Occupations in Farming, Fishing and Forestry as well as Production are declining.

Occupation	2016 Estimated Employment	2026 Projected Employment	2016-2026 Annual Avg. Percent Change
Home Health Aides	458	681	4.05%
Roustabouts, Oil and Gas	28	39	3.37%
Personal Care Aides	3,251	4,344	2.94%
Nurse Practitioners	138	179	2.64%
Physician Assistants	45	58	2.57%
Physical Therapist Assistants	113	145	2.52%
Occupational Therapy Assistants	46	59	2.52%
Web Developers	31	39	2.32%
Physical Therapists	255	319	2.26%
Computer Network Support Specialists	164	205	2.26%

Region 8 has chosen to pay close attention to an occupation that is emerging in the region. The occupations under the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Group of Computer and Mathematical Occupations (15-000).

SOC Code	SOC - Group and Occupational Title	Estimated Employment	Mean/Average	10th Percentile Entry	50th Percentile Median	90th Percentile Experienced	Mean/Average
15-0000	Computer and Mathematical Occupations	723	34.51	18.42	32.20	55.10	71,790

15-1211	Computer Systems Analysts	57	42.04	29.26	39.31	60.09	87,454
15-1231	Computer Network Support Specialists	75	24.85	14.47	23.36	37.22	51,698
15-1232	Computer User Support Specialists	77	22.17	12.74	20.15	35.95	46,116
15-1241	Computer Network Architects	47	43.16	26.91	38.19	63.25	89,781
15-1244	Network and Computer Systems Administrators	84	33.58	25.22	29.57	53.34	69,851
15-1251	Computer Programmers	62	34.47	25.82	31.61	51.49	71,706
15-1256	Software Developers and Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers	183	*	*	*	*	*
15-1257	Web Developers and Digital Interface Designers	13	34.83	22.54	29.67	58.38	72,455
15-1299	Computer Occupations, All Other	83	27.96	13.29	23.22	50.20	58,167

Computer and Information Systems Managers are found in the top twenty (20) occupations by annual wage paid in Region 8. Also, looking at job postings one of the most frequently requested occupation groups over the past twelve (12) months (August 2019 – August 2020) is for Computer and Mathematical Occupations.

Monroe Regional Labor Market Area (RLMA 8)	
Occupational Title	Annual Wage \$
Physicians, All Other and Ophthalmologists, Except Pediatric	223,475
Chief Executives	196,894
Optometrists	171,663
Family Medicine Physicians	162,829
Dentists, General	161,730
Architectural and Engineering Managers	153,811
Civil Engineers	152,118
Pharmacists	127,484
Industrial Production Managers	124,048
Purchasing Managers	119,357
Marketing Managers	114,367
Computer and Information Systems Managers	104,306
Financial Managers	104,102
General and Operations Managers	100,261
Human Resources Managers	100,069
Sales Managers	99,344

Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Technical and Scientific Products	98,142
Securities, Commodities, and Financial Services Sales Agents	96,075
Environmental Engineers	95,670
Speech-Language Pathologists	94,265

In September of 2020 there were fifty-five (55) job openings listed on HiRE in Region 8 for Computer and Math Occupations.

3. KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS NEEDED TO MEET EMPLOYERS NEEDS IN REGION 8

Employers, more often than not, identify customer service, attendance, time management, punctuality, communication skills, and accountability as examples of essential skills needing to be improved. Applicant testing services are available to Region 8's employers through the eleven (11) American Job Centers (AJCs), specifically the comprehensive centers located in Morehouse and Ouachita Parishes. Assessments help identify the interests, skills, and aptitudes of applicants early in the employment process. These tests can help close some of the skills gaps by helping employers better match applicants to open positions and/or identify opportunities for additional skill training. The Integrated Business Services Team is involved in employer outreach to gather information about skills and training needs of the employers in the region. Ongoing input from employers will drive future efforts to address the skill gap.

Degree Level	2016	2017	2018	Annual Projected Openings
Some Postsecondary, No Degree	8,802	9,232	11,876	62,410
Associate Degree	5,800	5,662	5,961	14,000
Baccalaureate Degree	18,973	18,725	19,532	23,490
Graduate or Professional Degree	6,997	7,150	8,080	5,880
Source: Annual Projected Openings from LWC's Long Term Occupational Projections. LA Board of Regents Degrees and Certificates Awarded by Degree, Degree Level, Gender, Race, and Citizenship.				

The preceding table shows the number of completers from Louisiana's public postsecondary education programs by degree level. Academic years 2016 through 2018 are included. The academic years are labeled by the year in which they begin, so 2017 is the school year beginning in June 2017 and ending in May 2018. This is compared to the number of annual openings in the State from LWC's long-term projections, which provides an approximation of what skill levels may show gaps in the future.

Below is further breakdown of degrees awarded by occupational category. The same comparison is drawn between 2017 graduates and annual projected job openings in the Monroe region through 2026.

Degree Category	2018 Completers	Annual Projected Openings
Health Professions	7,913	14,990
Business, Management, Marketing, and Related Professions	7,425	12,710
Education	6,327	8,900

- a. **TARGETED CAREER PATHWAY CLUSTERS** Assisting job seekers with not just job placement, but identification of career pathways is a priority in Region 8. The plan is also to create regional career pathways for each customer-base across systems [adults, dislocated workers, Unemployment Insurance (UI) Claimants, long-term unemployed, adult education students, TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)/SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) including services provided to Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD), vocational rehabilitation clients, veterans, older workers and individuals with additional barriers to employment including, the homeless, etc.] to align programs and resources that lead to employment outcomes, particularly for those with barriers to employment.

Louisiana Delta Community College is planning cooperatively through the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 and WIOA-planning to provide workforce skills training and integrated work-based training to meet regional employer and economic development needs. Region 8 partners will continue to work with the workforce development boards and core partners to define and build pathways appropriate to the region. WIOA emphasizes services that lead to career pathways and stackable credentials. This includes registered apprenticeships and occupational training programs, and from basic education into post-secondary programs. The foundation for this approach to post-secondary credentials is the development of career clusters at the secondary school level, these are:

- Health Science
- Manufacturing
- Business Management & Administration

A career pathway approach is designed to prepare students to meet the demands of postsecondary education and the expectations of employers, in particular those representing in-demand occupations. Integral to this process is the opportunity for participants to acquire a “portable” and “recognized” credential that they have successfully demonstrated skill competencies on a core set of content that is complete with performance standards that are based on a specific set of work-related tasks in either a single occupational area, or a cluster of related occupational areas. Louisiana currently has multiple certifications that are “Industry Based” and “Locally Designed” and available state-wide.

Region 8 recognizes that strong relationships with employers are necessary to create pathways to gainful, long-term employment for participants. The career pathway model provides a combination of education, training, and other services that align with the skill needs of industries in the region. The model prepares adults for success by organizing education, training, and other services to support their particular needs including: counseling to accomplish goals; educational training and workforce preparation that is offered simultaneously, concurrently, and contextually within a

specific occupation or occupational cluster; allowance for attaining a recognized high school equivalency credential; and entrance or advancement within a specific occupation or occupational cluster.

b. Skills In-Demand

<u>HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE</u>	
Advertised Detailed Job Skill	Job Opening Match Count
Interpersonal skills	3,499
Customer service	3,392
Time management	2,619
Organizational skills	2,385
Decision making	1,273

Source: Online advertised jobs data

<u>ACCOMMODATION and FOOD SERVICES</u>	
Advertised Detailed Job Skill	Job Opening Match Count
Customer service	104
Participate in the interview process	70
General maintenance	69
Restaurant management	60
Conflict management	60

Source: Online advertised jobs data

<u>RETAIL TRADE</u>	
Advertised Detailed Job Skill	Job Opening Match Count
Customer service	456
Clean parking lots	103
Greeting customers	39
Inventory control	38
Bookkeeping	37

Source: Online advertised jobs data

Diagram 6: In-Demand Industries with Employers' Requested Workplace Skills

Essential skills continue to be identified by Region 8's employers as a key barrier to individuals entering employment. Not only do employers want individuals with specific occupational skills (Diagram 6), they want individuals with the foundational workplace skills as well. Through conversations and visits with employers, feedback

showed that employers considered the following qualifications as essential to being hired:

- Reliability
- Personal Responsibility
- Attendance/punctuality
- Communication (active listening and learning, speaking)
- Critical thinking and judgement/decision making.

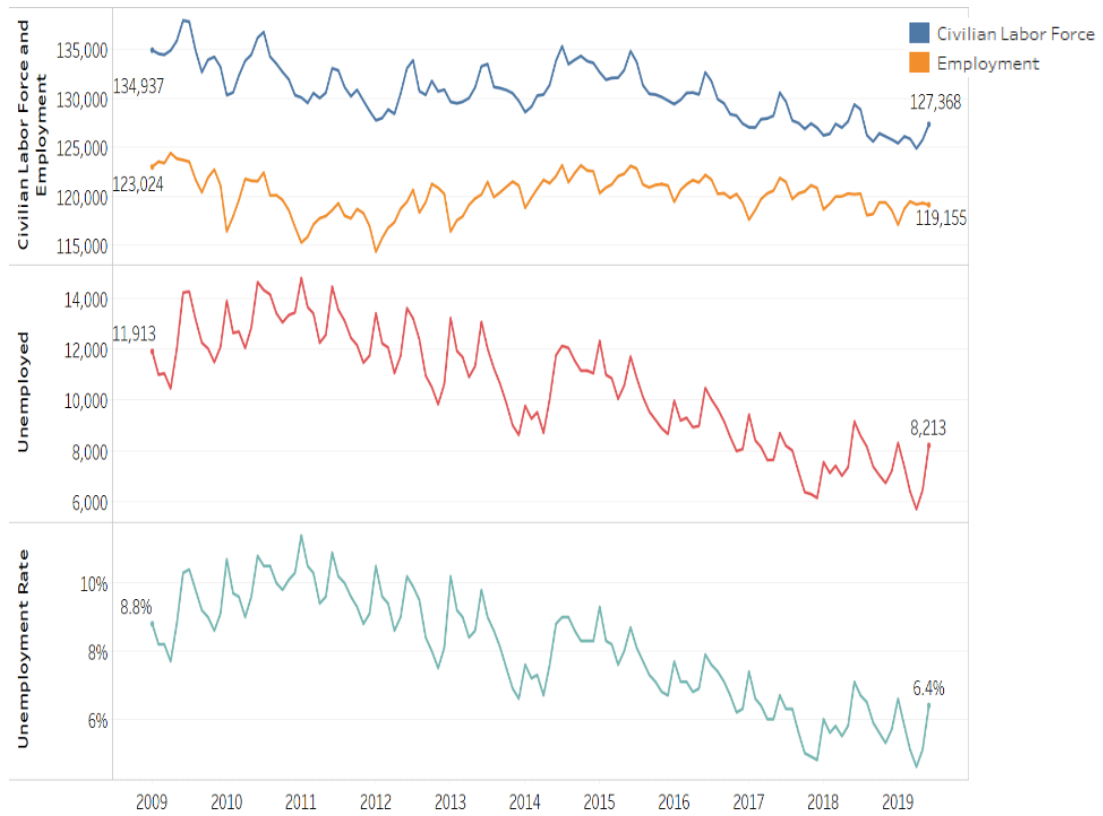
c. Existing Job Seeker Skills vs. Demands of Businesses

In Region 8, as in the rest of the State, the gap in skills between what a potential employee possesses and what an employer needs is a complex issue. We hear frequently that there are not enough of the right candidates for in-demand jobs. To meet the needs of employers for skilled workers, job seekers need training. This is the case for low-income adults, dislocated workers and youth as well.

4. WORKFORCE IN REGION 8

Civilian Labor Force Statistics
The Monroe RLMA was hit hard during the coronavirus pandemic with monthly unemployment rates exceeding 10 percent from April to May, 2020. The rate has decreased since then, with the preliminary September 2020 rate being 6.9 percent, compared to a September 2010 rate of 8.7 percent.
Through the period of January 2009 to June 2019, the labor force has decreased by 7,569 people, while the number of employed has decreased by 3,869.

Not Seasonally Adjusted Labor Force Data January 2009 to June 2019

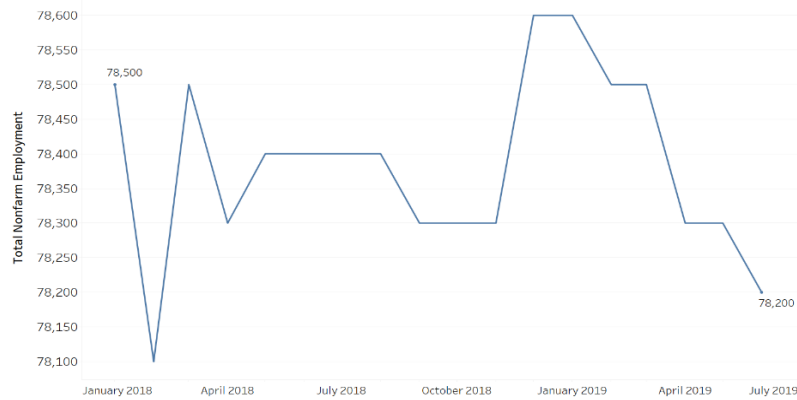


Labor Force Status	Percent
Population	4.5%
Labor Force Participation Rate	77.0%
Employed	96.1%
Unemployed	3.9%
Not in Labor Force	23.0%
Diagram 7: Labor Force Status of Veterans Aged 18 to 64	
Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey 2018 1-year estimates, Table C21005	

Diagram 7 breaks out the labor force status of Louisiana's veterans aged 18 to 64. Veterans in Louisiana have a fairly high labor force participation rate, with over 77 percent of those aged 18 to 64 part of the labor force. Veterans account for 4.5 percent of the state's population.

Nonfarm Employment Statistics

Seasonally Adjusted Total Nonfarm Employment January 2018 to June 2019



Above: During the period of January 2018 to June 2019, seasonally adjusted nonfarm employment declined by 300 jobs during what was a very volatile period.

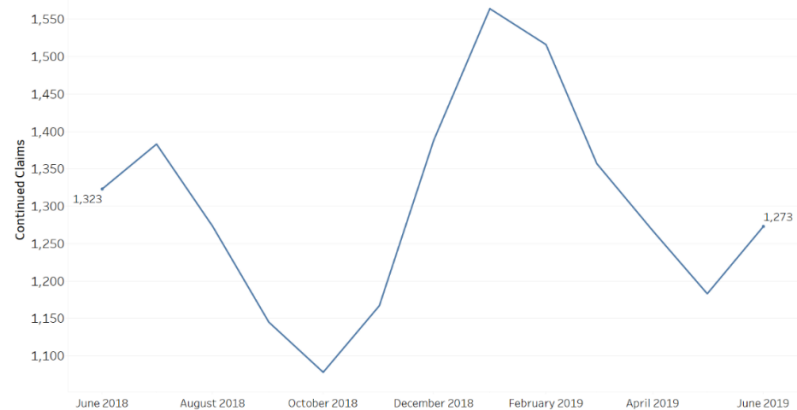
Below: Nonfarm employment in the Monroe MSA has grown steadily since reaching a low of 75,400 in December of 2010.

Seasonally Adjusted Total Nonfarm Employment January 2009 to June 2019



Unemployment Insurance Claims Data

Continued Claims for June 2018 to June 2019

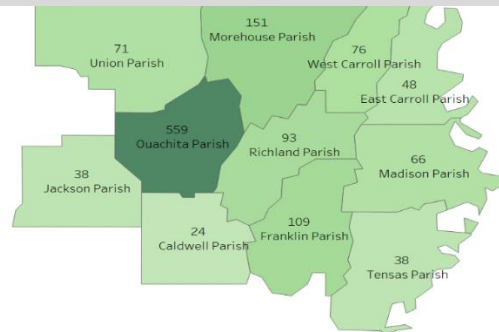


Above: Continued claims have decreased in the Monroe RLMA over the past year, declining from 1,323 in June 2018 to 1,273 in June 2019.

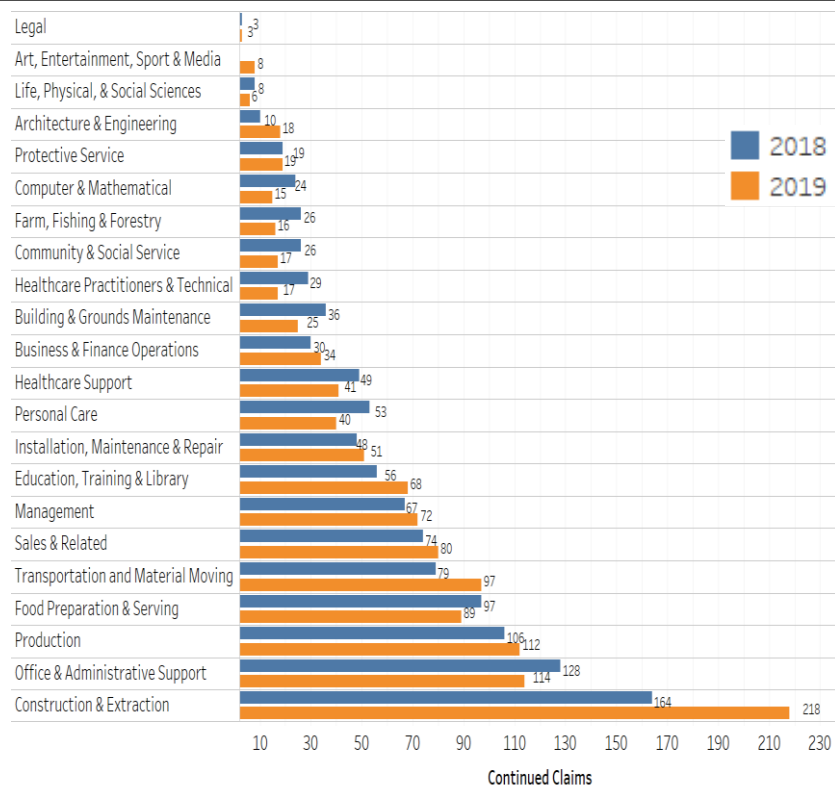
Below: Ouachita Parish had the most continued claims for the Monroe Region in June 2018 with 559 claims.

Both visuals display the continued claims for unemployment insurance filed for the week containing the 12th of the month.

Claims by Parish in June 2018



Continued Claims for June 2018 to June 2019



This chart shows the occupation clusters that contributed to Monroe's continued claims for the week containing June 12 in 2018 and 2019. Construction and Extraction Occupations led the region with 218 continued claims.

Diagrams 8 and 9 highlight the educational achievements of Louisiana's population. Diagram 8 looks at a younger cohort, ages 18 to 24, who may still be in postsecondary education. Their relative age likely accounts for the low percentage of Bachelor's degree or higher completers, and the high percentage of "Some college or Associate's degree" completers. Diagram 9 studies the population above age 24, which is more likely to have left the educational system. More than half of Louisiana's adult population has completed some college coursework or graduated from a secondary institution.

Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce of Louisiana	
Population 18 to 24 years	Percent
Less than high school graduate	16.7%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	35.5%
Some college or Associate's degree	40.4%
Bachelor's degree or higher	7.4%
Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey 2018 1-year estimates, Table S1501	

Diagram 8: Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce of Louisiana-18 to 24 years

Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce of Louisiana (Continued)	
Population 25 years and over	Percent
Less than high school graduate	14.2%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	34.3%
Some college, no degree	20.8%
Associate's degree	6.5%
Bachelor's degree	15.9%
Graduate or professional degree	8.4%
Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey 2018 1-year estimates, Table S1501	

Diagram 9: Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce of Louisiana-25 years and up

a. CHANGES IN DEMOGRAPHICS, LABOR SUPPLY AND OCCUPATIONAL DEMAND

The population in Region 8 is slowly decreasing. The 2010 population of 8th Regional Labor Market Area, Monroe, LA was estimated at 309,026. The 2016 population of 8th Regional Labor Market Area, Monroe, LA was estimated at 306,706. This represents a -0.75% change from 2010.

Area Name	2010 Estimated Population	2016 Estimated Population	Estimated 2010- 2016 Population Percent Change
8 th Regional Labor Market Area- Monroe	309,026	306,706	-0.75%

This demographic shift will continue into the future and will create continued downward pressure on labor supply for the entire region. The aging population is a key contributor to the expected strong demand for health care workers. Employers of Region 8 are also reporting that they are unprepared for the "brain drain" and skills void that will result when a significant proportion of talented, experienced older workers start retiring and leaving the workforce.

This diagram shows the number of job openings advertised online, as well as potential candidates in the workforce system in 8th Regional Labor Market Area, Monroe, LA on September 9, 2020.

Area Name	Job Openings	Candidates	Candidates per Job
8th Regional Labor Market Area-Monroe	2,923	56,088	19.19

b. SPECIAL POPULATIONS

WIOA established a priority requirement with respect to funds allocated to a local area for Adult activities. Under this section, AJC staff, when using WIOA Adult funds to provide individualized career services, training services, or both, must give priority to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient.

The special (priority) populations under WIOA, and recognized in Region 8, include:

- Recipients of public assistance: SNAP, TANF, SSI, any other income-based assistance,
- Other low-income individuals who receive public assistance:
 - Family income does not exceed the poverty line or 70% of LLSIL,
 - Homeless,
 - Free or reduced school lunch,
 - Foster child,
 - Disabled,
- Individuals who are basic skills deficient, and
- Veterans and eligible spouses.

Disability Characteristic	Employed	Unemployed	Not in Labor Force
With a hearing difficulty	25.9%	8.5%	15.1%
With a vision difficulty	30.0%	29.9%	21.0%
With a cognitive difficulty	32.6%	51.2%	47.3%
With an ambulatory difficulty	30.5%	26.3%	56.7%
With a self-care difficulty	7.3%	5.7%	24.0%
With an independent living difficulty	14.5%	24.4%	46.4%
Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey 2018 1-year estimates, Table B18120			

Diagram 10: LA Disability Characteristics of the Workforce Aged 18 to 64 by Employment Status

Diagram 10 highlights the rates at which various disability characteristics appear in the employed, unemployed, and not in the labor force populations. The majority of residents with disabilities, either unemployed or not in the labor force, face cognitive and/or ambulatory difficulties. Disability characteristics are not mutually exclusive, meaning one individual may have multiple difficulties, accounting for the high percentages.

In Louisiana, 6.5 percent of the employed population aged 18 to 64 lives with one or more disability. Residents with disabilities account for 15 percent of the unemployed and 31 percent of those not in the labor force.

B. REGION 8 SECTOR INITIATIVES

1. CONVENING OF EMPLOYERS, FOUNDATIONS, AND REGION 8 INSTITUTIONS

Region 8 has adopted the Next Generation Sector Partnerships model. The model is a partnership of companies from the same industry in a shared labor market region that works with education, workforce development, economic development and community organizations to tackle common needs of the targeted industry. Sector partnerships primarily focus on the education and workforce training needs of an industry, but Next Gen partnerships also focus on other issues related to an industry's competitiveness. This ensures deeper, broader and longer-term industry engagement.

INDUSTRY-DRIVEN, COMMUNITY-SUPPORTED SECTOR PARTNERSHIP



2. ESTABLISHED AND ACTIVE INDUSTRY SECTOR PARTNERSHIP IN REGION 8

Region 8's first attempt at sector partnership was in the Health care industry. Region 8's Workforce Development Boards first convened, in the summer of 2016, what has now grown into Northeast Louisiana Health Care Alliance. This has been a very successful partnership. The NELA Health care Alliance represents nearly forty (40) diverse health care organizations in northeast Louisiana. The alliance is made up of hospitals, long term care facilities, skilled nursing facilities, home health organizations and others who provide critically needed health care to community members. These health care organizations come together in an ongoing network to tackle the most pressing health care issues of Region 8 including workforce issues, networking opportunities, and pressing policy topics that warrant a collective action.

Health care companies in other regions of the country are working together to create "health care sector partnerships", and Region 8 must too if we are to continue to thrive. Sector partnerships are a way for multiple health care organizations to come together around important issues. They are a place to collectively address issues related to shared vitality; a single table at which to work with multiple public programs in education, workforce development and economic development; and an opportunity to help create solutions to shared pressing issues.

The launch meeting was professionally facilitated. Opportunities for industry stability and vitality in northeast Louisiana were defined for action. This was the beginning of an ongoing partnership of health care leaders in our region. Community partners such as workforce development, education, economic development, and others were there for the initial meeting in "listening" mode in order to better understand how they could help. Community partners are a critical piece to acting on the priorities defined by the Alliance.

Wins for the NELA Health care Alliance

- Region 8 Hospital Resource Guide
- Regional Acute Network Data-sharing Project – Live July 1, 2017
- Prompted the re-establishment of the Ambulance Advisory Committee and secured membership appointments for health care representations. Led to a new Ambulance Provider for parish 1.1.19
- Expanded working network and networking opportunities – both with health care and community partners and peer to peer networking.
- Hosted Legislative Luncheon August 10, 2017 directly resulting in 2 pieces proposed legislation with one passed SB478: Provides relative to LPN Licensure. (No longer a charge to look up LPN License.)
- Enhanced an existing Louisiana Delta Community College CNA education program to address customer service deficiencies defined by health care providers in the region. Industry Partners and support partners have also worked together to redesign C.N.A. curriculum to include a Behavioral Health course to address the lack of Behavioral Health Techs in the area.
- CNA training opportunities have expanded to non-traditional sites.
- The NELA Health care Alliance has hosted two no-cost Nursing Symposiums to address the need to up skill incumbent nurses.
- Submitted Alliance Support for a regional candidate for the Louisiana Board of Pharmacy to the Governor for appointment.
- Applied for and was awarded a Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation Collective Impact Grant of \$300,000, and a Living Well Foundation Grant award for \$44,000 for funding opportunities to support adjunct faculty to teach nursing clinicals at regional health care facilities.
- Hosted a seminar in partnership with Ochsner's for regional security guard training for approximately 20 participants to address active shooter threats in the health care facility setting. (Acute Care Committee)
- Instrumental in the development and installation of two new in-demand occupational training programs identified by the Alliance as critical for the region: 1) Medical Assistants and 2) Behavioral Technicians.
- Awarded the 2019 International Economic Development Council (IEDC) Bronze Award for collaboration and partnership for the NELA Nursing Adjunct Faculty Project funded by the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation of Louisiana and Living Well Foundation.

3. OTHER SECTOR-BASED PARTNERSHIPS IN REGION 8

Workforce Development Boards-81 and 83 continue to evaluate industry needs to determine the next sector partnership to initiate. A partnership with the Manufacturing industry has been launched by the Monroe Chamber of Commerce. Region 8 has representatives participating in the planning meetings. The WDBs work closely with the Manufacturing Extension Partnership of Louisiana (MEPOL), a manufacturing organization.

4. OTHER PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS IN REGION 8

In 2015, IBM, CenturyLink and the State of Louisiana announced a public-private partnership that was to create high-value, high-tech jobs in the IT sector. As part of a ten (10)-year business transformation agreement between IBM and CenturyLink, IBM opened and staffed the new applications development innovation center in Region 8, creating at least four hundred (400) new roles for experienced professionals and drawing heavily on graduates from the state's colleges and universities. The State is providing \$4.5 million in funding over ten (10) years to expand key higher education programs in the IT sector, including the computer science program at the University of Louisiana at Monroe, the cyber engineering program at Louisiana Tech, and the data analytics program at Grambling State University. In addition, the State is providing \$12 million for construction of new office space for the use by IBM.

In the spring of 2017, Graphic Packaging International Inc. and DHL Supply Chain, North America made a combined \$274 million capital investment in the Manufacturing industry in northeast Louisiana and developed a 1.27 million-square-foot folding carton plant and logistics center in Monroe. A number of factors influenced the decision, including access to an experienced and skilled local workforce in Region 8 and the relationship with the State of Louisiana and local community. To secure the projects, Louisiana offered a competitive incentive package consisting of a performance-based, \$3 million Modernization Tax Credit for Graphic Packaging. For the public-private partnership capital investment, Graphic Packaging secured a local tax exemption agreement with the Ouachita Industrial Development Board as an alternative to the state's Industrial Tax Exemption Program. For its investment in the Monroe facility, DHL will receive an exemption of local property taxes.

In addition, Graphic Packaging will receive support from the state's FastStart® workforce training program, and the warehouse operator will be eligible to participate in the state's Enterprise Zone Program, along with either a sales tax rebate on capital equipment and materials purchased or a 1.5 percent tax credit on the company's total capital investment.

The project created over one hundred (100+) new direct jobs, and the warehouse operations resulted in more new indirect jobs. Because of the public-private partnership, Graphic Packaging will continue to employ more than eight hundred (800) people in its West Monroe mill and in the new combined folding carton plant.

Region 8 has five (5) community college campuses that support sector strategies. Louisiana Delta Community College (LDCC) is in constant contact with businesses to help them align curriculum and provide quality, affordable education and training to area residents. In addition, these strategies are discussed at the partner meetings with the community college in attendance.

Partnerships with chambers of commerce and economic development agencies in Region 8 will prepare the region for future sector partnerships, especially as technology continues to change the nature of work and future jobs amid the coronavirus pandemic.

5. NEUTRAL CONVENERS IN REGION 8

As described in the Next Generation Sector Partnership Tool Kit, the convener plays an essential role in keeping a sector partnership on track and moving forward to accomplish the goals of the businesses in the partnership. The convener is the backbone of the sector partnership, providing administrative, project management, and facilitation support to keep the partnership focused and productive.

In Region 8, any of the community partners can be considered neutral enough to be a convener of a sector partnership. The community partners are:

- Workforce Development Boards 81 and 83
- North Louisiana Economic Partnership
- University of Louisiana at Monroe and Louisiana Tech University
- Louisiana Delta Community College
- Monroe City School District
- Ouachita Parish School District
- Monroe Chamber of Commerce.

Again, from the Next Gen model, there is no single organization that is best positioned to convene a sector partnership. Successful sector partnerships can be convened by workforce development boards, chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, industry associations, or community colleges. Whatever the arrangement, it's important that the convener has the following characteristics:

- Trusted
- Facilitative
- Process-oriented.

Chapter 2: STRATEGIES FOR SERVICE INTEGRATION – REGION 8

WIOA promotes alignment of workforce development programs with regional economic development strategies to meet the needs of local and regional employers. The workforce system supports strong regional economies and plays an active role in community and workforce development.

All customers in Region 8 will have access to services in both a self-serve option and/or a staff-assisted option. Access to some services may require determination of customer eligibility, which is provided at one of the eleven (11) local American Job Centers in Region 8. Integrated Service Delivery honors the journey of the individual. In particular, it highlights the assets and interests of the customer at every point of service delivery. Integration called out in the legislation requires partners to be flexible and adaptive as customer needs change. WIOA puts the job seeker in the driver's seat at Region 8's American Job Center locations and allows them the opportunity to understand all services and choose the option(s) that will work best for them. Customers are actively engaged in service determinations throughout the process, and service providers utilize the strengths that each customer brings to their employment journey. Customers are also frequently asked to review service experiences and inform how future customer experiences can be improved. Region 8 is in the forefront of the coordinated planning and service delivery strategies that makes the regional efforts successful.

A. Analysis of Workforce Development Activities

1. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES IN REGION 8

What follows is a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of workforce development activities in Region 8. A strength of the region's workforce development activities is the many partnerships in place to help individuals with barriers to find employment that will lead to a self-sufficient wage.

Strengths

- Title I performance goals are the primary focus of the region.
- Increased online presence and access to automated services.
- Both Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) in Region 8 make Title I programs more employer driven.
- Louisiana Delta Community College is a high quality provider across the region. WDB 81 and 83 work collaboratively with the community college to help develop employer-driven programming to fill immediate and longer term employer needs.
- Information is shared across the region to reduce any overlap with employers.
- Region 8 continues to participate in the North Louisiana Work Ready Community. LWDB-81 became a certified ACT Work Ready Community in May 2019. LWDB-83 continues to progress toward becoming a Certified Community.
- The Northeast Louisiana Health Care Alliance continues to make strides in Region 8.
- Both WDBs in Region 8 utilize labor market information produced by Louisiana Workforce Commission to make sound workforce decisions.

- Both LWDAs within Region 8 are working to be more creative with program design and consistently share best practices.

Weaknesses

- Employer involvement is not always as strong as it should be to ensure regular feedback. Region 8 seeks more feedback from employers to know how efficient and effective our programs are.
- The majority of the clients seeking assistance are the hardest to serve. “Employability” or “soft skills” are often what job seekers need the most.
- LWDAs in Region 8 seek additional training opportunities for Youth activities.
- There is a mismatch between the available labor pool and employer demand. Many in-demand jobs require advanced training to meet workforce requirements.
- Transportation issues are a constant struggle. Many workers are not close to job opportunities and do not have access to public transportation or access to a vehicle.
- Funding for child care assistance is a consistent reason for many to decline job opportunities.
- There is a perception that many clients served are “unemployable”.
- The lack of a consistent marketing campaign has diminished the ability to develop lasting relationships with both job seekers and employer customers.

- 2. CAPACITY OF PARTNERS TO ADDRESS EDUCATION AND SKILL NEEDS IN REGION 8** Region 8 is tasked with establishing, implementing and sustaining a comprehensive, integrated workforce delivery system that expands economic development and workforce capacity. This is being done by increasing collaboration among all workforce partners to improve responsiveness and the coordinated delivery of services. Region 8 is very connected in helping to bring partners and programs together. The region is forming many new partnerships to meet the educational needs of our citizens. The LWDAs are members of the Regional Carl Perkins committee to help shape pathways opportunities.

The Region strives on providing short-term, demand-driven training. Region 8 aligns with the goal to support the Jump Start 2.0 program to better prepare students to work in high wage, high-growth industries. Region 8’s Adult Education partners are partnering with the LWDAs to provide more training opportunities. Louisiana Delta Community College is actively engaged in developing solutions. LDCC Center for Adult Development has made employment the primary goal for adult education rather than earning a credential alone.

As new firms locate in the region and as existing businesses work to remain competitive, the ability of the workforce system to identify business needs and to respond and deliver appropriate assessment, training, placement and retention strategies, is essential to maintaining workforce capacity. The WDBs of Region 8 provides direct leadership, support, services and resources to employers that: enhance specific skill development initiatives and programs; expand technical skills, workforce capacity, apprenticeship programs, customized work training; and foster technical career support.

Employer services include occupational and labor market information to inform economic forecasting, no-cost human resource services for recruiting, retaining, and hiring qualified employees. Region 8 convenes a Regional Integrated Business Service Team. The goal is to bring together a team to coordinate and streamline services to employers. The focus is to ensure employers can access workers within the American Job Center system. The team:

- engages the business community to identify industry-hiring trends and industry recognized credentials,
- supports industry-specific sector strategies designed to facilitate in-depth focus on particular industries with business partnerships in these areas,
- analyzes and disseminates labor market information to project job growth, wages, and training requirements,
- provides comprehensive analysis of Region 8's labor market,
- creates custom recruitment plans,
- posts job vacancies online,
- conducts targeted recruitment through email and Zoom contact,
- organizes job fairs and special employer events,
- provides interview scheduling services and facilities,
- provides On-the-Job training funds,
- facilitates employed worker trainings, and
- responds to WARN (Worker Adjustment Retraining Notification) notices, facilitating workshops on behalf of Louisiana Workforce Commission by providing information on rights, responsibilities, and resources for the workforce.

There is opportunity for stronger coordination and consistency between partner programs in Region 8, through the use of a common intake process, referral and co-enrollment strategy that will improve efficiencies across the board for all partners. This "any door" approach will enable any job seeker to enter the system with a consistent approach, which will result in seamless transition among partner programs and supportive services providers.

C. CAPACITY OF PARTNERS TO ADDRESS NEEDS OF EMPLOYERS IN REGION 8

The regional partners have continued to expand their capacity to address the needs of employers. Partners within both LWDAs in Region 8 collaborate to understand the skill needs of employers and implement appropriate responses. Partners work with employers to understand skill needs by using Business Services Teams (BST) to meet with employers on a regular basis to discuss employment needs.

The Integrated Business Service Team is designed to be a group of individuals who work with businesses to form a single point of contact that represents all of the participating partners. Business customers express the need for American Job Center services which includes candidate screening, validation of the job-seeker information, assessment, and quality applicants. Business customers also need employee commitment and loyalty, a single point of contact, and knowledge about AJC's products and services.

Region 8's goals for meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers mirrors those of LWC.

- Foster the improvement and expansion of employer-driven regional sector partnerships to meet occupational demands as supported by regional labor market information.
- Increase the use of labor market and educational data and technology, in coordination with local data, to inform and guide strategic workforce development decisions.
- Develop focused, regional workforce initiatives that blend partner resources to educate and train workers for jobs within the workforce region.
- Increase the alignment and efficacy of formula, discretionary and competitive workforce funding in efforts to support regional and local workforce initiatives.
- Promote meaningful, portable industry credentials supported throughout the workforce delivery system that align to workforce demand.
- Institute a system of accountability for the workforce development system that supports and promotes the evaluation of the effectiveness of both the region as well as the local workforce development boards.

D. TRAINING PROGRAMS PREPARING JOB SEEKERS FOR EMPLOYMENT IN REGION 8

Each local area has different strategies and areas of focus for best servicing the needs of its residents and employers. Region 8's Workforce Development Boards are working increasingly with our educational partners to develop career pathway programs to prepare individuals to be successful in secondary and post-secondary education or enter a specific occupation. Louisiana Delta Community College offers credentials in many different sectors. The coordination between Adult Education and Workforce partners is necessary to meet the needs of the job seekers within Region 8.

Region 8's Workforce Boards utilize work-based learning opportunities to prepare job seekers. Work-based learning opportunities include On-the-Job Training (OJT), Work Experience, Apprenticeships, and Youth Internships to provide the skills needed for job seekers to be successful in the workplace.

E. COMMITMENT OF PROGRAM PARTNERS TO STRATEGIES IN REGION 8

Through the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) development process, each program partner has committed to the integration of workforce development services. Region 8's partners are committed to implementing the strategies for LWDA-81 and 83. The major priority continues to be communication among partners including improving and expanding technological capabilities that facilitate service referrals; coordination of services across partners for the entire workforce system; coordinated employer services; cross training provided to staffs; and performance reporting and management.

- B. COORDINATION OF TRANSPORTATION AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES** Supportive services for individuals are coordinated with community agencies as well as partner agencies such as adult education, vocational rehabilitation, and Veterans programs.

In coordinating and collaborating with partners, WIOA resources will be used to provide supportive services when other funding is not available.

WIOA allows for the provision of supportive services to enable an individual to participate in career services and training services. Supportive services such as transportation, work gear, licensure tests, child care, dependent care, and housing, may be necessary to enable an individual to participate in activities authorized and consistent with the provisions of the WIOA Title I-B.

Transportation issues are one of the most common barriers to individuals participating in activities as well as those seeking immediate employment. In all of the parishes in LWDA-83 there are no public transportation options available for training or work. Current practices include reimbursement of expenses toward transportation.

1. ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDING SUPPORTIVE SERVICES IN REGION 8

WIOA requires regions and local areas to enhance coordination and partnerships with organizations that do and could in the future provide supportive services. Each of the two (2) Comprehensive One-Stop Centers in Region 8 offer an extensive array of services which include for job seekers the provision of information relating to the availability of supportive services such as child care and transportation.

- The Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is committed to providing cash assistance and supportive services to needy families meeting specific financial criteria and to provide services necessary to accomplish the goals and purposes of Section 401 of the Social Security Act (42 USC 601), as well as the goal set by participating in WIOA training activities.
- The Community Services Block Grant Unit, as a component of the LWC, Office of Workforce Development, will provide leadership and technical assistance to the local Community Action Agencies (CAAs) to support the collaboration and coordination of employment and training activities, as well as supportive services with the local and regional WDBs.
- Training provided by the State Monitor Advocate is tied to and follows outreach and provision of services to MSFWs. The SMA developed and assisted MET, Inc. and local WIOA providers in developing MOUs. Other services, such as training or supportive services, provide a pathway for MSFWs to transition to higher wage jobs and permanent year-round employment in non-agricultural work.
- Vocational Rehabilitation in providing supportive services likes eyeglasses, hearing aids, dentures, etc.
- It should be noted that Louisiana Community and Technical College System, as well as other public and private organizations in the state, have received millions of dollars in discretionary grants and will continue to apply to receive future discretionary grants to support workforce training services and strategies to impact the lives of targeted populations. The governor's vision is to improve coordination and collaboration in delivering services to eligible participants in an effort to improve upon the efficacy and

effectiveness of service delivery, thereby increasing participation of the state's most vulnerable populations in need of workforce training and supportive services.

Supportive services could be identified by United Way of Northeast Louisiana 211 Program. The program offers resources for food assistance and other necessities. The program is offered throughout the entire Region 8 service area. Northeast Louisiana United Way's website, <http://www.unitedwaynela.org>, gives clients the ability to access supportive services within the region. American Job Center's clients are referred to entities or organizations that are not available at the Career Centers for supportive service.

Resource guides are available to serve individuals with barriers to employment. These resource guides provide a list of supportive services available in the community and are updated regularly.

2. POLICIES/PROCEDURES THAT PROMOTE COORDINATION OF SUPPORTIVE SERVICES DELIVERY IN REGION 8

The two local workforce development areas in Region 8 each have supportive service policies in place that promote coordination among community providers. Transportation is more difficult to coordinate as LWDA-81 has access to a mass transit system and for LWDA-83, rural transportation organizations simply do not exist. The partners will work through the MOU process to identify better ways to promote coordination of supportive services.

C. COORDINATION WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

It has been a goal in Region 8 to anticipate the ongoing need for creating contingency plans to support economic growth in targeted industry sectors, and developing improved relationships with local and state economic development entities with the goal of pre-empting shortfalls in a skilled workforce, that we are on track to do. Meeting this goal in Region 8 has the potential to strengthen the region's overall economic vitality by bolstering regional economic competitiveness by engaging economic development experts in workforce issues while aligning education, economic and workforce development planning.

1. ORGANIZATIONS ENGAGED IN PLANNING IN REGION 8

Region 8 has several economic development agencies that assist in regional planning. Region 8 works closely with the Monroe Chamber of Commerce and Northeast Louisiana Economic Partnership. The chair of LWDB-81 is the President and CEO of the Monroe Chamber and a representative of North Louisiana Economic Partnership (NLEP) sits on the Board of LWDA-81. Both LWDBs have economic development representation with Northeast Louisiana Economic Alliance (NELEA) represented on WDB-83. With the business members of the Workforce Development Boards appointed by the chambers of commerce in Region 8, needless to say the chambers of commerce are engaged in Region 8's planning efforts.

The local areas of Region 8 work with Louisiana Economic Development's Fast Start Program. LEDFast Start provides quick workforce solutions to businesses in LED's effort to attract new businesses to the region, or retain existing businesses. Solutions include recruitment and workforce training, working with the state's community and technical college system to develop curriculum approved by the employer(s) to produce short-term training to job candidates and helping trainees attain the skills necessary to fill jobs quickly.

2. ORGANIZATIONS DECLINING PLANNING IN REGION 8

No economic development organizations, WIOA service providers or businesses that were invited to participate in Region 8 planning declined the invitation.

D. COORDINATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE COST ARRANGEMENTS

Region 8's local Workforce Boards have engaged the WIOA partners in negotiating discussion about their fair share of the workforce development system. Additionally, partners have identified cost contributions based on available funds and system use. The partners will work together toward continuous system improvements through shared costs, leveraging of resources, and a foundation of cooperation. The local boards have finalized MOUs for partners cost sharing.

Chapter 3: VISION, GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES – REGION 8

Local Workforce Development Boards of Region 8 are increasing focus on alignment with economic, workforce, and education systems to coordinate system based on skill needs in regions, much as LWC is with the local boards. This entails aligning career and technical education and apprenticeship opportunities as well as other education programs and activities occurring at the local level in each region. Region 8, through its required Strategic Plans, is developing strategies and actions to promote the alignment of all programs with WIOA-funded programs. Additionally, they are including sector strategies and youth initiatives to promote integration of services across all programs. The strategy related to this goal is creating a new, integrated regional planning process across the economic, education, and workforce sectors.

Strategic planning elements provide a strategic vision and goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce. The strategy must include an analysis of economic conditions in Region 8, such as the existing and in-demand industry sectors and the knowledge and skills needed in these industry sectors.

It must also include data on the current workforce and labor market trends. This analysis must include the educational and skill levels of the workforce and specifically makes reference that individuals with barriers to employment must be included in the analysis. The strategy must further identify how the workforce development activities in the region will address the education and training needs of employers and the workforce, including a strategy for aligning the WIOA core programs and other resources in the region.

A charge for Region 8 is to provide a staff that has the knowledge and experience to carry out the requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014. Region 8's staff has the experience in case management, assessment, and counseling of clients to provide residents of this workforce area with an integrated service delivery for job seekers and employers. Region 8, acting under WIOA, brings together in strategic coordination, the core programs in skill development of employment and training services for adults, dislocated workers, youth and Wagner-Peyser employment services administered by LWC. Region 8 also coordinates with adult education and literacy programs and Vocational Rehabilitation state grant programs that assist individuals with disabilities in obtaining employment.

WIOA requires that workforce development programs be strategically aligned. WIOA ensures that employment and training services provided by the core programs are coordinated and complementary so that job seekers acquire skills and credentials that meet employers' of Region 8 needs. As partners transition to WIOA, they will utilize a customer-centered design – where the needs of businesses and workers drive workforce solutions; where AJCs provide excellent customer service to all job seekers and businesses; and where the workforce system supports strong regional economies (including across state lines) - to understand the customer's needs and desires, and have implemented policies and procedures for integrated services based on the

needs of their clients and within context of the local communities. Region 8 has altered its focus, from an organizational perspective, certifying we have the infrastructure and are aligning our priorities so that we have a strategic relationship with our employer customers

A. STRATEGIC VISION TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC GROWTH

The development of this WIOA Combined Regional Plan is an ongoing effort by Region 8 to transcend the fragmentation of workforce programs. Overcoming silos and promoting program integration are easy goals to talk about but very difficult to achieve. Region 8 partners will work together to leverage resources, both federal and other, to achieve Governor Edward's Strategic Vision.

To ensure the workforce development activities/services of Region 8 meet the needs of employers and support economic growth in the region WDBs 81 and 83 will enhance communication, coordination, and collaboration among employers, economic development entities and service providers.

Region 8 will develop data-driven goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce and to identify successful strategies for aligning workforce development programs to support economic growth. Region 8 anticipates the ongoing need for creating contingency plans to support economic growth in targeted industry sectors and developing improved relationships with local and state economic development entities with the goal to prevent shortfalls in a skilled workforce.

Region 8 shares the Governor's vision of serving job seekers and businesses by "Putting More Louisianans to Work" to create an environment in which our businesses can grow and our people can flourish. Region 8's strategic vision to create and expand the skilled workforce places priorities in the following areas:

1. Provide enriched and cohesive services to job seekers.
2. Enhance regional collaboration, coordination and partnerships.
3. Expand employer engagement strategies to be more responsive to the needs of business and industry.

B. GOALS FOR PREPARING AN EDUCATED AND SKILLED WORKFORCE The Region 8 partners have considered the overall needs of Region 8, the challenges of businesses and job seekers and the existing capacity of the workforce development system to respond to these needs. We have adopted the following goals to guide our work together during the next few years:

- Collaboration
 - Build a talent development delivery system through systematic change, integration of resources, and continuous improvement.
 - Align workforce development resources to anchor the following industry sectors
 - Health care and Social Assistance
 - Accommodation and Food Services
 - Manufacturing

- Ensure the employment and training services provided by core programs identified in WIOA are coordinated so that job seekers acquire skills and credentials that meet employers' needs.
- Evaluate performance.
- Job Seekers
 - Educate and inform, disseminate organization, workforce, and career pathway information regularly to foster interest and collaboration.
 - Foster and advance universal access to workforce services in all parishes with a focus on populations with barriers.
 - Engage and connect youth with career pathways and employment training opportunities.
 - Promote quality employment and training services for Adult and Dislocated Workers.
 - Provide access to high quality training to help job seekers acquire industry recognized credentials for in demand jobs.
- Employers
 - Build relationships that promote success, engage business, industry, and the education community to ensure universal contribution and commitment to workforce initiatives and strategies that support regional economies.
 - Foster regional sector partnerships and alignment between the region's workforce development programs.
 - Reinforce connections with registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs as these are proven models that provide workers with career pathways and opportunities to earn while they learn.
 - Ensure the workforce and education systems meets the needs of economic development and employers.

Region 8's seven (7) broad goals for the workforce development system are:

- Establish career pathways as the primary model for skill, credential, and degree attainment
- Expand public-private investment in the region's pipeline of workers.
- Increase opportunities for all youth to participate in work-based learning through summer employment, pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship, internships and other similar experiences.
- Engage employers through sector partnerships to improve the connection and responsiveness of workforce programs to the demand side of the labor market.
- Strengthen data sharing across state agencies and workforce development partners to better understand education and employment outcomes and rely more effectively on data to improve and target our efforts.
- To be recognized by the business and industry community as a valuable resource for the provision of workforce information, data, assistance, and guidance.
- To make everyone aware of "who does what" in the community and "where to go" when specific services are needed.

WIOA provides a historic opportunity to align performance-related definitions, streamline performance indicators, integrate reporting, and ensure comparable data collection and reporting across all six of the core programs, while also implementing program-specific requirements related to data collection and reporting. Region 8 will make investments in employment, education, and training programs that ensure evidence-based, data-driven, and programmatic service delivery that is accountable to customers and taxpayers. Performance accountability and data reporting will be aligned to promote the workforce development system that creates a best-in-class regional system, responsive to business and industry.

With respect to the performance accountability measures required in WIOA and the implementing rule, the LWDAs in Region 8 individually negotiated and reached agreement with the State on local levels of performance for performance accountability measures. Negotiations will occur every other year for a two-year period and measures are in place. In addition, partners will actively engage in whatever process is implemented by the respective state agencies for negotiating and setting targets for these measures. The goals for the Title I programs are set through the use of a statistical adjustment model. These procedures are in place and the partners consult with their respective state agency contacts and meet to discuss the implications of the performance measures and required targets for service delivery and integration. The Core Partners work cooperatively to report performance outcomes across all programs to advance the goals of improving access and success for all customers. However, currently there is no universal or shared system for partners to communicate performance to customers.

C. REGIONAL AND LOCAL STRATEGIES

In order to –

1) *Facilitate Engagement of Employers*

We will use our Workforce Boards to create strategies for employer engagement and to lead engagement efforts for specific industries, particularly for the primary targeted sectors. We will work with the existing community college advisory committees to leverage the work of these committees to inform our planning and policies for career pathway development, and to help ensure that these advisory committees benefit from the perspectives of the workforce system.

Region 8 focuses on working with corporations that can offer multi-dimensional support, such as work experiences, internships, job shadowing, tutors, mentors, and provide consultation about the Youth program. WIOA contributes to economic growth and business expansion by ensuring the workforce system is job-driven and matches business customers with skilled individuals.

2) *Support a System that Meets the Needs of Business*

The Integrated Business Service Team is designed to be a group of individuals who work with businesses to form a single point of contact that represents all of the participating partners. Business customers say there is a need for AJC services that include candidate screening, validation of the job-seeker information, assessment, less paperwork, and applicants from the centers who are equal to or better than walk-in applicants. Business customers also need

employee commitment and loyalty, a single point of contact, and knowledge about AJCs' products and services.

Region 8's business service plan clearly identifies products and services and their attributes and features that appeal to potential customers. The flow of business services follows these steps: a) assist in the forecasting of skills and knowledge needed by businesses in Region 8, b) identify eligible training providers, c) work with educational entities to provide customized training based on business customer needs and expectations, d) prepare a pool of job ready applicants and begin training them, and e) conduct targeted recruitment.

3) Coordinate with Economic Development Strategies

Region 8 has several economic development agencies. Region 8 works closely with each one. NELEA works with employers in Caldwell, East Carroll, Franklin, Madison, Ouachita, Richland, Tensas and West Carroll Parishes in Region 8. NLEP provides professional economic development services to the other parishes of northeast Louisiana, including Jackson, Morehouse, Ouachita, and Union. The organization also represents the interests of north Louisiana with a unified voice and as a single point of contact. It acts as a catalyst, a convener, and a connector in the region to ensure that north Louisiana's economic development potential is realized.

Region 8 is also closely tied to other regional economic development agencies providing them with workforce intelligence when asked to do so to attract potential employers to the region.

4) Strengthen Linkages with Unemployment Insurance Programs

A service strategy designed by LWC is already in place for providing career services to Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants. The staff working in the centers are trained and knowledgeable in the provision of information regarding filing claims for unemployment compensation. The two words "and assistance" imply a more affirmative responsibility to assist claimants in the claims filing process. Staff will need to be fully trained on customer-centered service delivery practices. These services will be expanded so all customers experience a "common front door" for all partner programs and a triage/assessment process to measure academic and occupations skills that leads to seamless customer flow and access to the services needed.

Region 8 has developed, convened, and implemented sector partnerships; one in the health care sector and a second in manufacturing. Region 8 knows how fast the health care industry is changing. Every day there are pressing questions and issues related to patient care quality, costs of care, a qualified workforce, technology innovations, public awareness and wellness, among a myriad of other topics. Aware that no single organization could do this work well alone, the LWDBs of Region 8 worked across health care organizations and with community partners to navigate the new demands. That's why the Northeast Louisiana Health care Alliance was launched.

5) Promote Entrepreneurial Skills Training and Microenterprise Services

WDBs-81 and 83 will establish relationships with entities that provide guidance, support, and resources to encourage microenterprises, defined as a small business employing nine (9)

people or fewer and having a fairly small balance sheet, and entrepreneurial opportunities, including the Louisiana Small Business Development Center at University of Louisiana at Monroe. If a WIOA participant is interested in their own business start-up, they are connected with the appropriate partner.

6) Implement Initiatives Designed to Meet Employers' Needs

A top priority for Region 8 is to ensure that the entire customer spectrum has accurate and available knowledge in order to make informed choices about career pathways for job seekers, and real-time, relevant access to labor market data for employers. Armed with quality data and sound interpretation, the WDBs and staffs of Region 8 are able to better navigate the workforce and economic environment in our region.

WIOA highlights sector partnerships as a key strategy for meeting the needs of employers, workers, and job seekers. Sector Partnerships are industry-driven and community supported by education, workforce development, economic development and community organization which are required to truly support a regional industry and to connect job seekers to jobs.

The WDBs of Region 8 were well positioned to serve as the convener for this work through a contract provided to the region by Louisiana Workforce Commission and funded by a National Dislocated Worker Grant. The development and implementation of Sector Partnership strategies began in March 2016 with the launch of our first industry partnership, Health Care, planned on August 3, 2016. The following is a brief overview of Region 8's Sector Partnership scope of work:

- Identify and engage key leadership within Region 8 – Board Members, Directors and Business service Team members (March – June 2016)
- Review and analysis of labor market data to determine valid demand industry sectors
- Full sector partnership and industry engagement for WDB staff (March – August 2016)
- Facilitation of Regional Meeting with key leadership from workforce development, education, economic development, and community organizations
- Identify Industry Champions for targeted sectors
- Health care Industry Sector launch (August 03, 2016)

Develop replicable process for Sector Partnership development in region to be implemented in additional sectors.

Region 8 will continue to focus on convening and collaborating with various organizations and workforce stakeholders. Region 8's Integrated Services Team is a key player in the combined employer engagement process. A strength of Region 8 is the implementation of work-based learning programs, including Youth Work Experiences and On-the-job Training programs.

Although these programs have their own unique rules, regulations, and targeted populations, they share a unity of helping local businesses access a viable talent pool through work-based learning, which in turn supports Region 8's participants in obtaining meaningful employment.

Region 8 actively uses On-the-Job Training opportunities as one of the cornerstones of its practical learning components. With a high rate of retention, the OJT program is one that both employers and job seekers actively inquire about.

Region 8 provides other business services and implements strategies that meet the workforce development needs of our local area employers. For example, Incumbent Worker Training provides both workers and employers with the opportunity to build and maintain a quality workforce and increase both participants' and companies' competitiveness. This type of work-based training and upskilling is designed to ensure that employees of a company can acquire the skills necessary to retain employment and advance within the company, or to acquire the skills necessary to avert a layoff. Incumbent worker training is designed to be responsive to the special requirements of an employer or a group of employers in partnership with other entities for the purpose of delivering training.

Transitional jobs are a type of work-experience considered an individualized career service. Transitional jobs are time-limited and wage-paid work experiences that are subsidized up to hundred (100) percent. These jobs are in the public, private, or nonprofit sectors and are only available for individuals with barriers to employment who are chronically unemployed or have an inconsistent work history, as determined by the regional AJC staff. Transitional jobs provide an individual with work experience that takes place within the context of an employee-employer relationship. Region 8 will use transitional jobs to establish a work history for the individual, demonstrate success in the workplace, and develop the skills that lead to entry and retention in unsubsidized employment.

D. REGIONAL STRATEGIES TO INCREASE APPRENTICESHIP AND WORK-BASED LEARNING

Closely tied to the solutions sought by businesses in Region 8 is the expanded use of work-based learning (Registered Apprenticeships, Youth Apprenticeships, Pre-Apprenticeships, Customized Training, On-the-Job Training, Incumbent Worker Training and others). This emphasis recognizes work-based learning as often the most effective mechanism for delivering Training and Education solutions in an environment that is directly shaped to and for the needs of the employer. This is beneficial because it's an earn-while-you-learn environment. Employers like this process because it is a plus for their business.

Work-based training models will utilize work-based learning to fill Region 8's business needs for skilled employees, thereby increasing employee earning potential and the business's bottom line. To ensure quality in work-based training, Region 8 will demonstrate evidence of the following criteria:

- Occupation training for in-demand jobs as defined by Occupational Forecasting Conference and approved by the State Board (Workforce Investment Council) accessible through (Star Jobs)
- Clear program goals
- Outreach implementation to program participants and employers regarding OJT opportunities; including leveraging various partners' relationships with employers

- Standardizing and streamlining forms, including contracts and training plan templates in Region 8
- Clear roles and responsibilities for trainers, worksite supervisors and support personnel
- Assessments to identify existing skills of individual learners
- Reasonable training length reflecting both the complexity of the job and skills of the trainee
- Specified methods of instruction
- Assurance that participants are job-ready prior to work-based training opportunities
- Established evaluation processes
- Clear expectations and feedback to assess progress toward achieving learning/skills acquisition goals.

Incorporating Registered Apprenticeship into service design and delivery is one way Region 8 will address the middle skill jobs that account for over half of Louisiana’s labor market. One way to accomplish this is by having American Job Center staff involved and engaged in screening and assessment for current registered programs.

Region 8’s BSTs are working throughout Region 8 to improve the capacity of the workforce system relative to incorporating Registered Apprenticeship in service design and delivery, as well as to support the emphasis on career pathways. The engagement of BST staff with the State apprenticeship staff has also been robust, and we expect that partnership to continue. LWC believes, as does Region 8, Registered Apprenticeship is a model that strikes “...the critical balance between serving individuals and employers in a manner that will produce strategies that in the long run are good for both.”

The WIOA grant provides funds for employer incentives to assist with OJT and Related Technical Instruction (RTI) training costs. The Integrated Business Service Team will promote this benefit braiding funds with OJT contracts and Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) to increase the amount of WIOA funds utilized by employers with a Registered Apprenticeship model and encourage Registered Apprenticeship expansion across Region 8.

During National Apprenticeship Week in 2019, Region 8 held an event in Richland Parish, the two local workforce boards coordinated together. This event focused on informing employers of the benefits of Registered Apprenticeship and how WIOA funding can amplify programs. A key strategy in Region 8 is the expansion of the use of Registered Apprenticeship programs where employer and employee are equally committed to the program’s success. Registered Apprenticeship programs have demonstrated that employers benefit from lower employee turnover, increased employee productivity, improve employee problem-solving skills and enhance employee relations.

Region 8 continues working to develop new non-traditional programs in industries such as health care and advanced manufacturing. Region 8 continues to encourage new and currently existing programs to take advantage of registered apprenticeship under the new WIOA

regulations. Provisions in WIOA clearly support the expansion and incorporation of registered apprenticeship as an evidence-based approach to workforce development.

E. INITIATIVES TO SHORTEN TIME FROM CREDENTIAL TO EMPLOYMENT

Region 8 partners realize the value and significance of shortening the time from credential to employment. A range of activities are in place region-wide. All work-based learning activities (OJT, pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship, and transitional jobs) are geared toward moving workers into employment more quickly and effectively. Region 8's integrated and the local Business Service Teams listen to employers' needs and work to better understand their training needs.

LDCC has partnered with high schools to offer dual credit programs, which help students quickly complete their degree and enter the workforce, while saving money along the way. LDCC is also working with four year universities to ensure credits are recognized and accepted. Louisiana Delta Community College is exploring a range of non-credit programs in conjunction with businesses, which often facilitate industry-recognized credentials more quickly than traditional course timelines, especially when these are interim credentials that would normally be part of a longer college course or program. Workers retain the value from these interim steps in themselves and should more easily be able to later take additional credentials that can be stacked toward college degrees.

F. STEPS TO ALIGN AND INTEGRATE EDUCATION, WORKFORCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC), in partnership with DCFS, shares job seeker registration data to promote efficient use of public assistance resources. DCFS clients, who may benefit from WIOA staff services, are referred to Region 8's AJC offices for additional assistance.

Region 8's relationships with Adult Education promotes training opportunities for Title I WIOA participants. The integration of Title II Adult Education into the workforce system promotes the flow of communication of labor market needs and education and training opportunities between Adult Education and Workforce Development. These stakeholders use WIOA programs and internal data to maximize the efficiency of its shared programmatic efforts.

North Louisiana Economic Partnership, an Accredited Economic Development Organization, provides professional economic development services to North Louisiana. The organization also represents the interests of North Louisiana with a unified voice and as a single point of contact. It acts as a catalyst, a convener, and a connector in the region to ensure that North Louisiana's economic development potential is realized. Its vision is for North Louisiana to be a thriving region-a destination for high quality talent, innovative companies, and global investment.

Region 8 will foster the improvement and expansion of employer-driven regional sector partnerships to increase the focus on critical in-demand occupations in key sectors through the following efforts:

1. Work with our economic development partners within Region 8 to identify existing partnerships and initiatives with employers in our key sectors.
2. Identify local employers willing to provide expertise to our sector initiatives.
3. Work with community partners to organize and or expand work within existing partnerships or create new partnerships.

And, as outlined in the State Plan:

4. Increase the use of labor market and educational data and technology, in coordination with local data, to inform and guide strategic workforce development decisions.
5. Develop focused, regional workforce initiatives that blend partner resources (co-investment) to educate and train workers for jobs within the workforce region.
6. Increase the alignment and efficacy of formula, discretionary and competitive workforce funding in efforts to support regional and local workforce initiatives.
7. Promote meaningful, portable industry credentials supported throughout the workforce delivery system.
8. Fortify a system of accountability for the workforce development system that supports and promotes the evaluation of the effectiveness of state and local workforce development boards in meeting the workforce demands of business and workforce.

Region 8 will expand career pathway opportunities through more accelerated and work-based training and align and integrate programs of study leading to industry-recognized credentials and improve employment and earnings by:

1. Fostering the improvement and expansion of employer-driven regional sector partnerships to increase the focus on critical in-demand occupations in key sectors
2. Expanding information for employers and jobseekers to access services by improving the alignment and integration of economic development, workforce development, and education initiatives for supporting sector partnerships and career pathways.

Region 8 will expand career services and opportunities for populations facing multiple barriers to close the gap in educational attainment and economic advancement through career pathways and improved career services and expansion of bridge programs by taking the following steps:

1. Expand and incentivize the utilization of evidenced-based workforce strategies that support targeted populations (e.g., the long-term unemployed, individual with disabilities, veterans, out-of-school youth) into sector-based career pathways leading to gainful employment.
2. Enhance and expand the delivery of integrated reentry and employment strategies to reduce recidivism among Region 8's returning citizens and meet the skill and workforce needs of business and industry.

Region 8 will expand information for employers and job seekers to access services to support the alignment and integration of economic development, workforce development and education initiatives for supporting sector partnerships and career pathways by:

1. Make Labor Market Information more accessible and easier to use. Training will be made available to all job center staff and core partners via webinars and in person trainings.
2. Partners and employers in LWDA-83 receive a local workforce report on labor market information monthly, which includes data on jobs data, labor force statistics and real time labor market information.
3. Workforce and economic development professionals, as well as our education partners, will continue to work together to coordinate mutually beneficial activities. It is also vital that we continue to work together to attract employers from the targeted industries where current and future workforce development opportunities, such as On-the-Job Training, Incumbent Worker Training and Customized Training opportunities, are available.