

**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act  
Local Plan  
July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2028**

**Local Workforce Development Area:**

Midlands

**Counties within the Local Workforce Development Area:**

Fairfield, Lexington and Richland

**Local Workforce Development Area Administrator and Contact Information:**

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## Attachment B: Local Plan Requirements

The local plan serves as a four-year action plan to develop, align, and integrate local workforce development area (LWDA) service delivery strategies with those that support the state's strategic and operational goals. In partnership with the chief elected officials (CEOs), each local workforce development board (LWDB) must develop and submit a local plan to identify and describe the policies, procedures, and activities that are carried out in the LWDA, consistent with the strategic vision and goals outlined in the WIOA State Plan and the respective regional plan.

In alignment with South Carolina's Unified State Plan (resulting from South Carolina's Act 67 of 2023), the Program Years (PYs) 2024 – 2027 WIOA State Plan vision is to achieve and sustain South Carolina's workforce potential. The plan focuses on the following priorities:

1. Develop and create an effective customer-driven workforce system through the alignment of programs and policies, the use of leading-edge technology, and high-quality staff.
2. Prepare jobseekers for priority occupations through relevant training and skills acquisition, and match jobseekers to open employer positions.
3. Improve the education and workforce infrastructure network to decrease obstacles to work in order to improve recruitment and retention of workers, which is necessary to maintain economic development competitiveness.
4. Create alignment between the workforce development system and the South Carolina agencies and organizations directing implementation of the Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act of 2021 (IIJA), Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (IRA), and CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 funding.

The following guiding principles must be considered priorities and included in responses throughout the LWDA's PYs 2024 – 2027 Local Plan:

- Partnership and collaboration,
- Increased access to resources and services through the use of technology, and
- Innovation and cost efficiencies.

The local plan must include:

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

## **Section I: Workforce and Economic Analysis**

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

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

**For many years, workforce data has been the cornerstone of planning processes in the Midlands Area, predating both WIOA and WIA. The five-year priorities, goals, and plans for the Midlands Area are centered on an analysis of current and emerging trends that will influence the needs of employers. To inform our planning update, we have assessed and incorporated refreshed data, both as a Local Workforce Development Area and as a participant in the Central Region.**

**Our examination of data encompasses various factors, including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations, employment needs expressed by employers, the knowledge and skills required to fulfill those needs, the current workforce situation in the area and region, and the available education and training providers and opportunities. The tables and analyses have been developed using the most recent data available as of November 2024. Furthermore, we aim to incorporate informal information sources that provide real-time insights whenever possible, such as Rapid Response Notifications, Economic Development Communications, and local media. Key data sources include SCDEW Labor Market Information, JobsEQ (Chmura), and Central SC Alliance.**

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

**The review and analysis of the knowledge and skills relevant to the employment needs of the region follows the established format and data usage from previous**

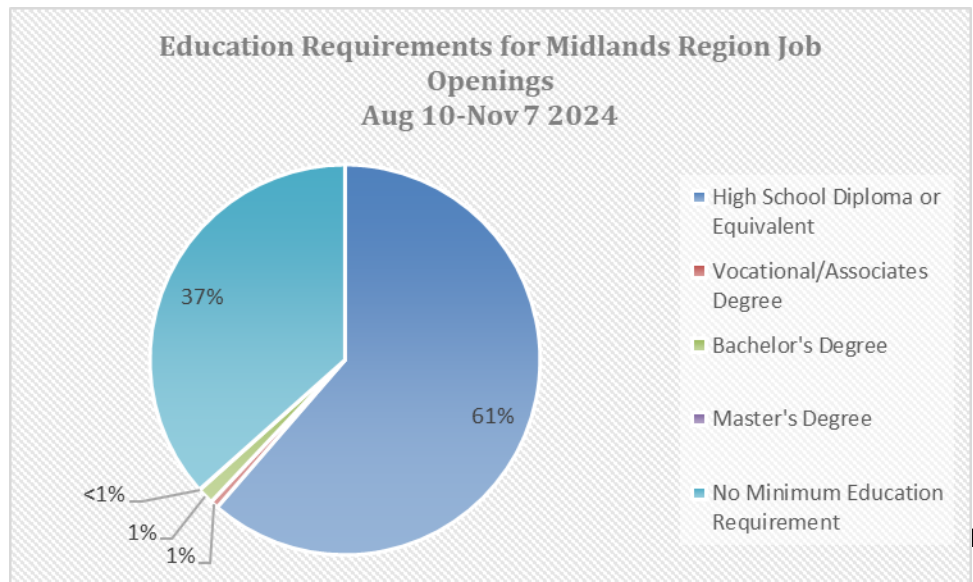
plans; however, in the current landscape, we are seeking to identify shifts and indicators of change.

Data evaluation reveals that employment trends in the Midlands have remained stable over the past few years, particularly concerning in-demand occupations. The Area is committed to evaluating alignment to ensure that the WIOA program and resources are effectively connected to priority sectors.

The Midlands Area is home to numerous educational institutions and training providers, including the primary campus of the University of South Carolina, a robust technical college system, and various private providers. The availability of education and training in the Midlands is well-positioned to continue addressing the area's skill demands, as well as those in surrounding regions. While interest in training programs focused on critical growth industries is rising, there are still challenges in expanding training opportunities to meet this demand.

	South Carolina	Midlands	USA	South Carolina	Midlands	USA
<b>Educational Attainment, Age 25-64</b>						
No High School Diploma	9.7%	7.6%	10.1%	254,785	28,340	17,373,867
High School Graduate	27.7%	23.1%	25.1%	724,001	86,383	43,176,248
Some College, No Degree	20.5%	21.7%	19.7%	535,585	81,278	33,916,989
Associate's Degree	10.7%	9.8%	9.2%	278,858	36,671	15,886,884
Bachelor's Degree	20.1%	23.2%	22.4%	524,281	86,920	38,451,123
Postgraduate Degree	11.4%	14.6%	13.4%	297,294	54,823	23,058,233

Data from JobsEQ show the Midlands Area educational rate as a positive attribute. The Area meets or exceeds the national averages in all attainment rates evaluated and is ahead of the overall SC rate in post-secondary training in all but Associate's degree.



Source: SCWOS Education for Job Openings

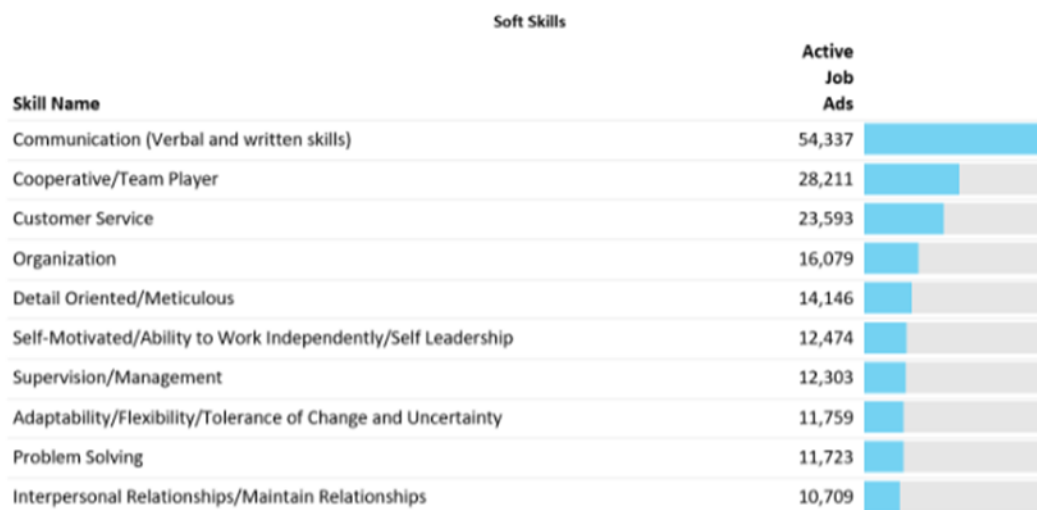
The job opening data for recent months indicates that of the jobs currently available (in the Midlands), a candidate with a high school diploma or GED would qualify for at least 61% of openings. While this is only a snapshot in time, and SCWOS listings, the education levels in the Midlands are aligned with the realities of employment requirements.

The skills necessary for jobs in the three county area according to a 2024 JobsEQ Real-Time Intelligence (RTI) data set is based upon the information from actual jobs posted. The top 10 elements are reviewed from categories include hard skills, soft skills, and certifications. This RTI from actual jobs posted gives a unique look into what employers are looking for when screening and selecting candidates.

## Openings by Hard Skills



## Openings by Soft Skills



## Openings by Certifications



The data from job postings highlights a sustained demand for computer literacy. It suggests that a foundational understanding of Microsoft software and general PC operations is essential for many roles. Similar to soft skills, these technological competencies are relevant across nearly all careers and industries. The necessity for digital literacy skills is likely to grow as technology continues to permeate various workplace environments, particularly with the increased emphasis on virtual services and telework following the pandemic.

The updated list of hard skills reflects ongoing shifts within the labor market, indicating logistics cluster trends that include both light and heavy lifting, while advanced skills such as JavaScript have seen a decline in demand. A combination of proficiency in Microsoft software along with abilities in lifting, sales, and training suggests that employers are seeking candidates who can perform multiple roles within a single position. As consumer habits evolve toward online shopping and cashless transactions, there is a rising need for more advanced skills, allowing for a broader range of industries to account for a significant portion of job openings. Consequently, the skills identified necessitate a more savvy approach from job seekers.

Soft skills, often referred to as essential skills, are increasingly recognized as vital across all sectors of the workforce. This trend has remained consistent for many years. Although there are numerous vendors, providers, and software solutions aimed at addressing this need, a singular, effective solution to bridge the gaps faced by employers is yet to be found. The recent introduction of WIN's soft skills assessment offers a means to evaluate competency; however, there has been little adoption of this tool by employers in the Midlands thus far. While the top four categories of essential soft skills remain unchanged, notable shifts have occurred in the lower-ranked skills, reflecting an evolution in workplace priorities. The overarching trend suggests a growing demand for more independent and efficient workers.

**Certifications and credentials represent a distinct aspect of the Midlands economy and its diverse business landscape. This overview provides a high-level look at essential requirements that may often be overlooked when assisting individuals facing barriers to employment. A Driver's License is identified as the most critical necessity, with the remainder of the list tailored to specific jobs or industries (e.g., RN, LPN, and CPA). These credentialing requirements highlight in-demand sectors such as healthcare and distribution logistics, indicating the presence of career ladder or lattice opportunities.**

**As we have refreshed data on the data sets we have traditionally utilized, we appreciate the new data analysis conducted through the work for the Coordinating Council for Workforce Development. Listing Priority Occupations both for the area and surrounding area helps us target our WIOA resources and inform the public of opportunities. Knowledge of those Priority Occupations with high wages and high-value credentials, helps us target the WIOA classroom training, On-the-Job Training, and employers that will move our job seekers into careers with immediate and long-term opportunities.**

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

**The employment trend in the Midlands indicates a strong demand for workers. Consistently, the number of job openings has outpaced the number of unemployed individuals. The top ten sectors in the Midlands generally remain stable, with only a few shifts in rankings. Manufacturing is particularly noteworthy, as it has seen a consistent rise in demand over the past five years.**

**However, it's important to point out that while production jobs, when looked at individually, do not show a significant growth rate, the overall growth of the manufacturing sector is tied to positions that may not be typically considered "manufacturing." These include roles in IT, maintenance, management, and construction. As the industry evolves, so too do the jobs and required skills.**

**This trend reinforces the region's commitment to initially focus on manufacturing through Sector Strategy initiatives. The overall outlook for occupations with projected growth continues to support the Midlands' emphasis on business, information technology, manufacturing, healthcare, distribution/logistics, and construction.**

Midlands, 2024Q1<sup>1</sup>

SOC	Occupation	Current					5-Year History			1-Year Forecast				
		Empl	Mean Ann Wages <sup>2</sup>	LQ	Unempl	Unempl Rate	Online Job Ads <sup>3</sup>	Empl Change	Ann %	Total Demand	Exits	Transfers	Empl Growth	Ann % Growth
43-0000	Office and Administrative Support	54,870	\$44,100	1.18	1,422	2.6%	2,396	-838	-0.3%	6,062	2,896	3,293	-127	-0.2%
41-0000	Sales and Related	36,462	\$47,300	1.07	1,273	3.4%	3,763	123	0.1%	4,913	2,169	2,628	118	0.3%
35-0000	Food Preparation and Serving Related	33,074	\$28,800	1.06	1,432	4.6%	2,274	-179	-0.1%	6,603	2,892	3,496	215	0.7%
53-0000	Transportation and Material Moving	32,188	\$42,500	0.95	1,492	4.8%	1,911	2,930	1.9%	4,594	1,718	2,502	373	1.2%
29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	26,318	\$101,100	1.16	291	1.1%	5,546	1,705	1.3%	1,802	847	659	296	1.1%
11-0000	Management	25,015	\$114,800	0.87	381	1.4%	3,262	3,505	3.1%	2,214	733	1,222	259	1.0%
13-0000	Business and Financial Operations	21,742	\$77,100	0.89	498	2.0%	2,301	2,629	2.6%	1,965	682	1,085	198	0.9%
25-0000	Educational Instruction and Library	20,477	\$60,700	0.99	389	1.8%	1,290	461	0.5%	1,968	934	888	146	0.7%
51-0000	Production	19,396	\$48,200	0.91	714	3.8%	736	184	0.2%	2,138	837	1,265	35	0.2%
31-0000	Healthcare Support	16,083	\$35,300	0.92	398	2.6%	942	1,423	1.9%	2,566	1,052	1,249	265	1.6%
49-0000	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	15,862	\$54,400	1.05	293	2.1%	1,604	598	0.8%	1,556	630	797	129	0.8%
47-0000	Construction and Extraction	13,728	\$50,700	0.78	352	4.3%	671	-127	-0.2%	1,316	491	710	114	0.8%
33-0000	Protective Service	12,058	\$45,700	1.45	264	2.4%	450	-215	-0.4%	1,367	590	742	35	0.3%
37-0000	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	11,391	\$35,300	0.90	442	4.2%	721	-567	-1.0%	1,643	728	836	79	0.7%
15-0000	Computer and Mathematical	9,704	\$93,700	0.79	195	1.6%	1,654	965	2.1%	756	229	375	152	1.6%
39-0000	Personal Care and Service	9,383	\$35,400	0.98	333	3.5%	324	58	0.1%	1,784	662	1,020	102	1.1%
21-0000	Community and Social Service	8,252	\$52,700	1.18	187	2.1%	1,231	-95	-0.2%	807	321	398	88	1.1%

Source: JobsEQ®, <http://www.chmuraecon.com/jobseq>

Industry Clusters for Midlands as of 2024Q1



The alignment of industry sectors and occupations between the Midlands Area and Central Region greatly enhances our planning efforts. This strong correlation allows our work as a Workforce Area to align seamlessly with local priorities in developing a regional strategy. Employment needs and growth opportunities are well-matched, as are the industries



experiencing a decline in workforce demand. Overall, the Midlands Area accounts for the largest share and percentage within the Central Region, which aligns with expectations based on population and business scale.

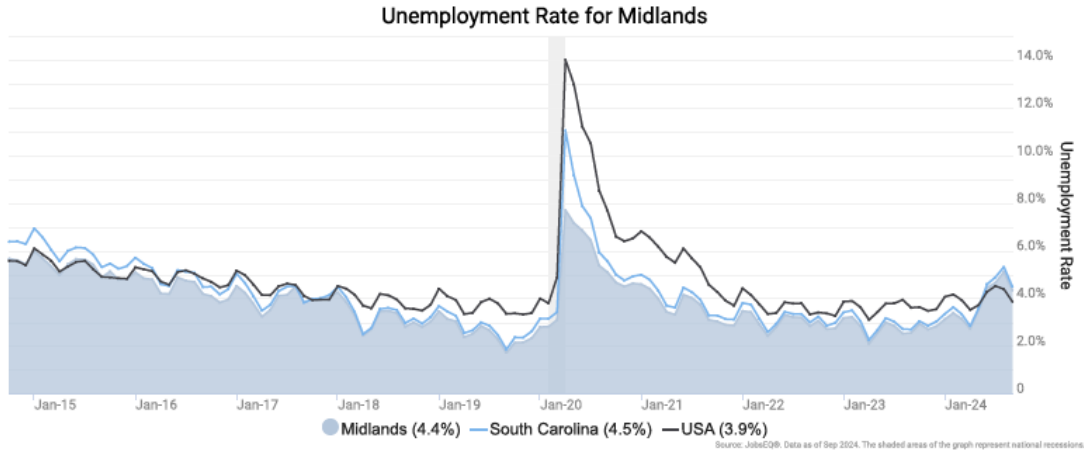
The Midlands has a historical track record of low unemployment rates, consistently remaining below both state and national averages. This trend persists even amid the recent increase in unemployment. We are actively monitoring the pool of new unemployment insurance (UI) claimants to identify targeted interventions that can swiftly reintegrate them into the workforce, whether through skills upgrade training or direct job placements.

Data regarding the skill levels of the local workforce, in relation to employment and occupations, must be developed and analyzed from various sources, as no single report sufficiently covers this topic. According to JobsEQ data reports, skills needed in high-growth areas (sectors and occupation groups) include Office and Administrative Support Occupations, which represent the largest major occupation group in the Columbia, SC MSA, closely followed by Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations. Typically, the skills required for Office and Administrative Support can be categorized into short-term training, credential attainment, and on-the-job training (OJT). Additionally, Transportation and Material Moving positions also ranked highly in terms of job openings posted (as per JobsEQ and the Midlands LMI Community Profile) and demonstrate positive projected growth. Over the next five years, the fastest-growing skill need group in the area is expected to be in Healthcare, which includes support occupations, personal care, and practitioners/technicians. The demands for skill levels are related to, though not always directly tied to, traditional educational attainments. To bolster the workforce and address growth needs across various industries in the area, it appears that certifications, credentials, and hands-on/work-based learning experiences will remain a key focus for support in the Midlands. Currently, occupations in Food Preparation and Serving rank highly in terms of job openings and projected growth over the next five years. The region acknowledges this trend and will continue to assess data to determine whether skills development or other forms of support can yield positive outcomes for both participants and employers.

Manufacturing is of particular interest, as it continues to grow as a sector. However, we observe that when examining individual occupational data, production jobs do not necessarily exhibit significant growth on their own. Instead, the sector's overall expansion is closely tied to roles that are not traditionally associated with "manufacturing," including IT, maintenance, management, and construction. As the industry and its processes evolve, so too do the associated jobs and skills. This trend reinforces the Region's commitment to initially prioritize Manufacturing through Sector Strategy initiatives. The broader outlook on occupations with projected growth aligns with the Midlands focus on Business, Information Technology, Manufacturing, Healthcare, Distribution/Logistics, and Construction.

# Unemployment Rate

The unemployment rate for the Midlands was 4.4% as of September 2024. The regional unemployment rate was higher than the national rate of 3.9%. One year earlier, in September 2023, the unemployment rate in the Midlands was 2.6%.



Unemployment rate data are from the Local Area Unemployment Statistics, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and updated through September 2024.

Expanding on the skills and education levels mentioned earlier (Educational Attainment, JobsEQ), overall education in the Midlands Area is improving. According to the Central SC Alliance, 31.7% of the population over 25 in the Columbia Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) holds a Bachelor's degree or higher. While this percentage is slightly lower than the national average of 36% (as reported by the US Census Bureau in 2019), it places the Midlands among the most educated MSAs in South Carolina.

Data from JobsEQ projects that the average employment growth across all industries in the Midlands over the next ten years will be about 0.9%. Within this projection, occupations requiring a postgraduate degree are expected to grow at a rate of 0.9% per year, those requiring a bachelor's degree are forecasted to grow at 1.0% per year, and positions typically needing a 2-year degree or certificate are anticipated to grow at 0.9% per year. This indicates a slight decrease in the growth of traditional training pathways, possibly due to employers' increasing need for workers quickly.

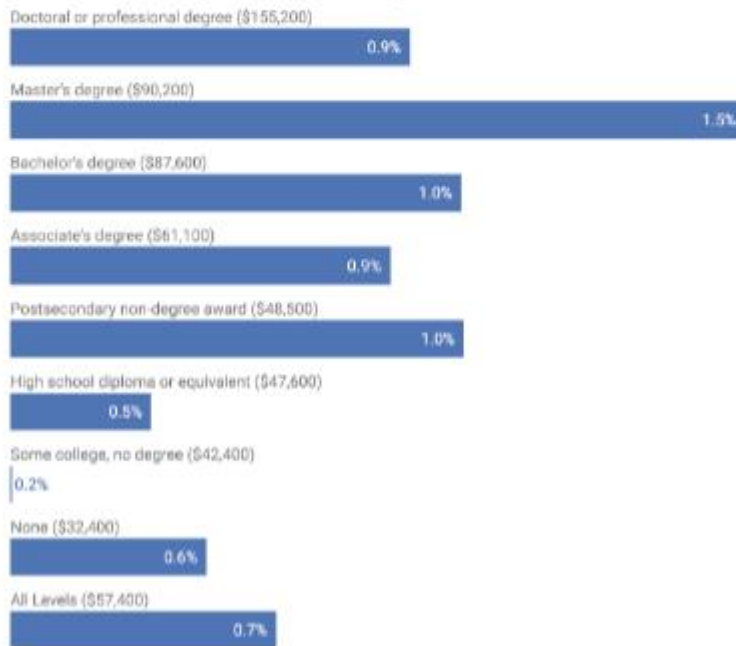
To support this trend of rising educational levels, the Midlands Area boasts numerous established educational institutions and career training providers. This includes the primary campus of the University of South Carolina, a comprehensive technical college system with a robust curriculum, and a variety of private providers. The availability of education and training in the Midlands is well-positioned to meet local demands, as well as those in surrounding areas of the state. The main challenge lies in increasing interest in training targeted toward critical growth industries, rather than simply expanding training opportunities. Additionally, the growing reliance on distributed, distance, and e-learning

methods enhances the potential for candidates and job seekers to remain competitive in the job market.

## Education Levels

Expected growth rates for occupations vary by the education and training required. While all employment in the Midlands is projected to grow 0.7% over the next ten years, occupations typically requiring a postgraduate degree are expected to grow 0.9% per year, those requiring a bachelor's degree are forecast to grow 1.0% per year, and occupations typically needing a 2-year degree or certificate are expected to grow 0.9% per year.

### Annual Average Projected Job Growth by Education Levels



Source: Jeddell O'Brien  
Data as of 2024Q1

## Openings by Industry

Program Name	Active Job Ads
Business	2,452
Computer Science	2,364
Engineering	2,059
Business Administration	2,050
Accounting	1,909
Nursing	1,545
Finance	1,369
Information Technology	1,231
Social Work	1,187
Marketing	799

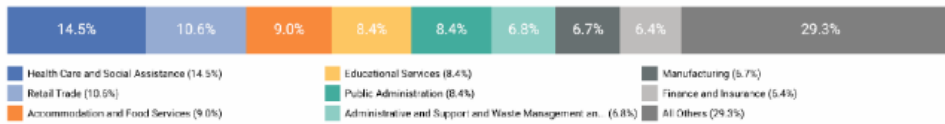
Individuals with barriers to employment is a broad and diverse topic. Service to individuals with barriers is a priority in the Midlands and an area that is evolving. Additionally, the definition of a barrier can also vary. From a data analysis stand point, the available data focuses on demographics that can be clearly identified. Using the JobsEQ RTI system, a report

of the Demographics Profile for the 3-county area and focusing on social elements, the Midlands Area, SC, and US data show:

## Industry Snapshot

The largest sector in the Midlands is Health Care and Social Assistance, employing 55,998 workers. The next-largest sectors in the region are Retail Trade (40,778 workers) and Accommodation and Food Services (34,697). High location quotients (LQs) indicate sectors in which a region has high concentrations of employment compared to the national average. The sectors with the largest LQs in the region are Public Administration (LQ = 1.80), Finance and Insurance (1.61), and Utilities (1.49).

Total Workers for Midlands by Industry



Source: JahaSQR  
Data as of 2024Q1  
Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Employment data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and imputed where necessary. Data are updated through 2023Q4 with preliminary estimates updated to 2024Q1.

Social						
Poverty Level (of all people)	14.7%	14.4%	12.5%	103,048	717,849	40,521,584
Households Receiving Food Stamps/SNAP	10.6%	10.5%	11.5%	30,785	212,887	14,486,880
Enrolled in Grade 12 (% of total population)	1.4%	1.3%	1.4%	9,914	66,257	4,476,703
Disconnected Youth <sup>3</sup>	2.0%	3.0%	2.5%	937	8,424	430,795
Children in Single Parent Families (% of all children)	41.2%	39.2%	34.0%	62,194	403,834	23,568,955
Uninsured	9.1%	10.2%	8.7%	64,146	512,886	28,315,092
With a Disability, Age 18-64	12.0%	11.9%	10.5%	52,768	359,972	20,879,820
With a Disability, Age 18-64, Labor Force Participation Rate and Size	46.3%	40.9%	45.5%	24,433	147,253	9,492,098
Foreign Born	5.5%	5.3%	13.7%	40,292	270,170	45,281,071
Speak English Less Than Very Well (population 5 yrs and over)	2.5%	2.7%	8.2%	17,579	132,913	25,704,846

The poverty level and related statistics for SNAP recipient households in the Midlands Area are notably higher than both state and national averages by several percentage points. Additionally, the percentage of individuals identifying as having a disability is elevated, although the labor force participation rate for this population is similarly high. An analysis of the PY23 WIOA EEO reports provides insights into the service rates for individuals who self-identify as having a disability. Data from the Adult/DW program indicates that approximately 5% of participants and 10% of Youth report a disability. The discrepancy between these programs may stem from multiple factors, including a possible reluctance to report or a need for staff training to better encourage reporting. Overall, the data highlights an opportunity to enhance engagement with this population, as our rates fall slightly below the average for the area.

This analysis is based on the available data. We aim to collaborate with partners who can help us reach and serve individuals facing additional barriers, such as returning citizens with a criminal background, as well as those dealing with transportation and childcare challenges. It is important to note that barriers to employment often overlap, affecting individuals in various ways. By prioritizing services for those confronting these obstacles, we can potentially make a meaningful impact across multiple interconnected categories.

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**The region greatly benefits from Columbia being the hub of state government, which supports a variety of businesses and sectors that thrive within this economy. Key individual sectors include Business, Technology, Healthcare, and Distribution Logistics. Innovation and collaboration have enabled continued business growth in the Midlands, providing additional opportunities. A few emerging and ongoing initiatives that show a great deal of promise include:**

- **Building Occupational Opportunities in the Midlands (BOOM) is a construction job-training program designed for high school students with disabilities. This innovative initiative allows students to acquire valuable skills while they are still in school, facilitating employment opportunities with local homebuilders. For several years, BOOM has received partial funding through Apprenticeship Carolina, serving as a pre-employment program for individuals with disabilities. However, this funding will conclude in 2024. Local school districts and other partners are committed to sustaining this essential initiative.**

**The training encompasses classroom instruction for OSHA certification and basic construction skills. Additionally, BOOM emphasizes job readiness by providing training in resume writing, interview techniques, and effective career communications. The program culminates with students participating in interviews with employers, with the goal of ensuring that each student receives at least one job offer upon completion.**

- **Project Search programs have existed in the Midlands area for a decade. It is a business-lead program that teaches students relevant, marketable skills while immersed in a business setting. The business receives no subsidies for partnering in the project and is part of the braided funding approach. The Midlands area is fortunate to have multiple sites in healthcare and hospitality partnered with different school districts to provide a robust set of options for training for young adults with a variety of developmental disabilities.**

- **Apprenticeship Carolina™** has established a work group aimed at identifying resources to assist employers in hiring individuals with disabilities for new or existing United States Department of Labor Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs). This initiative involves key stakeholders such as Midlands Technical College and AbleSC. Additionally, Apprenticeship Carolina is exploring how grant funds can be utilized to offer financial support, including tuition assistance and stipends for supportive services, to ensure individuals with disabilities achieve success in their RAPs.
- **Midlands Technical College** offers apprenticeship grant opportunities that enable students and job seekers to leverage resources within the healthcare industry to earn wages and gain valuable experience while enhancing their professional knowledge to advance their careers. EMT apprentices have the chance to work with First Priority Academy and Vital Care EMS. Furthermore, students who have completed courses in CNA, EKG, Phlebotomy, or Cardiac Care Technician are encouraged to apply for the Pre-Apprenticeship for Entry Level Healthcare program. Apprentices participate in a one-week course that combines job search skills, soft skills, and training in electronic health records, after which they are connected to employers for continued training.
- **Central SC Alliance** is a public/private alliance that focuses resources and energy on leveraging our people, resources, and assets to attract the businesses, entrepreneurs, and organizations that share a collective desire to cultivate and nurture the prosperity of the region.
- **Columbia Metro Region Economic Development Action Plan** is developing a strategy to increase and then maintain higher levels of investment in knowledge-based enterprise operations. Primary targeting is to increase the attraction of knowledge-based enterprise activities like IT, R&D, and specialized business processes in fields like FinTech, Cybersecurity, AI, Data Analytics, etc.
- **Create Opportunity** is a private/public partnership that seeks to develop software engineers from untapped markets and non-traditional locations. Using artificial intelligence as an aptitude and success predictor, the opportunity blends classroom training on the front end, with a Registered Apprenticeship.
- **The South Carolina I-77 Alliance** is a county-driven nonprofit economic development organization dedicated to positioning and marketing the five counties as a world-class business location to attract capital investment and high-quality jobs to the region.

- **I-77 International Mega Site is a Fairfield County Economic Development initiative/partnership in conjunction with the SC Department of Commerce.**
- **The Midlands Youth Apprenticeship Program (MYA) is a collaborative initiative involving the Columbia Chamber, Midlands Technical College, and participating school districts. MYA serves as a career-education pathway designed to cultivate a skilled local workforce for high-demand, hard-to-fill positions. It offers high school juniors and seniors the opportunity to earn while they learn as youth apprentices. Participants receive paid, hands-on training alongside job-related education at MTC. Additionally, the MYA Program provides businesses and organizations with a unique opportunity to connect with qualified high school students from diverse fields and backgrounds who are already excelling.**
- **Launch Cola - The Columbia Chamber of Commerce is currently developing a pilot program inspired by the Greenville Chamber of Commerce's Launch GVL, aimed at enhancing high school students' access to work-based learning opportunities with local employers. Although still in the planning phases, this initiative is expected to be available for the 2025-2026 school year.**
- **Midlands Registered Apprenticeship (Midlands Technical College/Apprenticeship Carolina).**
- **REEMERGE is a comprehensive reintegration program spanning 6 to 12 months, designed to support individuals through employment, coaching, education, and entrepreneurship. Participants engage in a structured curriculum that includes training in HVAC, industrial electrical work, landscaping, or carpentry, complemented by hands-on work experience and classroom instruction. Through this program, participants acquire valuable skills that open new and exciting opportunities, enabling them to support their families while also significantly reducing the likelihood of reoffending.**
- **Life Launch & Pathway Home are two DOL grant funded projects in the Midlands area launching in 2022 through Goodwill Industries of Upstate/Midlands SC. Life Launch serves past justice involved job seekers aged 18-24 find their way through the barriers and into sustainable employment. Pathway Home is a project aimed specifically at the correctional facilities working with pre and post release clients transition into sustainable employment. Projects like these help the returning citizens transition into productive work and help to fill the employment gaps in the area with a new pool of job seekers.**

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

The WIOA program plays a crucial role in connecting customers and job seekers to employment and training opportunities. A significant strength of workforce development programs in the Midlands area is the abundance of initiatives that emphasize collaboration. The primary focus on workforce development within these organizations reflects a growing recognition of its importance. By integrating workforce development with education, economic growth, and community development, the relevance and impact of these investments are significantly enhanced. This collaboration leads to a more effective use of resources.

The cooperative nature of the projects enables the area to engage participants in similar initiatives, whether or not they are selected for a specific opportunity. Additionally, it allows for the provision of comprehensive support services when needed for funded training programs. Resources such as supplies, transportation, testing and licensing fees, supplementary instruction for work-based learning, and barrier removal are invaluable tools that help maximize resources while enhancing the skills of job seekers.

Partnerships and alignment are foundational strengths in nearly every activity across the region. This positive shift in the approach to workforce development has elevated it to a genuine priority, with the potential benefit of increased resource allocation as partnerships continue to expand.

The strengths of these and emerging programs lie in their focus on in-demand employers and industries, which has significantly contributed to regional economic growth and job development. These initiatives present unprecedented opportunities for entry into high-demand careers. However, a notable weakness of these programs is the lack of connectivity and data sharing. Many initiatives aimed at assisting job seekers or businesses come with specific requirements or eligibility criteria. While there is often overlap among the participants in these programs, seamlessly connecting them remains a challenge. This issue can stem from individual program performance metrics or confidentiality obligations that hinder direct data sharing. Such competing interests can create a perception of silos or disconnection between organizations. Additionally, consistent funding for these programs can lead to continuity issues, resulting in gaps in services. A lack of awareness also poses a challenge; despite the wealth of opportunities available, attracting participants to various programs tends to be a well-kept secret. Each partner invests considerable effort into awareness campaigns to initiate recruitment. Although collaboration among partners and regular meetings to exchange information can help, the process of conducting effective community outreach continues to be laborious.



A strong emphasis on priority populations, particularly those facing barriers to employment, has gained significant momentum within the Midlands Area. Several workforce programs prioritize serving these individuals. For instance, BOOM facilitates connections for persons with disabilities, while REEMERGE is specifically tailored to support returning citizens. The Midlands Area WIOA program remains committed to serving those with barriers as a primary focus, emphasizing strategic partnerships to leverage high-quality services aimed at addressing or eliminating these obstacles.

## **Section II: Strategic Vision and Goals**

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

- Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including youth and individuals with barriers to employment;  
**In the realm of economic growth, the Midlands Workforce Development Board (MWDB) sees its role as one of talent development. By partnering with local and regional stakeholders, we equip job seekers with the necessary skills—both technical and soft—to meet the needs of employers. The establishment of the Central Region Planning Team is a crucial component of this effort. Regional planning will enable us to align our resources with the demands of businesses and adapt as necessary.**

The goals that define our vision include:

- Increasing high school diploma and GED attainment, as well as employment opportunities.
- Reducing the number of unfilled and vacant jobs, along with unemployment and joblessness.
- Expanding Registered Apprenticeship (RA) opportunities, which include both sponsored apprenticeships and hired apprentices.

**Focusing on priority clusters for virtual classroom training combined with increased opportunities for Registered Apprenticeship and On-the-Job Training will help strengthen and build the talent pipeline in the area. A variety of training options will make education accessible, available, and attractive to a diverse range of job seekers, including youth and individuals facing barriers to employment.**

- A description of how the LWDB will work with core and required partners to align local resources to achieve the strategic vision and goals referenced above; and  
**The Midlands Workforce Development Board (MWDB) prioritizes partnerships with essential stakeholders and contributors, both within and outside our local area. This focus is a core component of our service delivery model and is crucial for aligning the available local resources.**

We continue to coordinate the activities of our partners through monthly meetings of the Midlands Business Services Team, led by MWDB staff. This team consists of representatives from Adult Education, South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation (SCVR), South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS), South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce (SCDEW), Apprenticeship Carolina, WIOA service providers, and community-based organizations. This collaborative approach allows partners to share information about their planned or provided services, which helps to eliminate duplication and increase participation. Additionally, the MWDB maintains relationships with all required WIOA partners as mandated by the Act.

Due to statewide budget cuts, some agencies are unable to maintain the level of in-person services that were previously available at the SC Works Centers. As a result, we have modified our service delivery methods to include virtual referrals and affiliate offices, accommodating the needs of job seekers in the area. Fortunately, the Midlands has adopted technology that makes this transition nearly seamless.

Training is also a vital component of our strategy for workforce development. We are focusing on priority clusters for classroom training using the Priority Occupations as a guide, along with expanding opportunities for apprenticeships and on-the-job training, which will help strengthen and grow the talent pipeline. The variety of training options will ensure that resources are accessible, available, and attractive to a diverse array of job seekers, including youth and individuals facing barriers to employment.

The MWDB will continue to seek opportunities with new partners and entities that align with our vision and goals, allowing us to leverage additional resources and funding.

- A description of how the LWDB will utilize technology to increase access to resources and services for job seekers and employers.

The Midlands Workforce Development Board understands the dramatic changes that have occurred in the last few years related to technology and artificial intelligence. The coming months and years will undoubtedly provide opportunities and challenges for the workforce system to increase access to technology and resources that will prepare jobseekers to meet the ever-changing work environment. The WDB will work with partners to determine appropriate investments in technology to provide a more relevant customer experience. The WDB's sector partnership groups will provide insight from a business perspective of what needs to be included in training options for jobseekers and youth. The WDB's educational partners will be an important advisor on existing training and future training opportunities to address the needs identified by the business sector partnership groups. The WDB's staff and contractors will be encouraged to request permission to purchase technology related to virtual reality, augmented reality, and robotics to assist in enhancing the customer experience. The Midlands Workforce Development Board (WDB) recognizes the significant changes that have taken place in recent years due to advancements in

technology and artificial intelligence. In the coming months and years, we will face both opportunities and challenges in enhancing the workforce system to improve access to technology and resources, preparing jobseekers for the evolving work environment.

The WDB will collaborate with partners to identify suitable investments in technology that can provide a more relevant experience for our customers. Our sector partnership groups will offer valuable business insights on what should be included in training programs for jobseekers and youth. Additionally, our educational partners will play a crucial advisory role by sharing information about current training and future opportunities that address the needs identified by our business sector partnership groups.

We also encourage WDB staff and contractors to seek permission to acquire technologies related to virtual reality, augmented reality, and robotics, as these tools can significantly enhance the customer experience.

### **Section III: LWDA Partnerships and Investment Strategies**

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

**For the 2024-2027 Plan, the MWDB planning process adhered to State Instruction 24-03 and our established methodology, which has proven successful in the past. We adopted a division of labor based on staff areas of expertise, leveraging a Subject Matter Expert approach that remains highly effective for managing large-scale projects. Each component of the planning and plan writing was assessed by subject area and assigned to the most suitable staff or team members.**

**We meticulously analyzed each section of the plan template to identify needs, current status, and areas requiring attention or revision. Engagement with SC Works (Core and required) partners occurred throughout the process, with their involvement in Board meetings, Committee meetings, Business Services team meetings, and monthly partner meetings, ensuring representatives from these partners were present.**

**All planning and working draft documents were shared with members via Google Drive, allowing for input and transparency in the development process. Additionally, we sought collaboration with partners such as Economic Developers for their expertise in shaping the plan's elements. Coordination with local elected county officials during the planning phase was facilitated through the Clerk's Office of each county, providing draft documents, and materials to ensure their integral involvement.**

To ensure accuracy and the incorporation of all relevant input, we implemented a peer review model. A final draft of the plan and framework was then presented to the Midlands Workforce Development Board, county council members, local government representatives, and chief local elected officials, inviting their direct input and feedback prior to the draft's release for public comment.

2. A description of the workforce development system in the LWDA, including the following:

- Identification of the programs that are included in the system; and
- How the LWDB will support strategies for service alignment among the entities carrying out workforce development programs in the LWDA.

**The workforce development system in the Midlands is founded on strong relationships with essential WIOA partners, including SC Vocational Rehabilitation, SC Commission for the Blind, local Adult Education departments, SC Department of Social Services for TANF services, and Job Corps. These partners provide services on a part-time basis within the SC Works Centers (with SC DSS and Job Corps operating full-time), along with additional support through referrals from the Center. Furthermore, all Midlands WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs, alongside various initiatives delivered by the SC Department of Employment and Workforce, co-locate services full-time at the SC Works Centers. The Midlands will continue engaging with both required and additional partners to enhance and innovate the strategic delivery of services mandated by WIOA, aiming to increase integration while preventing duplication. Additionally, all partners will maintain collaboration as an integrated Business Services Team, offering employers a cohesive and cooperative approach to accessing the talent pipeline.**

**The Board is committed to a process of continuous improvement to ensure that the menu of career services remains relevant, high-quality, efficient, and accessible. This commitment will be particularly important as the Midlands transitions to a post-pandemic economy. By incorporating technology and enhancing access to career services for job seekers facing barriers to employment, we aim to strengthen the local and regional talent pipeline.**

**Data sharing—particularly business intelligence—with our partners and making coordinated strategic decisions to address skill gaps will continue to be central to these initiatives. The alignment of resources and strategies will be facilitated through the Board's standing committees, alongside the area operator and business services lead. Utilizing the operator and business services lead as primary points of contact, as well as maintaining regular meetings, will help ensure that our partnerships and participation keep our services efficient and relevant.**

Finally, the Midlands Area will engage in a planning activity in spring 2025 to develop alignment strategies with the strategic plans of the CCWD and the State Workforce Board.

3. A description of the strategies and services that will be used in the LWDA to achieve the following:
  - Expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, including individuals with barriers to employment;  
**The Midlands Workforce Development Board (MWDB) has prioritized establishing partnerships with key programs and contributors both locally and beyond. This strategy, which serves as the cornerstone of our service delivery model, is crucial for expanding access to and aligning the available resources within the community for the foreseeable future.**

Over the past five years, the demand for services among individuals seeking employment and training, as well as employers in need of talent, has remained steady in an increasingly competitive market. Our services encompass staff-assisted job searches, including resume preparation, labor market data analysis, and interview skills training; training services such as remedial education, short-term training, and career-specific certifications; and opportunities for On-the-Job Training placements. By collaborating with similar organizations—such as ReadySC, Apprenticeship Carolina, SC DEW, DSS, and nearby Adult Education partners—we can enhance the delivery of employment-related services to both job seekers and business customers.

Private businesses and community organizations frequently volunteer to lead workshops at our Centers, offering resources on job searching, interviewing, basic computer skills, career exploration, and criminal record expungement, all at no cost to participants. The Midlands area will continue to pursue partnerships with local stakeholders to improve training and education opportunities, provide supportive services, and facilitate successful entry into the workforce.

Training lies at the core of the services provided by the MWDB. The MWDB collaborates closely with various Adult Education and English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs in the local area, as well as Midlands Technical College and other PATH-eligible providers, to support adult learners in obtaining essential certificates and fundamental skills necessary for further education in occupationally specific postsecondary programs. By utilizing a range of training resources, the Midlands aims to enhance its capacity to provide training services in high-demand occupations while addressing the financial needs necessary for completion.

The initiative includes outreach and recruitment efforts with Midlands Technical College's Continuing Education students through QuickJobs, which encompasses over 35 programs and additional scholarship opportunities. By combining these funding strategies, the Midlands can better leverage resources for training. This diverse array of training options will ensure that training is accessible, available, and appealing to a broad spectrum of job seekers, including youth and individuals facing barriers to employment.

Among the collaborative partnerships in place are the Transitions Homeless Center, MIRCI Youth Drop-in Center, Fast Forward CTC, and SC Codes. The Transitions Homeless Center operates an emergency housing shelter, short-term housing, and a day center to support homeless individuals in the Midlands area. Their commitment to helping individuals achieve employment and self-sufficiency forms a critical component of their stabilization plan. The Midlands area works in conjunction with Transitions to identify customers in need of WIOA assistance, securing resources for further education and job placement.

Since the inception of MIRCI's Youth Drop-in Center, the Midlands WIOA program has partnered with them to assist homeless youth. WIOA staff collaborates closely with MIRCI staff to provide enhanced training and employment opportunities for customers whose housing stability has been achieved. Additionally, the Youth Services Director at MIRCI plays a crucial role on the MWDB Youth Committee, ensuring ongoing collaboration of services.

We are fortunate to have multiple sites at Prisma Healthcare and Embassy Suites Hotel with the Project Search program. The program has been present in the Midlands area for more than a decade serving young adults with development disabilities. The business-led immersive training program is year-round, integrated into the existing business infrastructure and pays the trainees minimum wage or higher. The program teaches marketable skills in the business environment and prepares the students through the training and coaching to enter the job market as their time in high school ends.

Fast Forward CTC maintains a close partnership with the Midlands area, focusing on support for homeless individuals and veterans with disabilities. Their collaboration with SC Works Centers enhances participants' basic computer skills, provides access to IT certifications, and facilitates direct placement into a range of occupations, helping to reintegrate homeless individuals and veterans with disabilities into the workforce and guide them towards self-sufficiency.

The IT career field is robust in the Midlands area. Collaboration with Create Opportunity, SC Codes, Build Carolina, and the Council on Competitiveness

provides access to the field for traditional and non-traditional students. The partnership with Create Opportunity continues to expand, offering training and employment in Information Technology for non-traditional job seekers through apprenticeship programs. This initiative leverages artificial intelligence and web-based assessments to identify aptitudes, creating a more inclusive pathway for priority populations—such as rural residents, minorities, women, and marginalized individuals—into the IT sector. Build Carolina offers a similar model to develop full-stack developers while SC Codes and the Council of Competitiveness reach into the emerging workforce to encourage IT-focused careers. The Midlands staff will persist in exploring opportunities beyond these initiatives to connect job seekers with pathways that enhance their employability in high-demand industries.

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

The diversity of educational options and credentials within our highly decentralized system is a significant strength, as it generates numerous opportunities and serves a variety of purposes. However, this diversity also poses considerable challenges for students, employers, workers, and policymakers. The weak connections among different elements of this multilayered credentialing system make it difficult for learners with varying abilities and needs to comprehend their career pathway options and the most efficient routes to achieve their goals. In today's competitive job market, postsecondary credentials are highly valued. Business leaders increasingly seek the acquisition of training credentials that are both stackable and portable.

The MWDA is actively collaborating with various Adult Education programs in the local area and Midlands Technical College to develop stackable certificates that support adult learners in completing their secondary education, acquiring essential basic skills, and pursuing continuing education in occupationally specific postsecondary programs. The concepts of portability and stacking—where progressive levels of attainment are emphasized—are crucial for industry-recognized credentials and certifications. These credentials not only reflect an individual's capacity to engage in a comprehensive program of study but also demonstrate a defined career pathway toward gainful employment. Such programs are particularly advantageous for non-traditional students. The courses offered provide numerous benefits for WIOA participants in the Midlands Area, with many leading to a certificate that can be earned in a relatively short timeframe. This approach establishes a pathway to advanced job opportunities, increased wages, and access to middle-income positions.

The initiative aims to enhance access to post-secondary credentials by collaborating closely with partners and stakeholders to (1) identify entry-level

credentials that serve as prerequisites for WIOA-approved ETPL training, facilitating recruitment and outreach for WIOA participants who wish to add stackable credentials to their resumes; (2) coordinate with local educational funders to expand scholarships and grants to support training programs beyond the WIOA framework; (3) work with partners to co-enroll participants interested in training opportunities before and after WIOA-funded training; and (4) collaborate with employer apprenticeship programs to promote the use of alternative training paths alongside WIOA-funded On-the-Job Training (OJT).

The Incumbent Worker Training program is an excellent resource to assist area employers in their commitment to apprenticeship, providing multi-year support in skilled trades such as Plumbing, Pipefitting, and HVAC/Refrigeration. Although funding availability ebbs and flows, the area is actively engaged with a core group of employers building the workforce through apprenticeship. Staff actively assists in seeking funding to support the effort inside and outside of WIOA resources. As new opportunities arise to broaden the WIOA eligible training provider list and expand credentialing options, the initiative will continue to evolve.

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

To ensure that employers are engaged in the Midlands Workforce system, we plan to continue a multi-faceted approach. Our goal is to provide relevant services, products, and solutions that meet business needs, starting with the Midlands Business Services Team (BST). The BST emphasizes a partnership approach and integrates services to create a seamless experience for employers. This integration helps eliminate duplication, allowing employers to clearly understand available services without facing repetitive contacts.

We hold formal meetings monthly whenever possible, but we also rely on improvised meetings and electronic communication to ensure that information is constantly flowing among the team. Engaging employers in the Midlands does not follow a single format. The BST members use a variety of strategies, including cold calls, follow-ups from previous contacts, face-to-face interactions at community events, and social media outreach. This engagement approach is tailored to each industry or business.

The demand for technology that assists small businesses—especially those with limited human resources—in the screening and hiring of new talent continues to grow. The Brazen Virtual Job Platform has enhanced our Center's ability to support the hiring process. We recently celebrated Workforce Development Month by hosting a “Made In” virtual job fair specifically for



manufacturers in Fairfield and Lexington County. This event highlighted the diverse manufacturing landscape in our area and offered an accessible format for employers to connect with potential hires. Recent participants in stand-alone virtual job fairs include Labor Finders, Receivable Solutions, Schneider Electric, and UPS.

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

The Midlands Business Services Team (BST) has adopted a data-driven approach to ensure that its efforts and services address actual demand. The information used comes from various sources, covering multiple categories. Specific data from the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce's (SCDEW) Business Intelligence Division, Labor Market Information, Economic Development, and other analyses serve as examples. Additionally, insights from the business community are taken into account. Data plays a crucial role in guiding the Midlands system, focusing customer service and training efforts on in-demand occupations. Moreover, the Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) program provides support for businesses by helping to advance the skills of existing employees, rather than focusing solely on new hires. This approach ensures that business needs are addressed in more than one capacity.

The Regional Sector Partnership, comprising manufacturing employers, has provided an informal yet valuable tool for understanding how the workforce system can meet employer needs. So far, our employer group has revealed that the local workforce has training requirements that exceed our initial expectations. They have identified gaps in understanding the manufacturing culture, a need for leadership skills among team leaders and supervisors, and highlighted the unique needs of our growing life sciences manufacturing sector. By collaborating with our workforce partners—including technical trainers from high schools and post-secondary institutions, job seeker service providers, and economic development partners—we can directly address employers' concerns. This collaborative approach will help us effectively tackle the shared challenges they face.

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

The MWDB's connection to local Economic Development is an area we have focused on to foster continued growth in recent years. We value our partnerships with Economic Development as a key link to Local Employment Organizations (LEOs) and the business community. Our focus has been on Economic Development at the local, regional, and, where appropriate, state levels. We have achieved success by providing quality services that support and enhance the efforts of Economic Development organizations. Furthermore, we

have increased our engagement by ensuring the participation of economic developers on our Business Services Team (BST), area committees, and various ad hoc groups. Richland County Economic Development is also represented and engaged with our board through a county appointment.

We have begun to collaborate more frequently with our local Chambers of Commerce. Although their staffing levels are generally small, investing time to develop personal relationships has generated increased collaboration opportunities. We have been invited to speak at some of their meetings, providing visibility for the workforce system to additional businesses in need. The Lexington Chamber of Commerce has been particularly instrumental in helping us quickly identify emerging leaders for the Workforce Board. Recently, the Columbia Chamber of Commerce expanded its staff to include a Workforce Director. Collaborating with her on the first Young Leaders cohort, expanding youth apprenticeship and work-based learning opportunities, is an important first step in enhancing workforce services in the area. We are encouraged by the progress made through the initial outreach efforts to this group.

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

**To strengthen our customer-focused connection with the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program within the SC Works System, we consider our partnership with the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce (SCDEW) to be essential. The Re-Employment Assistance (REA) UI staff in the centers provide us with crucial links to frontline unemployment services. Additionally, the Midlands Workforce Development Board (MWDB) collaborates closely with the SCDEW Area Director for our region to ensure a seamless flow of services for our customers. This relationship facilitates a two-way exchange of information.**

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

- Developing and implementing cross-partner staff training to enhance service delivery to job seekers and business;

**Quarterly, partner staff at the SC Works Midlands Centers are invited to participate in a Center-wide staff meeting. This meeting will cover important information related to Center operations and will also include a training component on various topics, such as frequently asked questions in the Resource Room, awareness and inclusion for persons with disabilities, safety protocols, and partner program services. Periodically, staff identifies additional training opportunities to benefit the system. As an example, the area coordinated and hosted a series of sessions to provide Mental Health First**

**Aid certification to all Center partner staff as well as the larger workforce system to include MIRCI and Transitions staff.**

**Additionally, the Business Services Team, which includes staff members who serve local businesses and economic development professionals, meets monthly. These meetings feature a cross-program training session and a discussion on the latest employer needs. Both meetings provide valuable opportunities for cross-program training and collaboration. Without these coordinated efforts, some team members might not have the chance to connect with each other.**

**Furthermore, our local area is looking forward to the upcoming launch of a statewide learning module. We believe this initiative will enhance our service delivery to job seekers and help us address the emerging challenges faced by the workforce system.**

- **Increasing the percentage of participants that obtain high-value credentials; A key ingredient to creating high-value credentials is offering a diverse menu of options for short-term certifications. The Midlands Workforce Development Board is currently reviewing high-priority occupations in our area and region to identify gaps in our classroom training offerings. If there are limited or no classroom training opportunities available for job seekers to qualify for these positions, we will explore options to address these gaps.**

**We believe this is a crucial first step in aligning our resources with the strategic plan of the State Workforce Board and Coordinating Council. By seeking additional training providers and programs in demand industries and occupations, we can accelerate the process for employers to find qualified applicants. This approach will also enhance customer choice, guiding the workforce to fill those critical roles.**

**Career Advisors work closely with job seekers and youth to provide guidance and coaching on understanding the labor market and identifying careers that offer a living wage along with opportunities for advancement.**

- **Increasing access to education and training necessary for individuals to use Broadband to advance their personal goals and increase South Carolina's technology workforce competitiveness; In alignment with one of the guiding principles of the State of South Carolina, the Midlands Area will leverage existing technologies and explore new innovations to enhance access to resources and services. We will collaborate with partners and business customers to identify relevant software and artificial intelligence tools.**

Broadband enables users to access information via the Internet through various high-speed transmission technologies. This digital transmission allows text, images, and sound to be sent as bits of data. The technologies that facilitate broadband transmit these bits significantly faster than traditional telephone or wireless connections, including standard dial-up Internet access. It is crucial for today's workforce, as well as future generations, to understand broadband and its applications. The Midlands Local Area will partner with educational institutions to invest in opportunities that enhance participants' access to education and training in broadband usage. This investment will bolster South Carolina's competitiveness in the technology workforce.

- Improving strategic outreach and service delivery to employers to effectively match job seekers with employers;  
**Frequent communication among economic development partners and training providers is essential for anticipating the needs and expectations of employers. Insights gathered from Sector Partnership Groups and ongoing employer engagement will help inform and validate how the workforce system can effectively meet business demands. We will leverage trusted technologies—such as webinars, emails, and surveys—to efficiently gather feedback and input from businesses. The better we understand the needs and expectations of employers, the more effectively we can prepare job seekers to secure and retain quality positions with opportunities for career advancement. The Career Advisors will collaborate closely with the Business Solutions Team to ensure job seekers are appropriately matched with in-demand industries and occupations.**
- Increasing awareness of resources to mitigate obstacles to employment;  
**Navigating barriers to securing and retaining employment can be quite challenging. The Midlands Workforce Development Board has forged significant partnerships with both core and required partners, as well as non-traditional organizations. Many of these non-traditional partners are community-based entities that provide vital resources for basic needs. These collaborations enable us to deliver comprehensive wraparound services, thereby avoiding duplication of existing offerings. This strategic alignment minimizes missed steps in the individual customer experience as they progress toward self-sufficiency. Regular cross-agency collaboration and communication foster more successful outcomes for participants. By adopting a holistic approach through wraparound services, we start with essential needs such as food, housing, clothing, and healthcare. Leveraging our partnerships with organizations like DSS, Housing Authority, Catholic Charities, Transitions, MIRCI, Wateree/Aiken-Barnwell/Carolina Community Actions, and others in the region allows us to stabilize job seekers, enabling them to concentrate on employment and training activities.**

**We will utilize both existing and new technologies to effectively communicate the availability of supportive services to potential applicants. Additionally, we will collaborate with our partners to establish tracking systems that allow multiple entities to identify provided services and collectively share in the positive outcomes.**

- **Implementing a multifaceted outreach strategy to rural and underserved communities to ensure that individuals living in these rural areas of South Carolina have access to employment and training resources;**

**Technology is a vital component of our future! Access to broadband and education on its effective use will create outreach opportunities that enable the Midlands area to communicate service options to rural and underserved communities. Over the past few years, we have cultivated a strong following on our website and social media platforms, which we utilize extensively to promote our hiring events and workshops. Looking ahead, we plan to explore new ways to deliver career and training services electronically. This includes web-based offerings focused on soft skills, job search techniques, and pre-employment training. We are eagerly anticipating the release of two career exploration games from the SC Rural Water Association and SCETV, which will provide an excellent opportunity to highlight high-demand careers and engage emerging populations, particularly in rural and underserved regions. Our educational partners are also actively launching web-based employment and training options to better serve these communities.**

**Social media has become an integral part of our daily lives. As the world—and the Midlands Area—continues to evolve in the digital age, it is crucial for us to leverage all available resources. Social media enables the workforce system to establish a presence across various platforms, each catering to a diverse audience. This allows us to share content, promote services, engage with both current and prospective customers, and enhance community awareness of employment and training services. Additionally, social media is more cost-effective than traditional advertising; a single share or repost can potentially reach hundreds or thousands of individuals at no cost. The majority of people have access to social media, whether through computers or mobile devices.**

**We will continue to enhance our YouTube channel to educate and inform individuals in rural and underserved communities. This will feature both short-form and long-form video content. Short-form videos will quickly engage viewers by focusing on a single message, while long-form content will include customer success stories, live streaming of events like job and career fairs, as well as training topics such as interview preparation. It is worth noting that YouTube predominantly attracts users aged 16 to 40.**

**Instagram remains one of the leading social media platforms, particularly appealing to an audience aged 18 to 34. This demographic represents a crucial market for registered apprenticeships and online learning, especially in rural and underserved communities. Our content strategy will emphasize video, photos, and hashtags to enhance recruitment and outreach efforts.**

**Facebook remains the largest social media platform, offering an effective virtual storefront for our employment and training programs. This platform is particularly popular among individuals aged 40 to 65. In addition to our Board, Center, and WIOA Program pages, we can enhance our outreach by connecting our messages to various custom Facebook pages, thereby expanding our market reach. We have established relationships with several job posting, community, and layoff group pages, enabling us to tailor our messages to specific segments of both our existing and potential customer base.**

**The area, particularly the Business Solutions Team, will leverage LinkedIn both as an outreach tool and an educational content resource to enhance the visibility of the workforce system. This initiative will include interviews with industry representatives who can discuss in-demand occupations relevant to rural and underserved communities. We plan to share insights on industry trends and news, and we will provide support to the business community with job postings as necessary. Additionally, we will continue to engage in cross-promotion with our Economic Development, business and industry, and service provider partners. We will also maintain coordination with the Regional Business Services Coordinator to access LinkedIn Recruiter when required, aiding in the recruitment for challenging-to-fill and high-level job openings.**

**To continue our support of rural outreach, we coordinate where possible with DEW's Rural Initiative team. Only Fairfield County is designated as a priority tier in the Midlands. In Fairfield County, we house the Rural staff in the SC Works office. At this time, the Coordinator is a previous WIOA case manager so he is well versed in the WIOA services and is able to work closely with the WIOA staff in the Center he is housed. Additionally, we work closely with Rural Initiative Coordinator to provide additional services. She works with us to target services in adjoining counties near our rural pockets in Lexington and Richland Counties. In exchange we assist with staffing events and making community connections for locations and partners. Most recently, we have partnered with the previous Lexington Four School District Superintendent to meet with the Rural Coordinator to identify Calhoun County resources near the Gaston/Swansea area of the Midlands. We were able to identify a potential location for a Resource Fair and learn more about projects in the area. We have engaged in the service need survey and asset mapping project of the Lexington Four School District. We will be engaged in that project in 2025.**

- Identifying resources and funding opportunities to provide services to jobseekers;

**Funding for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and Wagner-Peyser has seen substantial decreases over the past few years. No single funding stream possesses the necessary financial resources to deliver the full range of education, training, and wrap-around services essential for helping individuals secure and maintain jobs that provide a living wage—preferably in career paths that offer opportunities for advancement. A diverse array of partners contributes resources, particularly in terms of supportive services, that help to augment Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and Wagner-Peyser funding. These supportive services encompass a range of needs, including books, tuition, licensing fees, uniforms, transportation, childcare, housing assistance, auto repair, utility payments, legal services, tools, technology, food pantries, and clothing closets.**

**A key concern is ensuring that participants have access to broadband internet. We will continue collaborating with partners to identify resources for subsidizing or reducing the cost of internet services. Additionally, the Board staff will seek out national, state, and foundation grants specifically aimed at addressing the needs of job seekers when other funding sources are unavailable. We will pursue funding for registered apprenticeships, reentry programs, specialized projects for individuals with disabilities, support for recently separated military personnel, and other targeted initiatives to expand and meet the needs of job seekers.**

- Communicating opportunities to the workforce system; and  
**The One-Stop Operator in the Midlands Local Area holds quarterly meetings with all partners to facilitate collaboration. These meetings serve as a platform for sharing information, discussing funding opportunities, providing training on partner services, analyzing service levels and performance metrics, and brainstorming innovative program designs. Additionally, informal communication with partners occurs regularly, often on a daily basis, between these meetings.**

**The Area also boasts an active Business Solutions Team that convenes frequently to discuss employer and business services while exchanging information on job openings and updates regarding required skills and knowledge. Economic Development Representatives participate in these Business Solutions Team meetings, offering insights about new businesses and the needs and expectations of the business communities they serve.**

- Identifying and strategically targeting training providers in the state that are offering programs in the infrastructure, energy, and advanced manufacturing sectors.

**The Midlands Business Solutions Team gathers data on the current needs of in-demand industries and occupations. Collaborating with the Educational Representatives on the Board, we will compile an inventory of existing training providers and conduct a review of the Eligible Training Provider List to identify any providers that may not be included. Our staff will assess the current training provider list against the region's Priority Occupations to pinpoint any gaps in essential training for these roles. We will partner with our educational collaborators to identify and recruit training programs that address any identified gaps.**

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

**The Midlands Workforce Development Board (MWDB) has consistently made it a priority to establish and cultivate partnerships with essential programs and stakeholders, both locally and beyond. To effectively implement its strategies and services, the MWDB positions itself as both a convener and an advocate. This approach is crucial for expanding access to and aligning local resources within the community for the foreseeable future.**

**The One Stop Operator plays a vital role in coordinating core and required partners in relation to the day-to-day operations of service provision. This responsibility encompasses facilitating training, distributing information, and coordinating activities within and among SC Works Centers. Additionally, the Operator is tasked with implementing and enforcing the Midlands Center Operations and Business Engagement Plan. The focus of the Operator lies in service coordination, implementation, and customer-facing activities in the Area.**

**In a complementary capacity, the Midlands Business Services Lead ensures that core, required, and additional partners collaborate efficiently. Through monthly coordination and consistent communication, these service-providing partners can connect with industry and economic developers across all three counties. By working collectively, Midlands partners can leverage opportunities, optimize resources, and enhance efficiency. Lastly, the Board, comprising both appointed members and non-appointed committee members, forms a collective of subject matter experts. This structure enables the board to set priorities and guide the system from a high-level operational perspective.**

**The Central Region Sector Partnership strengthens initiatives within the manufacturing sector. Currently, the Sector Strategy focuses on the in-demand manufacturing industry in the area. Adopting an approach akin to the NextGen model, business leaders play a pivotal role within the group. The 14 businesses represented on the Steering Committee have identified a list of shared challenges. Having established this commonality, the committee has extended invitations to select**



partners to attend meetings, allowing them to hear firsthand about the challenges faced by businesses and to address questions related to current and potential services and solutions. This approach ensures that our partners receive a consistent and unfiltered message from industry representatives, enabling us to concentrate our collaborative efforts effectively.

Ultimately, the successful implementation of the Midlands system hinges on strong partnerships and clear communication, fostering an integrated workforce system that serves both job seekers and employers by leveraging all available employment and training resources. As state strategies continue to develop, the Midlands Board will actively pursue innovative ways to enhance the alignment of our services and partnerships. Whenever possible, we aim to cultivate new partnerships and relationships to improve service delivery.

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

The development of soft skills among job seekers has been a priority in South Carolina, particularly in the Midlands, for several years. This issue is complex for many reasons, including the challenge of defining what soft skills, or essential skills, mean to employers. Traditionally, these skills encompass abilities such as time management, conflict resolution, effective communication, and teamwork. However, as various groups have surveyed employer needs, other foundational skills have emerged as equally critical. Skills such as basic computer proficiency, including familiarity with the Microsoft Suite, typing, and having a valid driver's license, are now included in the employers' essential needs list. Addressing this wide range of required skills necessitates a multifaceted approach to assessment and training.

The Midlands area actively supports state-developed initiatives aimed at enhancing soft skills. We have previously backed efforts such as Work Ready Communities, S.C. Job Ready U, and the subsequent WIN Career Readiness Program. The Midlands continues to offer WorkKeys assessments to business partners that utilize these Job Profiles. Until 2024, the Midlands Workforce Development Board (MWDB) functioned as an assessment provider, offering a variety of assessment options across the SC Works Centers. In 2024, the Board will adjust the assessment options available at the Centers while continuing to support the state's work-ready initiative. The WIN assessment will remain accessible in the region through the partner network in Adult Education. The MWDB is committed to seeking opportunities to support large-scale soft skills initiatives. Meanwhile, workshops designed to enhance the soft skills of local job seekers will continue to be a fundamental component of our offerings.

The Midlands Area provides additional resources that enhance the State's initiatives. Our WIOA provider offers the MY LEGACY program, a series of soft skills "bootcamp" workshops designed to prepare WIOA Youth for work experience. Building on the

success of this initiative, we launched a similar project for Adult and Dislocated Worker participants to assist them in their job placement efforts. Furthermore, select topics are included in the Center's ongoing monthly workshop series, which is available to the public. Recognizing that no job seeker has identical needs—and that those needs may evolve over time—we are committed to adapting and addressing our customers' requirements with relevant products and solutions.

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

**The business services strategies and offerings for the Midlands area have undergone several adjustments and additions from 2017 to 2023. During this period, the Midlands Workforce Development Board (MWDB) utilized a locally funded Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) program to supplement resources available from state discretionary funds. This program was successful, yielding a return on investment through skill upgrades, wage increases, and the potential creation of new job opportunities. However, due to a reduction in WIOA resources, the area will not be able to continue this strategy in 2024, although it will evaluate resources for a possible program restart in the future.**

**On-the-Job Training (OJT) remains a cornerstone of the Midlands Area Business and WIOA training service toolkit. To support the success of OJT, Midlands WIOA service providers are allocated specific funding, and OJT performance is monitored to prioritize high-wage opportunities.**

**Our Sector Partnership Initiative will play a crucial role for businesses moving forward. We are encouraged by the engagement of the new Steering Committee and the challenges they have identified. Understanding their emerging needs is essential for the Board in order to effectively engage the workforce system to address these concerns. We look forward to making progress on their initial list of pain points and tackling additional issues as they arise.**

**Lastly, the Midlands Area Business Service Team continues to grow and increase its impact. The integrated team will continue to recruit partners and employers for membership and will convene on a monthly basis. Engaging with various service providers, including local economic developers and the Small Business Administration, helps to strengthen the overall workforce system. This consistent meeting environment allows partners to gather for roundtable discussions, ensuring effective service delivery to employers.**

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

**Collaborations and partnerships with regional and statewide groups will be our primary approach to engaging in regional economic development (ED) activities. The MWDB has built long-term relationships with local economic developers, and our regional team plans to continue strengthening these connections. Representatives from existing industries in each of the three counties, along with the South Carolina Department of Commerce, actively participate in the Area Business Service Team and have been involved in the Regional Sector Partnership. Recently, all three counties have appointed staff to focus on existing industries. This additional resource will help us integrate workforce services with economic development, allowing us to efficiently meet a larger number of employer needs.**

**By collaborating with economic development efforts, the MWDB can connect with both new and expanding businesses. To further promote entrepreneurship, skills development, and support for microenterprises, we are looking to engage additional organizations in these areas. We have partnered with the Small Business Administration to promote their workshops on our events calendar, aimed at better supporting emerging entrepreneurs. Additionally, we periodically host joint staff meetings to enhance awareness between workforce professionals and economic development staff.**

#### **Section IV: Program Design and Evaluation**

1. A description of the SC Works delivery system in the LWDA, including the following:
  - How the LWDB will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services through the system and that the providers will meet the employment needs of local employers, workers, and jobseekers;  
**Before the commencement of each new Program Year, the MWDB conducts a review of the current Program Year to assess each provider's performance, identifying areas that require improvement as well as opportunities for enhancement within the framework of continuous improvement. This evaluation is integral to the annual decision-making process regarding the renewal of contracts with existing service providers for Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, and Operator services, or the issuance of a Request for Proposals (RFP). Based on the Board's decision, identified areas are either incorporated into the RFP or translated into operational benchmarks for the providers.**

**Key indicators for assessment include participation/enrollment levels, fund utilization, overall performance, and Youth work-based learning, alongside**

annual goals developed from these indicators. These benchmarks are typically selected to target areas with potential for growth or shifts in service demand.

The Board and its Committees receive quarterly updates on the identified improvement areas. For any provider whose proposed budget includes a management fee or profit, these operational benchmarks are stipulated in the awarded contract, guiding the earning of the management fee or profit. Regardless of the contract type, the operational benchmarks serve as a measure of provider effectiveness. As part of the Board's continuous improvement process, the impact areas and their respective levels are reassessed for each Program Year.

The Midlands area is committed to continuous improvement through a comprehensive review of training provider applications. These applications are evaluated for approval based on the standards established by the Midlands Workforce Development Board. Key criteria include the attainment of a recognized credential, endorsement by the relevant state authority overseeing the specific training, and alignment with the locally prioritized industry clusters. As performance data becomes available with the implementation of PATH, this data will serve as an important additional criterion for maintaining approval on the Eligible Training Provider list. As the State Board sets benchmarks for the providers on this list, the Midlands area will be prepared to assess provider performance, identify potential areas for improvement, and address any service gaps that may arise from provider removals.

- How the LWDB will target rural communities, including how the LWDB will use technology and other means to facilitate increased access to services provided through the SC Works delivery system;

The Midlands is actively seeking partnerships to enhance regional access points and deliver virtual services from the SC Works system as extensively as possible. We support the state's initiative to establish Connection Points aimed at broadening SC Works service delivery. To date, the Midlands area has implemented Connection Points at county libraries, the Midlands Fatherhood Coalition, and Brookland Lakeview Empowerment Center. In 2024, we facilitated the creation of the first Connection Point on a college campus at Benedict College.

Although our region is primarily regarded as urban, it does contain pockets of rural environments and areas that face significant barriers to accessing services. We concentrate our efforts on developing strategies to address these needs. Partnering with the State's Rural Initiative is a crucial first step in this process. Fairfield County is included in the initiative, and a regional coordinator, who is a former WIOA Career Advisor, operates out of the SC Works office in the County. The Midlands staff collaborates with the Rural staff

to identify the needs of adjacent rural areas in the Midlands, ensuring that resources are utilized effectively. Our target areas include rural opportunities in Fairfield County (beyond the town of Winnsboro), western Lexington County, eastern Richland County, as well as select downtown spots in Columbia.

In the meantime, several members of the Business Services Team have undergone training in job referrals, job search strategies, and the creation of resumes and cover letters. This training aims to promote the utilization of SC Works Online Services (SCWOS) as they assist their clients. Partners who have completed this training include Job Corps, the SC National Guard, Goodwill (specifically the Job Connection and SCSEP staff), Lexington County DSS, and various Adult Education partners. Although these locations are not officially designated access points, this initiative expands access to job referrals, thereby providing greater value to the businesses we serve.

The Midlands has actively embraced technology to enhance service delivery across various sectors. Since April 2020, all workshops have been conducted virtually and will continue in this format. Each month, new workshop topics are being introduced, and social media is employed to promote accessibility. Additionally, selected workshops are being edited and made available on YouTube. TABE is offered through a web-based platform to broaden service access. Under the WIOA framework, the Midlands area has notably increased customer access to Financial Literacy resources. Targeted workshops featuring representatives from professional organizations are still conducted within the Centers at no cost to job seekers. Furthermore, a comprehensive range of financial literacy curriculums is accessible online, allowing for reinforcement and deeper exploration of specific topics. These resources and training opportunities are made possible by the SC Works Midlands Centers, which annually host Cooperative Ministries' VITA program, providing free tax return preparation and filing services by trained professionals. Additional basic skills and occupational training is available to SC Works customers online through platforms such as Allison and the South Carolina Library. WIOA participants also benefit from access to LinkedIn Learning modules via the Equus Workforce Services contract. This online training program, led by industry experts, covers a range of subjects including business, software, and creative skills, with universal topics such as Team Building, Leadership, Conflict Resolution, and Customer Service included in the curriculum. The Midlands continues to pursue further online training opportunities to enhance technological integration and better serve the diverse needs of job seekers.

- How entities within the SC Works delivery system, including center operators and partners, will comply with the nondiscrimination provisions of WIOA and applicable provisions of the South Carolina Nondiscrimination Plan, the

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA) in regards to the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities; and

**All entities and partners involved in providing services within the SC Works Midlands system must agree to and sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that outlines how they will participate in the system. Attachment B of the MOU ensures that partners comply with the nondiscrimination provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Section 188.**

**To reinforce these commitments, the Midlands Area has designated an Equal Opportunity (EO) Officer who ensures compliance and offers assistance as needed. This includes meeting accessibility requirements set forth by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Compliance is achieved through monitoring, technical assistance, and, when necessary, training.**

**South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation has conducted an assessment of the comprehensive center to recommend the technology and accommodations needed to assist customers. The recommendations from this assessment have been reviewed, and necessary assistive technologies have been provided to ensure that the centers and their services are accessible. The software for the accessibility workstation in each of the Center's Resource Rooms was upgraded to most recent version in Program Year 2023 and staff regularly reviews the station for functionality and the software for needed upgrades.**

**To provide our customers with the highest quality of service and to address ongoing staff development, the Midlands Disability Advisory Committee collaborates with Mental Health America SC (MHA) to provide Mental Health First Aid training and certification to all SC Works staff through our relationship with our connection point, Brookland Lakeview Empowerment Center. MHA has provided additional staff training opportunities around stress management, compassion fatigue, and SAD to Wellness ensuring staff is prepared to recognize customers in crisis and help access services where necessary. The Committee is currently exploring additional training around discussing disabilities with employers.**

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

**Core partners WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth services along with Wagner-Peyser, Veterans, and Trade Adjustment Assistance will continue to co-locate within the SC Works Centers. Additional partners (full-time, part-time, and electronically linked) will be added to the collection of on-site**

partners as appropriate. Resource Sharing among SC Works Center partners is outlined in the common costs and methodology for cost allocation in the Midlands Resource Sharing Agreement.

Each Partner agrees to:

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

Additionally, each partner agrees to:

- Actively participate in the strategic planning process for the local SC Works system;
- Serve on the Business Services team and participate in industry or sector partnerships, as applicable;
- Participate in SC Works Partner meetings, as appropriate;
- Coordinate and integrate activities so that individuals seeking assistance will have access to information and services that lead to positive employment outcomes; and
- At a minimum, provide electronic access to programs, activities, and services:
  - Services provided through electronic means will supplement and not supplant those provided through the physical SC Works delivery system. The term "electronic" includes Web sites, social media, internet chat features, and telephone.

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

Lease/Rent	HVAC Maintenance
Utilities	Equipment Rental Expenses
Landscaping	Security
Janitorial & Cleaning Maintenance	Pest Control
Building Maintenance & Repairs	Supplies (public access & common space only)

To date, the optional costs have included:

- Front Desk Reception
- Phone/Internet access for Staff
- Shared Printer/Copier Staff access

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

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

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

The Midlands has developed its WIOA programs to provide Adult and Dislocated Worker participants with access to high-quality career services, education and training, and the necessary supportive services to secure in-demand, quality employment and maintain job retention.

Workforce center staff conducts a thorough objective assessment of each participant’s needs, which is crucial for making informed decisions regarding the services required by the customer. Service providers may offer additional comprehensive and specialized assessments of the skill levels and service needs of Adults and Dislocated



Workers, which can include tools such as WIN, TABE, My Next Move, and other diagnostic assessments. These evaluations are particularly vital for participants who are lower-skilled, less experienced, or those transitioning into new fields due to layoffs. An essential part of the assessment process is determining if the participant requires training services. Service providers will ensure that all participants meet the following training prerequisites:

- They are unlikely or unable to secure or retain employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency or offers wages comparable to, or higher than, their previous employment solely through career services;
- They require training services to obtain or sustain employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency or offers wages comparable to or exceeding their previous employment, through career services alone; and
- They possess the skills and qualifications to successfully engage in the chosen training program.

Upon completion of assessments, the service provider and the participant collaborate to create an individualized employment plan (IEP). This plan aims to identify employment objectives and the appropriate combination of services necessary for the participant to achieve their employment goals, including a list of eligible training providers along with relevant information.

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and through the workforce center system, the following employment and training activities will be provided:

- The Workforce Center will offer labor exchange services, encompassing job search and placement assistance, as well as labor market employment statistics. This includes delivering accurate information pertaining to local, regional, and national labor market areas, job vacancy listings, essential job skills for obtaining those vacancies, and insights into local in-demand occupations, including their earnings, skill requirements, and opportunities for advancement. The South Carolina Online System (SCWOS) is utilized to facilitate job search, placement assistance, and labor market information for Midlands Workforce Development Area (MWDA) participants.
- Information regarding in-demand industry sectors and occupations.
- Resources on nontraditional employment opportunities.
- Referrals to and coordination with other programs and services.
- Supportive services may be available for Adult and Dislocated Worker participants, along with appropriate referrals to additional agencies providing assistance, which

may include childcare, child support, legal aid, access to computers and/or the internet, and medical or child health assistance.

- When deemed appropriate, training services will be offered through an Individual Training Account (ITA). These training services must be aligned with in-demand employment opportunities in the local area and fall within the training clusters approved by the Midlands Workforce Development Board (MWDB).

The approved training clusters by the MWDB are as follows:

- Healthcare
- Transportation & Logistics
- Manufacturing
- Information Technology
- Business Services
- Construction

The process for selecting training services is designed to maximize customer choice, and training providers are chosen from the state's eligible training provider list. The MWDA intends to offer the following training opportunities:

- Occupational skills training
- Internships and work experiences linked to career paths
- On-the-job training (OJT)
- Incumbent worker training (IWT)
- Skills upgrading and retraining
- Entrepreneurial training
- Transitional jobs
- Job readiness training
- Adult education and literacy activities, including English language programs
- Customized training

3. A description of how the LWDB will coordinate workforce development activities carried out in the LWDA with statewide rapid response activities.

The coordination of rapid response activities in the Midlands has been enhanced by the standardized training and collaboration provided by SC DEW. The region will continue to utilize designated staff within the local area to offer necessary assistance at both in-person and virtual Group Orientations. The MWDB has consistently maintained a strong connection with the SCDEW Rapid Response team. We will continue to promote Rapid Response services as an effective strategy for layoff aversion and as a crucial first step towards engaging and re-employing affected workers.

The MWDB prioritizes having a representative present at all on-site Rapid Response events during layoffs, closures, or workforce reductions at local employer facilities. At these meetings and events, WIOA staff provides impacted employees with

information about career and training services available for eligible Dislocated Workers. The Midlands also conducts on-site certification and enrollment when the employer's preferences and schedule allow for this model. Moving forward, we anticipate a greater need to provide these services in a virtual environment and will explore platforms that can help facilitate this.

Furthermore, the Midlands values the use of Rapid Response-funded Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) as a layoff aversion tool and encourages local businesses to utilize these resources to enhance their viability as a proactive competitive step. We have found both strategies to be highly beneficial to both employers and the workforce. An additional benefit is the relationships fostered with the SC Manufacturing Extension Partnership and training providers. The area intends to continue supporting and promoting these activities as long as funding is available.

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

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

- City Year Columbia is part of the National City Year program, a national service initiative that brings together young adults from diverse backgrounds for a year of full-time community service. This program is a collaborative effort of AmeriCorps and the Corporation for National and Community Service. AmeriCorps volunteers work alongside Lexington School District Four and Richland School District One to support teachers in elementary and middle schools. They deliver supplementary instruction to students identified as needing additional support, helping to prepare them for college and career readiness. In addition to their service, AmeriCorps volunteers have opportunities to develop leadership skills and further their education. They can pursue an alternative teaching certification or a Master's degree in Divergent Learning through a partnership with Columbia College. Although the interface with the Midlands WIOA Youth program is limited due to differences in target groups, City Year's impact on the community is invaluable. WIOA regularly seeks opportunities to learn from City Year and collaborate where possible.
- Communities in Schools Midlands (CISM) is part of the national Communities in Schools network, which was founded in the 1970s by Bill Milliken. The organization aims to bring community resources into public schools so they can be easily accessed, coordinated, and held accountable. Focused on students living in poverty and those at risk of dropping out, CISM places a coordinator in schools to organize services and assist families in navigating these resources. The primary goal is to keep students in school and help them graduate by leveraging relationships and resources while using research evidence to achieve impactful results. CISM operates in targeted clusters of elementary through high schools

within Richland School District One and Lexington School District Two. The Midlands WIOA leadership has a longstanding relationship with this organization, although we do not share program participants. WIOA Board members and staff have served on the organization's Board of Directors and advisory committees to stay informed about emerging student needs and to facilitate connections to services and resources for students and their families.

- The JAG-SC program offers several sites in the Midlands area. JAG-SC is modeled after the DOL JAG Program and is a drop-out prevention program focused on academic success and career readiness skills. There are two in-school programs in operation (Swansea High School in Lexington County and C.A. Johnson High school in Richland County) The WIOA program receives referrals from the in-school programs' graduates to receive additional services when needed as the Midlands WIOA Youth program serves out-of-school participants.
- SkillsUSA is a national student organization on high school and post-secondary education campuses. The chapters integrate personal, workplace and technical skills into the academic curriculum. Students hone their hands-on skills in alignment with industry standards in more than 130 occupational areas and develop career-readiness skills (teamwork, communication, professionalism and leadership). Both Midlands Technical College and Lexington/Richland 5 School District are participating campuses. The Midlands Workforce Development Board encourages engagement through Board members and staff serving as judges in local and regional competitions, promoting community awareness of team successes and encouragement of program participants to get involved.
- The Midlands area is home to two middle colleges both housed on the campuses of Midlands Technical College. Richland School District One sponsors the Middle College on the Beltline campus while the Middle College on the Airport campus is open to all Midlands area high school students. The Middle College concept is aimed at giving underserved high school students the opportunity to access college courses and earn an associate degree or transferable college credits with no cost to students or their families. It offers college-focused academic programs and support, comprehensive student support, dynamic school and college partnerships and a continuous improvement culture. The Middle College National Consortium and the College and High School Alliance Coalition support this initiative. This alternate path to high school diploma combined with a post-secondary education focus allows our emerging workforce population to shorten the path to the workforce. Board staff and the WIOA Youth program coordinate with the Middle College for labor market information exchange, career awareness activities and post-secondary education/career/job fair activities.
- Although there are eight different school districts in the Midlands area, each with an Adult Education department, we have and continue to enjoy a close working relationship with the districts including Adult Education. The Adult Education departments have universally seen a shift in age demographics. As such, we have begun considering the Adult Education a youth service. Adult Education has a mandated Integrated Education and Training (IET) program that must meet the

definition and requirements set forth in WIOA and the final regulations as established by the Department of Education on August 19, 2016 in the Federal Register. IET is a service approach that provides adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement (§463.35). An IET program must include the following three components: adult education and literacy activities, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training (§463.36). In addition, as part of a career pathway (§463.37), the design of an IET program should support the local and state workforce development board plans as required under WIOA.

The Youth contractors in the Midlands area have established a strong track record of successfully delivering WIOA Youth services. Equus brings several decades of experience and a history of achievement across the United States, including over five years specifically in the Midlands region. Fairfield County has been running Youth workforce programs since the JTPA era and has demonstrated a successful model for workforce development through JTPA, Welfare-to-Work, WIA, and WIOA. The two contractors collaborate effectively to provide workforce services in the Midlands area.

The MWDA youth service providers are dedicated to delivering high-quality services to all youth and young adults. This initiative encompasses career exploration and guidance, ongoing support for educational achievement, and opportunities for skills training in high-demand industries and occupations. Currently, the Midlands Workforce Development Board has chosen to prioritize funding for the Midlands Youth program specifically for Out-of-School Youth aged 16 to 24 residing in Fairfield, Lexington, and Richland counties.

The MWDA is dedicated to ensuring that all fourteen (14) WIOA-required program elements are accessible to all eligible youth participants. Youth service providers will support young individuals in developing the academic and employability skills necessary for successful transitions into adulthood. To enhance services for youth with disabilities, the MWDA will conduct training sessions for youth service providers, focusing on various types of disabilities. This training will also address intake processes, including reasonable accommodations, disability etiquette, and strategies to encourage youth to disclose their disabilities. A strong emphasis will be placed on providing comprehensive programmatic access for youth with disabilities. Additionally, service providers will receive information about local disability programs and resources to facilitate successful outcomes.

The MWDA coordinates with various agencies that provide services in the Midlands Area, including those not covered under WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act). Currently, the MWDB partners with the following agencies and plans to collaborate with additional organizations:

- Local Department of Juvenile Justice and Juvenile Probation and Parole
- Columbia Housing Authority, which offers public housing assistance
- Adult Education and Continuing Education agencies, both public and private
- South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS) and South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS) for participant assistance and referrals
- South Carolina Youth Advocacy Program (SCYAP)
- WIOA Title II Adult Education providers
- South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs, South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department, as well as health and mental health providers
- Project SEARCH, a business-led program that facilitates school-to-work transitions for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Richland 1, Richland 2 and Lexington/Richland 5 school districts
- Job Corps referrals
- Other relevant youth initiatives, both public and private.

After determining eligibility, youth service providers will conduct a comprehensive objective assessment summary to identify the needs of each participant. This assessment will help both the participants and the youth service providers make informed decisions about the necessary services.

Youth service providers may also conduct additional specialized assessments to evaluate the skill levels and service needs of youth participants. These assessments may include career readiness evaluations, TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education), and other diagnostic testing tools. They are valuable in identifying deficiencies in basic skills, assessing soft skills, determining training needs, exploring career interests, and evaluating leadership skills.

Once the assessments are completed, the service provider and the participant will collaboratively develop a service strategy tailored to the participant's needs. This strategy will outline appropriate goals and objectives, as well as a suitable combination of services to help the youth achieve their education, training, and employment goals.

The MWDA youth service contractors either provide these services directly or refer participants in need to partner agencies for the fourteen (14) required program elements under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) that are available to eligible youth.

1. Tutoring, study skills training
2. Alternative secondary school services
3. Paid and unpaid work experiences
4. Occupational skill training

5. **Education, workforce preparation activities/training for specific occupations/cluster**
6. **Leadership development and community service**
7. **Supportive services**
8. **Adult mentoring**
9. **Follow-up services**
10. **Comprehensive guidance and counseling**
11. **Financial literacy education**
12. **Entrepreneurial skills training**
13. **Labor market and employment information**
14. **Preparation for and transition to postsecondary education and training**

5. A description of how the fourteen youth program elements are integrated in program design, including a description of partnerships which identifies the entities involved and the function(s) they are providing, and a description of formalized agreements in place for the provision of program elements not provided by the local program.

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

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

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

**(3) Paid and unpaid work experiences that have academic and occupational education as a component of the work experience, which may include the following types of work experiences and are included in the service provider menu of available services. Internships following classroom training are available to WIOA participants if not a part of the training provider's curriculum. On-the-Job training opportunities are**

available to WIOA youth throughout program participation as a compliment to other program services. Youth apprenticeships are available through the Midlands area collaboration with Apprenticeship Carolina and Midlands Technical College. Some opportunities are in collaboration with the education entities, while others are direct placements with local employers including Owen Steel, Michelin and Walker White. With the grants to Apprenticeship Carolina for apprenticeship expansion, the area continues to see increased opportunities. Create Opportunities has a growing number of Youth enrollees and by association the Apprenticeship model with an OJT component following the intense six-month classroom training. Paid work experience is available to WIOA participants both in summer and throughout the year.

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

**(11) Financial literacy education will be provided through workforce center staff provided workshops available through SC Works Center workshops and Wells Fargo Hands on Banking curriculum; In addition, students in the Adult Education program is provided financial literacy interwoven in the curriculum. For any in-school high-school students, financial literacy is interwoven their curriculum as well. High school freshmen are now required to take a financial literacy course to introduce finance basics to include checking/savings banking, responsibility credit card use and loans.**

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

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

**(14) Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training. WIOA works closely with program participants to prepare for advanced training. The Midlands is also fortunate to have TRIO programs on the MTC and USC campuses in the Midlands area. These programs offer outreach services to the public as part of the program recruitment process that assist in preparing youth participants for a successful transition to post-secondary education.**

**The Midlands area has enjoyed a long-standing collaborative relationship with both the Midlands Education and Business Alliance (MEBA) and the Midlands Regional**

Education Coordinator. In recent years, the local area has worked even more closely with the staff in both organizations to extend the collaboration to prepare youth across the area for their transition into post-secondary education and/or employment. We promote the exploration of the local school districts' Career and Technical Education programs with jointly sponsored marketing materials. Midlands staff has taken a more active role in the Midlands Youth Expo, hosted by MEBA, to talk to more than 4200 youth across the three county area about career paths and opportunities on the path. Midlands staff also attends MEBA's winter networking session with area school career advisors to raise awareness of the SC Works services, WIOA eligibility and career pathways to assist their guidance activities with the high school youth. The Regional Education Coordinator assisted with making a connection to the Midlands Middle College to provide additional support to the career guidance staff for high school seniors planning for post-graduation career opportunities.

6. If using the basic skills deficient definition contained in WIOA § 3(5)(B), describe the LWDA's policy that further defines how to determine if a youth is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English, at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society. (If the LWDA continues to use TABE for determining youth basic skills deficiency, a local policy is not required.)

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

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

In assessing basic skills, local programs must use assessment instruments that are valid and appropriate for the target population, and must provide reasonable accommodation in the assessment process, if necessary, for persons with disabilities. For purposes of basic skills assessment, local programs are not required to use a NRS-

approved assessment, nor are they required to determine an individual's grade level equivalent or educational functioning level (EFL), although use of these tools is permitted. Rather, local programs may use other formalized testing instruments designed to measure skills-related gains.

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

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

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

**The Midlands region has consistently prioritized the optimization and effective use of resources to explore innovative ways to serve its customers. The Board actively supports Business Services, Sector Partnerships, Career Pathways, Talent Pipeline Development, and Work-Based Learning by collaborating with local employers to provide valuable information to the Board, Midlands Youth Committee, and education and training partners. The Board is dedicated to fostering youth career development through strategies that include work-based learning, career exploration via short-term work experiences, internships, and On-the-Job Training. These work-based learning opportunities, combined with soft skills training and foundational as well as occupational education from our secondary and post-secondary partners, form an integral part of our youth-centric learning services. In delivering these services, we prioritize addressing educational barriers to employment, with WIOA staff working closely with participants. Our team ensures ongoing communication between educational programs and workforce activities while actively breaking down other barriers to success.**

Identifying funding options for participants is essential for addressing educational needs while optimizing available resources. For post-secondary education, MWDA staff assist participants in applying for federal and other financial aid that may be

accessible. When appropriate, staff will connect job seekers with Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) partner services for more specialized financial aid assistance. The Board has established long-standing partnerships with several local post-secondary institutions, including Midlands Technical College, as well as with local school districts' Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Adult Education programs. Board staff routinely collaborates with these groups through Board Committees, Partner meetings, Business Service Team meetings, and advisory groups formed by these educational entities. These collaborative groups explore ways to integrate services, leverage resources, and prevent duplication of efforts. Furthermore, in recent years, the Board has made a concerted effort to facilitate regular meetings and maintain contact between these two sectors. Workforce activities and investments will be designed and formulated in response to labor market and business demands. The Board will continue to utilize economic reports and feedback collected by the Business Services Team from local employers to guide the development of services and investments. Since secondary and post-secondary education providers are integral to the Board and Committee structure, information gathered is shared on a regular basis.

In an effort to explore further avenues for workforce development to enhance the secondary education system, the Midlands area launched a pilot project in 2023 in collaboration with a local charter school, Midlands Middle College. This initiative aimed to provide additional career exploration and readiness resources to a select group of high school seniors, complementing the existing guidance and career readiness staff. In 2024, the staff refined the hands-on career exploration sessions to extend their reach to the Adult Education programs in two school districts and one high school. The Adult Education series fostered closer collaboration among the entities, ensuring a seamless transition for students moving from secondary education into careers or post-secondary education.

8. A description of how the LWDB will coordinate the WIOA Title I workforce investment activities with the provision of transportation, childcare, and other appropriate supportive services in the LWDA.

**The Midlands Workforce Development Board has approved a set of policies aimed at removing barriers to employment through initiatives focused on transportation, childcare, and other supportive services within the Midlands WIOA program. These services are intended to help participants who are receiving WIOA assistance to secure and maintain employment while also enabling their participation in training and job-related activities. Throughout the program year, policies such as Supportive Services undergo regular evaluation to assess their effectiveness and are adjusted as necessary. In recent years, one notable update to the policy includes provisions for assistance with legal aid and technology support, encompassing hardware, software, and internet access.**

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

- Assistance with transportation;
- Support for childcare needs;
- Legal aid assistance;
- Provision of laptop computers and/or internet access;
- Help with uniforms or appropriate work attire, as well as essential work-related tools, including eyeglasses and protective eyewear;
- Support for educational expenses including testing, books, fees, school supplies, and other necessary items for students pursuing postsecondary education;
- Payment of fees related to employment and training applications, tests, and certifications.

Support services are offered on a case-by-case basis, contingent on available funding, when it is confirmed that the participant lacks sufficient resources and no other agency is able to provide assistance. These services are integrated into the individual employment plan and must be assessed each time an individual enrolls in an employment or educational program.

The Midlands envisions support services as a short-term solution; therefore, they are restricted in both duration and funding. Given the limited financial resources, it is the responsibility of the Program Managers to ensure that each participant has a comprehensive plan that includes provisions for meeting basic support needs, while also assisting the participant in identifying alternative sources of assistance to supplement the services provided.

Service providers are responsible for ensuring that an assessment is conducted to identify the supportive service needs of all participants who are eligible for and enrolled in WIOA programs. The MWDA policy outlines the coordination and referral of services to other entities to prevent the duplication of resources and to establish limits on the funding and duration of these services.

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

**The Midlands Area strategy for maximizing service coordination and delivery, while ensuring continuous improvement, combines a Center Operations Business Plan, Memorandums of Understanding, and a Partner Liaison, all aligned with the SC Works Standards. By clearly defining and assigning partner roles, responsibilities, and expectations, we ensure that the services provided to customers are focused and not duplicative.**

The Midlands operational plan for in-center services outlines a clear method for service delivery, enabling programs to operate in a complementary manner. The Operator's role within the Midlands SC Works system is to facilitate daily coordination

among partners and oversee the execution of the operational plan. The Operator achieves seamless service delivery by following guidance from the Midlands Workforce Development Board (MWDB) and adhering to the SC Works Standards.

In addition to on-demand meetings at the centers, we schedule formal quarterly meetings to provide partners with the latest information regarding services and center operations, as well as to conduct staff training. The operational plan is a dynamic document that is continually reviewed as part of the SC Works Center Certification process. The addition of a new One Stop Operator, service partners, and technological advancements drive this evolution.

As service delivery in the centers and the system changes, so do the roles of the involved parties. Through active engagement, coordination, and communication, we ensure there is no overlap in the Wagner-Peyser functions. Examples of this coordination include regular stand-up meetings, real-time communication with staff, and monthly training sessions that complement the informal daily interactions among center staff.

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

**The Midlands Workforce Development Board has a rich history of collaboration with the Adult Education departments across each school district in the region. We are committed to identifying opportunities to streamline service delivery and enhance our partnership for the benefit of our shared customers. Our communication efforts encompass the promotion of all Adult Education services available through the eight respective departments, both physically within the Center and via SC Works Midlands social media platforms. This aims to make skill enhancement opportunities accessible to each customer in their neighborhood.**

**The consortium of Adult Education Directors appoints a representative to the Midlands Workforce Development Board. This Director acts as a liaison between the two groups, facilitating the exchange of information and collaborative opportunities. Additionally, various Adult Education staff members participate in the Midlands Business Services Team and serve on the Board's standing committees. This participation helps ensure a smooth flow of information between the frontline staff at the SC Works Centers and the diverse Adult Education departments.**

**Furthermore, with a Board representative seated on the Midlands Youth Committee, we guarantee that Adult Education priorities and perspectives are effectively communicated within the Board, ensuring that relevant actions are relayed back to the Directors. This collaborative model continues to serve the Midlands Area and our partnership exceptionally well. By welcoming new partners and service providers, we**

**maintain the most effective mechanism for efficient coordination through open communication.**

**In accordance with the requirements outlined in Title II of WIOA, the Midlands Workforce Development Board employs a volunteer-based ad hoc review committee for the assessment of local applications. When the Midlands Area is due for a review of such applications, the MWDB Center Management/Planning Committee or the Board Chair will appoint a minimum of three volunteers from among the members to form a committee. This ad hoc committee is tasked with reviewing and evaluating the proposals based on the established criteria. This process aligns with the review mechanisms employed by MWDB staff for all competitive and application review procedures.**

**Twice a year, the WIOA programs convene with the Adult Education Directors to evaluate any evolving needs of the students, address necessary process changes, and discuss other shared projects or concerns. This collaboration enhances the existing communication channels and daily operations while focusing on the specific needs for collaboration.**

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

**The Midlands Area Equal Opportunity Coordinator is responsible for overseeing activities related to the provisions of WIOA § 188. This includes programmatic monitoring, data evaluation, staff training, and partnership development to ensure a comprehensive and effective outreach process. Each quarter, the EO Coordinator generates data reports from SCWOS to assess customer demographics under WIOA. By understanding the populations utilizing our services, we can identify which groups may require tailored outreach efforts. Additionally, the area utilizes the Chumra JobsEQ data system, which provides insights into the general population of our counties. This tool may help us identify further outreach opportunities.**

**The outreach mechanisms in the Midlands Area encompass social media, partner referrals, direct customer contact at our centers, and peer-to-peer referrals. Among these, social media and partner referrals have the most significant influence on our affirmative outreach efforts. For instance, when the Midlands chooses to conduct a social media campaign, the platform enables us to customize our audience approach. In these instances, we define parameters based on our geographic area and target individuals aged 18 and older, ensuring that all users of the platform receive equal information about our programs. Additionally, our network of partners allows us to broaden the reach of our service message. While organizations like SC Vocational**

Rehabilitation and Able SC focus specifically on individuals with disabilities, other partners such as SC DSS, Adult Education, Fast Forward, MIRCI, and Transitions offer targeted services without restricting them to any specific population.

These activities also include the Midlands Area Business Service Team and the Partner Team. The Business Services Team Lead and One-Stop Operator facilitate coordination among partner programs during meetings. By distributing information and inviting Subject Matter Experts as guest speakers, we foster a diverse approach. Our staff continually enhances their knowledge base to ensure it is relevant and welcoming to all customers accessing our system and services.

At the Board level, the Midlands engages non-appointed members as advisors to the standing committees. While this is most prominent with the Disabilities Committee, it applies to all committees and the full board. Furthermore, the Midlands Area has established policies and procedures to support our providers and partners.

These approaches create a variety of opportunities for us to ensure comprehensive outreach, providing equal access to individuals from diverse religious, racial, and ethnic backgrounds, those with limited English proficiency, individuals with disabilities, as well as people of different age groups and genders. Each new partnership is seen as a chance to enhance our affirmative outreach efforts.



## Section V: Operations and Compliance

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

**The Midlands PY24 MOU and IFA are included as an attachment.**

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

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

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

**The Midlands WDB successfully completed a competitive procurement for One-Stop Operator and WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs in the spring of 2024. These services were procured through an RFP issued in March 2024. The procurement process resulted in contracts with Equus Workforce Solutions and Fairfield County.**

**The area follows SC State procurement rules to award the grants. A comprehensive RFP 23-01 was issued on March 15, 2024 for Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Services and One-Stop Operator across all three service counties with responses due April 26, 2024. The solicitation included the award period, approximate funds available and the elements of the services solicited. The RFP was advertised in SCBO, posted on the MWDB and CMCOG websites, and notice was mailed to over 100 individuals and organizations who had requested to be on the notification list for any solicitations. Questions regarding the RFP were accepted until April 5, 2024, and all**

questions and answers were posted on the MWDB website on April 10, 2024. Four proposals were received and all were forwarded to the ad hoc Committee of the MWDB for review and scoring. The ad hoc Committee met on May 15, 2024, and forwarded their award recommendation to the Board. The Board reviewed and approved the Committee’s recommendation at the June 6, 2024 Board meeting. Notification letters were sent to the successful and unsuccessful bidders following the meeting. At the end of the appeal time expiration, staff began negotiations with the successful bidders to write the contract. Contracts resulting from the RFP commenced on July 1, 2024.

4. A description of agreed upon local performance goals.  
**WIOA Performance Measures for Program Year 2024 and 2025 are below.**

<b>WIOA TITLE I – ADULT</b>	<b>Program Year 2024 Goal</b>	<b>Program Year 2025 Goal</b>
<b>Employment Rate 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit</b>	<b>78.5%</b>	<b>78.5%</b>
<b>Employment Rate 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit</b>	<b>78.3%</b>	<b>78.3%</b>
<b>Median Earnings in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit</b>	<b>\$7300</b>	<b>\$7300</b>
<b>Credential Attainment Rate</b>	<b>67.5%</b>	<b>67.5%</b>
<b>Measurable Skill Gains</b>	<b>66.3%</b>	<b>66.3%</b>
<b>WIOA TITLE I – DISLOCATED WORKER</b>	<b>Program Year 2024 Goal</b>	<b>Program Year 2025 Goal</b>
<b>Employment Rate 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit</b>	<b>81.6%</b>	<b>82.0%</b>
<b>Employment Rate 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit</b>	<b>81.7%</b>	<b>81.7%</b>
<b>Median Earnings in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit</b>	<b>\$8949</b>	<b>\$8949</b>
<b>Credential Attainment Rate</b>	<b>65.8%</b>	<b>65.8%</b>
<b>Measurable Skill Gains</b>	<b>72.3%</b>	<b>72.3%</b>

<b>WIOA TITLE I – YOUTH</b>	<b>Program Year 2024 Goal</b>	<b>Program Year 2025 Goal</b>
<b>Education or Training Activities or Employment in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit</b>	<b>78.0%</b>	<b>78.5%</b>
<b>Education or Training Activities or Employment in the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit</b>	<b>78.9%</b>	<b>78.9%</b>
<b>Median Earnings in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit</b>	<b>\$5360</b>	<b>\$5360</b>
<b>Credential Attainment Rate</b>	<b>57.3%</b>	<b>57.9%</b>
<b>Measurable Skill Gains</b>	<b>60.8%</b>	<b>62.0%</b>

5. A description of actions the LWDB will take toward becoming or remaining a high-performing workforce area, including the following:

- The effectiveness and continuous improvement criteria the LWDB will implement to assess their one-stop centers;  
**The Midlands Area maintains a focus on developing business-friendly services while enhancing the integration of partner services. We also utilize the SC Works Center Standards for Job Seekers and Business Services to ensure consistency across all Centers within our local area, region, and state.**

**Several years ago, we initiated a feedback system to assess customer satisfaction in the Centers, and we will continue this approach as we implement the new statewide tool. Members of the MWDB are encouraged to use the services of and visit the SC Works Midlands Center. They regularly provide feedback to both the staff and each other regarding the effectiveness and satisfaction of these services. Additionally, some members have led focus groups to showcase the available services to other local businesses, encouraging greater participation.**

- A description of fiscal and program performance goals beyond the federal measures and how progress will be tracked and made publicly available;  
**In addition to the federal core performance measures, our organization is evaluated based on both fiscal and programmatic performance. Financially, we are mandated to obligate a minimum of 80% of available resources each year. Moreover, we must allocate at least 75% of our Youth funds to out-of-school youth, ensuring that a minimum of 20% is specifically directed toward work-based learning activities. Additionally, we face the requirement of utilizing at**

least 70% of all available program funds annually, with a focus on ensuring that at least 30% of these expenditures are dedicated to direct participant services.

On the programmatic side, we are required to serve at least 75% of participants who meet the Priority of Service criteria to fulfill the program requirements set by the state. To qualify for the Priority of Service definition, participants must be classified as low-income or possessing basic skills deficiencies, as detailed in State Instruction Letter 15-17 Change 3. The Midlands Workforce Development Board (MWDB) has also prioritized expanding services to a broader audience, enhancing work-based learning opportunities for all participants, and placing increased emphasis on technology-driven service delivery.

With these requirements in mind and a commitment to continuous improvement, the Midlands area has established specific goals for 2024 to systematically achieve and assess our success.

- Focus on Work-Based Learning with a minimum of 35 On-the-Job Training placements, 30 Youth Work Experience placements and 2 Youth Training Provider/College/Employer Tour;
- Increase Community Engagement with 2 Employer-Focused Outreach Events, 2 Rural-Focused Workshops per quarter, and 2 Rural Youth Outreach Events per quarter;
- Hold Job and Training Fair Events with a minimum of 1 large scale event per year, 1 Resource Fair and 3 Employment/Training Events; and
- Maintain the Social Media with a minimum 3 YouTube Channel videos per quarter;

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

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

The Midlands employs the Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) framework issued at the State level to allocate costs among partners. All partners share the expenses related to Center-specific operations, including rent, utilities, janitorial services, phone and internet access, as well as shared supplies like paper and ink. Additionally, there are optional service costs for Center staff, such as staff internet and phone services, and costs associated with center navigator/front-desk personnel. Partner costs are calculated based on the staff hours spent in the Center, utilizing a Full-time Equivalent (FTE) methodology. Some partners have a physical presence in the Center on a full or part-time basis, with some workspace sharing, while others participate virtually. Consequently, the FTE methodology was chosen by the partners as the most equitable approach for sharing infrastructure costs in relation to their proportional use and the relative benefits received.

Partners are invoiced quarterly, and the majority opt for cash payments. The only exception to this is the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce (SCDEW); its contribution to the depreciation cost for the SC Works Columbia is provided as an in-kind contribution. SCDEW owns the facility that accommodates the SC Works Columbia office. All other partner payments are made in cash.

The development of the IFA commences each spring in preparation for the upcoming Program Year. Partners convene, either in person or virtually, as a collective group each spring to initiate this process. Before the meeting, each partner submits their anticipated staffing needs for each Center to the MWDB staff, who then assess capacity and start drafting a proposed budget. The MWDB staff subsequently provide a preliminary budget for the Centers, utilizing actual costs from the first and second quarters of the previous year, along with any expected changes. They also include preliminary costs for each partner based on the FTE methodology and the anticipated staffing levels for each Center. During the meeting, the MWDB staff reviews the budget, addresses any questions regarding specific costs, and facilitates discussions among partners about potential adjustments to line item costs for negotiation purposes. Once all process and budget details are finalized, the MWDB staff prepares the final document for distribution and coordinates the collection of signatures.

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

The Center is managed by an operator funded through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), who oversees daily operations and coordinates the activities and needs of partner organizations. These partners provide their specific services at the SC Works Centers, either through in-person delivery, referrals, or technology-based methods. Each year, the services offered are determined as part of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) process. Individual partners retain supervisory responsibilities for their program staff within the Centers. Additionally, partners contribute to the Center's operational costs, which are divided based on full-time equivalent (FTE) employees and outlined in the annual partner MOU.

The shared costs include:

- Rent/annual depreciation
- Building and grounds maintenance
- Utilities
- Center security (optional)
- Front desk reception (optional)
- Staff internet and phone (optional)
- Internet and maintenance for resource room computers

- Commons supplies for the Center (such as Resource Room printers and ink)

**The partner-shared costs are billed quarterly.**

6. A description of how adult and dislocated worker training services will be provided through the use of individual training accounts (ITAs), including the following:
  - If contracts for training services will be used;  
**The Midlands Area service providers utilize voucher systems to issue vouchers for participant Individual Training Accounts. The area does not intend to issue contracts for full training classes at this time.**
  - How the use of training service contracts will be coordinated with the use of ITAs; and  
**The Midlands area utilizes Individual Training Accounts in conjunction with On-the-Job Training opportunities to deliver occupational skills training with WIOA funding.**
  - How the LWDB will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs regardless of how the training services are to be provided.  
**In the Midlands area, WIOA participants complete a customer selection form in conjunction with the WIOA Eligible Training Provider (ETP)/SCPATH System list as part of the training funding application process. The Midlands internal ETP list is currently arranged by cluster to assist the participants in identifying the individual training providers for a specific training. The arrangement of the list also assists management and the Business Services Team in identifying gaps that may exist in the training availability as employment requirements evolve.**
7. A description of the process used by the LWDB to provide a minimum 10 business day public comment period prior to submission of the plan, including an opportunity to have input into the development of the local plan, particularly for representatives of LWDA businesses, labor organizations, and institutions of education.

**A timetable and management plan has been established to ensure sufficient time for input and development of the Midlands Local (and Central Region) Plan as well as a 10-day public comment period. While the MWDB facilitated the development of the plan, we seek to create opportunities for community stakeholders and partners to shape the strategies described in the plan. We are seeking partner-created solutions for an economically self-sufficient community.**

**To ensure a wide distribution of the plan and to solicit input, the planning framework, drafts, and associated documents are hosted on our website, and notice (with links) was provided through social media outlets, SC Works Centers, and direct contact to county, city/town elected officials, economic developers, regional planners,**

representatives of community groups, and stakeholders including the local technical college and all eight school districts. The plan development was a discussion topic at MWDB and Committee meetings, the monthly partner meeting, and the area business services monthly team meeting. Membership and attendees of those groups include labor organizations, education (K-12, Adult Education, Midlands Technical College, and private-for-profit education providers), and business and industry leaders. Additionally, the Midlands Area Business Services Team was tapped to assist us in reaching business leaders and labor representatives. Each presentation outlined the elements of the plans, where to find a complete copy, and how to submit comments.

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

All SC Works staff have access to virtual connectivity tools, provided through center smart boards or issued laptops. This has enabled all services to be available in a virtual environment using either Google Meet or Zoom. Both platforms allow our customers to connect with staff, submit documents, and participate in services such as orientation workshops. Additionally, customers are being positively trained in technology use, which can lead to more virtual instruction and employment opportunities when face-to-face interviews aren't possible. WIOA staff assess digital literacy by asking open-ended questions about technology familiarity and use. While in-person enrollment practices have resumed, we are exploring the use of our COVID-era virtual enrollment process with Adult Education students to expedite their enrollment.

As we have resumed face-to-face services at SC Works Centers, virtual workshops continue to be a critical component of our offerings. The implementation of a virtual greeter kiosk system has streamlined customer check-in, as well as data management and analytics. Accurate reports are now available on demand, in contrast to the previous system that relied on paper sign-in sheets and manual tabulations.

The Midlands Area is continually searching for new technology to enhance the accessibility and efficiency of our services. We are particularly interested in virtual job fair systems and artificial intelligence-based systems, such as ERISS+SARA, which could work in conjunction with the SCWOS case management system. In general, the primary limitation we face regarding technology implementation and innovation is funding.

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

The Midlands policy and procedures prioritize providing individualized career services and training to recipients of public assistance, low-income individuals, those who are basic skills deficient, and covered individuals in the Adult program.

On March 1, 2024, the Midlands Workforce Development Board issued MWDA Instruction Letter PY-15-02, Change 8, which outlines the Midlands Adult Priority of Service Policy. To ensure comprehensive understanding of how these priority services will be implemented, training has been provided to the service providers in the Midlands area. During the eligibility certification process, applicants will be identified as covered individuals, low-income, recipients of public assistance, or basic skills deficient.

The Midlands Workforce Development Area will ensure compliance with the Adult Priority of Service Policy through ongoing program monitoring by board staff and required internal monitoring by service providers. The following list details the priority of service for individuals in the WIOA Adult Program:

**1st Priority - Eligible veterans and their spouses (eligible covered persons).**

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

- Low-income (as defined by WIOA Sec. 3(36)),
- Recipients of public assistance, or
- Basic skills deficient.

**3rd Priority - Eligible individuals (non-covered persons) who do not meet the above criteria may be enrolled on a case-by-case basis. Local policy restricts the enrollment of adults in WIOA who are not low-income, public assistance recipients, or basic skills deficient to no more than 25% of all adults registered in the current program year.**

Due to limited funding for Adult programs and an increase in layoffs, the Midlands Workforce Development Board has adjusted the priority levels for service to focus on the First and Second Priorities. Staff continues to monitor enrollment numbers and financial status to potentially extend services to additional eligible job seekers in the Adult program.

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

**The Midlands Workforce Development Board (MWDB) aims to develop targeted strategies and provide intensive services for individuals facing significant barriers to employment. Recognizing the critical need for such services, MWDB emphasizes efforts to facilitate the entry of these individuals into the labor force. Initiatives in this endeavor include expanding work-based learning opportunities, offering access to in-demand industry certifications, delivering job readiness training, and enhancing skill-building programs. Furthermore, the Board seeks to increase the participation of individuals with employment barriers, tailoring its services to support people with disabilities, veterans, out-of-school youth, young adults with limited work experience,**



and those who encounter language barriers, criminal justice involvement, or homelessness.

We recognize that many job seekers have characteristics that place them in more than one priority population. Coordination of services is an essential element of our services to break down barriers to employment through our network of providers. Individuals with barriers to employment include those individuals in one or more of the following:

- **Displaced homemakers – The MWDA dislocated worker program offers various services, collaborating with local women’s and family shelters to ensure virtual access to SC Works workshops, events, and job listings. Staff members periodically engage with residents through the organization’s speaker bureaus and provide training for organizational staff to enhance their ability to deliver virtual services and WIOA referrals, particularly once the residents’ housing situations have stabilized.**
- **Low-income individuals – Services provided by the MWDA adult or youth program; Close collaboration with DSS staff, Midlands Fatherhood Coalition and local food pantries for participant referrals to the SC Works Center and the WIOA program as appropriate.**
- **Individuals with disabilities – The Midlands Area is looking to establish partnerships aimed at enhancing outreach to individuals with disabilities and delivering WIOA career services. We are also seeking to provide additional services beyond WIOA through collaborations with organizations such as SC Vocational Rehabilitation (including VictorySC projects), SC Commission for the Blind, Able SC, MIRCI, and Work in Progress.**
- **Older individuals – Services provided by the MWDA and in conjunction with SCSEP Service Provider - Goodwill Industries of the Upstate/Midlands;**
- **Ex-offenders – Services provided by the MWDA and in conjunction with SC Department of Corrections, Alston Wilkes, Goodwill Industries of the Upstate/Midlands, Project 180, and ReEmerge;**
- **Homeless individuals – Services provided by the MWDA and in conjunction with His House, Oliver Gospel Mission, MIRCI, SC DEW’s Back to Work, Sistercare Inc., Fast Forward, Samaritan’s Well and Transitions;**
- **Youth in or aging out of the foster care - Services provided by the MWDA and in conjunction with Department of Social Services, SC Youth Advocate Program (SCYAP), and Epworth Children’s Home;**
- **English language learners – Services provided by the MWDA and in conjunction with area Adult Education Centers, English Program for Internationals (EPI) and Agape English Language;**
- **Within 2 years of exhausting TANF – Services provided by the MWDA and in conjunction with South Carolina Department of Social Services;**

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

11. A description of the LWDA's fiscal, programmatic, and equal opportunity/nondiscrimination monitoring process.

**Fiscal monitoring is performed annually by the finance staff of the Central Midlands Council of Governments. All sub-recipients are assessed for compliance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) as well as the specific terms and conditions of their grants. Typically, the process involves a random selection of invoices and transactions, accompanied by a verification of supporting documentation. Once the financial monitoring is complete, a detailed report is provided to the contract signatory, highlighting areas that require improvement. Contractors are then given 30 days to respond with an actionable plan.**

**Programmatic monitoring is conducted once each program year, typically in the fall. Areas of focus for the review include Certification, Case Notes, WIN, Career Assessments, Basic Skills Assessments, Objective Assessment, IEP, Resume, Training, MSG/Credential, Supportive Services, Work-Based Learning, and hard copy file documentation. Following the completion of monitoring, supervisors receive a comprehensive report detailing areas that require improvement. Contractors are allotted 30 days to respond with an action plan.**

**On a quarterly basis, the area conducts Data Validation monitoring to verify the presence of DOL-approved file documentation for the selected elements and participants, as determined randomly by software. The quarterly files are supplied by the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce and include participant files for review, along with the specific data elements to be examined.**

**In Program Year 2022, the area implemented monthly Intentional Monitoring sessions with front-line staff. These monthly reviews consist of open-ended discussions among Administrative and Case Management staff in small groups, with rotating topics each month. The topics addressed include a comprehensive review of caseloads for stage evaluation and file familiarity, identification of challenging cases or scenarios, highlights of successes or best practices, resume assessments, long-term participants, recent enrollments, unmet needs, job-ready next steps, and strategies for participants nearing training completion. The primary objectives of these monitoring sessions are twofold: to inform the Administrative staff about challenges, successes, and opportunities to enhance service delivery, and to provide a collaborative training environment for staff that supplements the monthly staff training meetings. While**

**these sessions have been temporarily suspended due to turnover among case management staff, they have been adapted to focus on training through a group staffing approach. The area plans to resume Intentional Monitoring once staffing stabilizes.**

12. Copies of current LWDB policies and definitions, including the following:

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

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

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

**Local Workforce Development Board Chair:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Local Grant Recipient Signatory Official:**

    D. Britt Poole      
Print Name

    Executive Director      
Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date