

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

Planning Region Name:

Central Region

Local Workforce Development Areas within the Planning Region:

Catawba, Lower Savannah, and Midlands

Local Workforce Development Area Administrators and Contact Information:

Catawba Workforce Development Area:

Amanda Baker, Administrator

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Lower Savannah Workforce Development Area:

André Anderson, Administrator

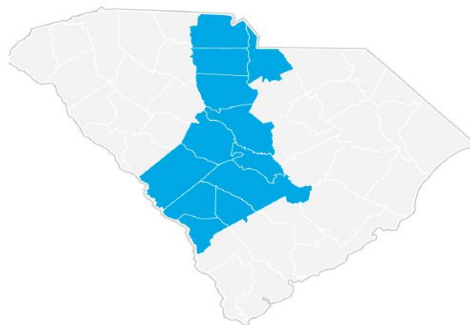
abanderson@lscog.org

Midlands Workforce Development Area:

Tammy Beagen, Administrator

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Central WIOA Regional Map



Attachment A: Regional Plan Requirements

The regional plan serves as an action plan to develop, align, and integrate service delivery strategies and resources among multiple local workforce development areas (LWDAs) within a region. Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) and chief elected officials (CEOs) in each planning region are required to engage in a regional planning process that results in the preparation and submission of a single regional plan. Regional plans must incorporate the local plans for each LWDA within the planning region. The following guiding principles must be considered priorities and included in responses throughout the document:

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

The regional plan must include the following:

1. A description of how each LWDA within the region was afforded the opportunity to participate in the regional planning process, along with a description of the planning process undertaken to produce the regional plan. The description must include how the CEOs and LWDBs were involved in the development of the plan.

Engagement of LWDAs in the Planning Process

The Central Workforce Region of South Carolina, encompassing Catawba, Lower Savannah, and Midlands Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs), implemented a structured and inclusive approach to ensure all LWDAs participated in the regional planning process:

- **Preliminary Outreach:** Each LWDA was invited to engage through an initial orientation session, where the purpose and scope of the regional planning process were explained.
- **Regular Meetings:** Bi-monthly planning meetings allowed LWDA directors and key staff to share insights, challenges, and priorities for their respective areas.
- **Stakeholder Surveys and Feedback Sessions:** Surveys were distributed to LWDA teams, partners, and service providers to capture diverse viewpoints on regional workforce needs and opportunities.

Regional Planning Process Overview

The planning process for the Central Workforce Region was comprehensive and collaborative:

- **Data Collection and Analysis:** The region conducted labor market analyses to identify trends in employment, industries, and workforce demographics. The data was shared with LWDAs to ensure informed contributions.
- **Joint Strategy Sessions:** Representatives from all LWDAs participated in facilitated sessions to discuss regional challenges, such as workforce shortages and industry demands, and identify shared strategies.
- **Drafting and Iteration:** A draft regional plan was developed and circulated among

all participating LWDAs for review and input. Feedback was incorporated to address local nuances while maintaining regional cohesion.

- **Public Comment Period:** After internal reviews, the draft plan was shared publicly for broader stakeholder input, ensuring transparency and inclusivity. That sharing included both the Economic Development community, SC Works Center partner organizations and the technical college partners within the Central Region.

Involvement of CEOs and LWDBs

Chief Elected Officials (CEOs):

- CEOs were actively involved throughout the process to align workforce development goals with broader economic development strategies.
- Regular briefings and consultations ensured their input shaped key priorities and strategies in the regional plan.
- CEOs were provided final copies of the plan, ensuring the plan addressed both local and regional needs.

Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs):

- LWDBs played a critical role by participating in strategy workshops and regional planning meetings.
- Board members contributed insights on sector-specific workforce needs, partnerships, and innovative solutions.
- LWDBs reviewed the draft plan during regular board meetings, offering feedback and ensuring alignment with local workforce plans.
- Lastly, Local Workforce Boards approved the Draft version of the Regional Plan

Outcomes of the Planning Process

The regional planning process successfully:

- Fostered collaboration among LWDAs, promoting shared goals and resource alignment.
- Engaged CEOs and LWDBs in shaping a comprehensive, data-driven regional workforce strategy.
- Resulted in a cohesive regional plan that supports workforce development priorities across the Central Workforce Region while addressing local challenges and opportunities.

2. 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;

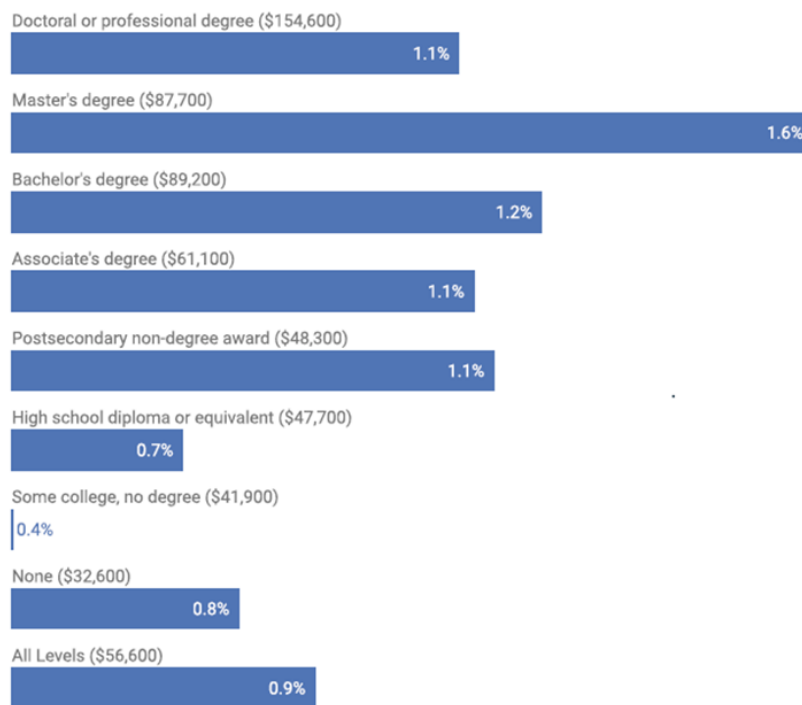
The Community Profile no longer includes educational requirement data so it not a simple task to analyze the requirements for credentialed levels for the region. However, expected growth rates for the region's occupations was available from SC Department of Employment and Workforce's Labor Market Information department. As outlined in the data below, employment is expected to grow

almost 1% over the next 10 years with the expected growth for education in post-secondary non-degree, two-year, four-year, Master and Doctoral/Professional degrees over 1.0% each. At the same time, employment with a high school diploma or less is not keeping pace with the projected employment growth. This indicates a priority of formalized training at all levels for the Central Region. All formalized training is above the expected growth with the largest growth at the Master's level. With the additional factors of rising education cost, the immediate need for increase labor participation and rising cost of living expenses, this growth projection seems to indicate an emphasis on a continuum of learning that may see job seeker stacking credentials for upward mobility and life-long learning.

Education Levels

Expected growth rates for occupations vary by the education and training required. While all employment in the Central WIOA is projected to grow 0.9% over the next ten years, occupations typically requiring a postgraduate degree are expected to grow 1.1% per year, those requiring a bachelor's degree are forecast to grow 1.2% per year, and occupations typically needing a 2-year degree or certificate are expected to grow 1.1% per year.

Annual Average Projected Job Growth by Education Levels



Source: JobsEQ®
Data as of 2024Q1

Employment by occupation data are estimates as of 2024Q1. Education levels of occupations are based on BLS assignments. Forecast employment growth uses national projections from the Bureau of Labor Statistics adapted for regional growth patterns.

After analyzing the employment needs related to credential levels, the next step is to identify the specific skills required by employers. According to the JobEQ report, job seekers need a combination of degrees, along with both soft skills (essential skills) and hard skills. This review reveals that employers in the region seek candidates who are technologically savvy, capable thinkers, and possess problem-solving abilities. They also need strong communication skills and leadership qualities. While technology skills can be taught relatively easily in a classroom setting, essential skills are more challenging to develop. A flexible

workforce that is open to continuous learning, evolving, and, most importantly, thinking critically must have these skills integrated into the technical curriculum. These skills should be practiced during work-based learning opportunities and supported through coaching in the workplace.

Knowledge and Skills Needed to Meet Employer Needs

Hard Skills:

- Technical proficiencies such as certifications, software, or equipment skills.

Soft Skills:

- Communication, problem solving, leadership, etc.

Credentials:

- Degrees, certifications, or credentials employers prioritize.
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- 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 chart below tracks the unemployment rate in the Central WIOA region compared to SC and the US, with key observations as of September 2024:

1. Current Unemployment Rate:

- The Central WIOA region's unemployment rate was 4.6%, higher than the national rate of 3.9% and slightly above SC's rate of 4.5%.

2. Year-Over-Year Increase:

- A significant increase occurred over the past year, with the Central WIOA region's unemployment rate rising from 2.8% in September 2023 to the current 4.6%.

3. Historical Trends:

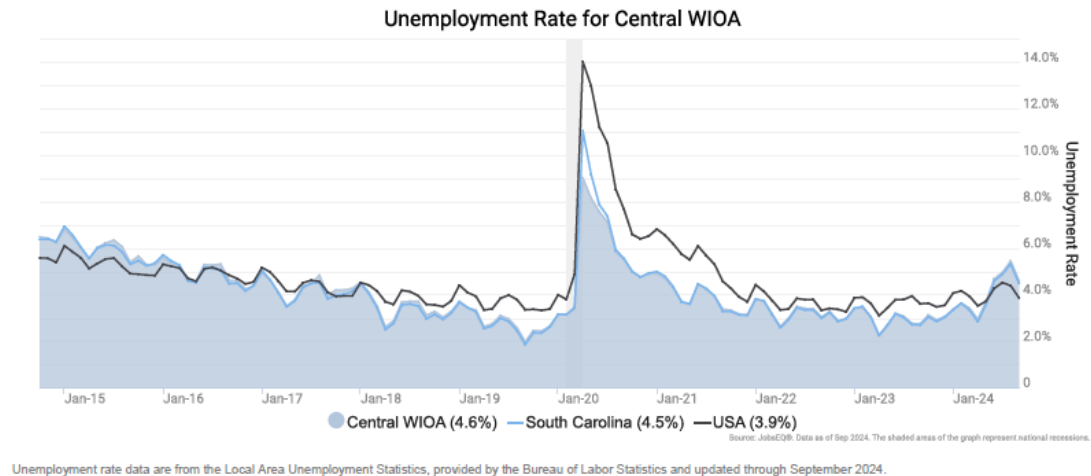
- The chart shows a decline in unemployment rates from 2015 until the peak during the pandemic (2020).
- After the spike in unemployment during COVID-19, rates trended downward but recently experienced a slight rise in 2024.

4. Comparison to State and National Rates:

- While the Central WIOA region generally tracked closely with South Carolina and the U.S., it now shows a slight divergence, with unemployment higher than both.
- While the reason for the divergence is not clear, the Region does have pockets of rural demographics. Several of the Counties in the Region have also been identified as Tier 3 and Tier 4 to underscore the need for additional supports for their workforce. The Region is fortunate to have area of robust employment, challenges with affordable housing, affordable childcare and transportation barriers continues to challenge the rural neighbors.

Unemployment Rate

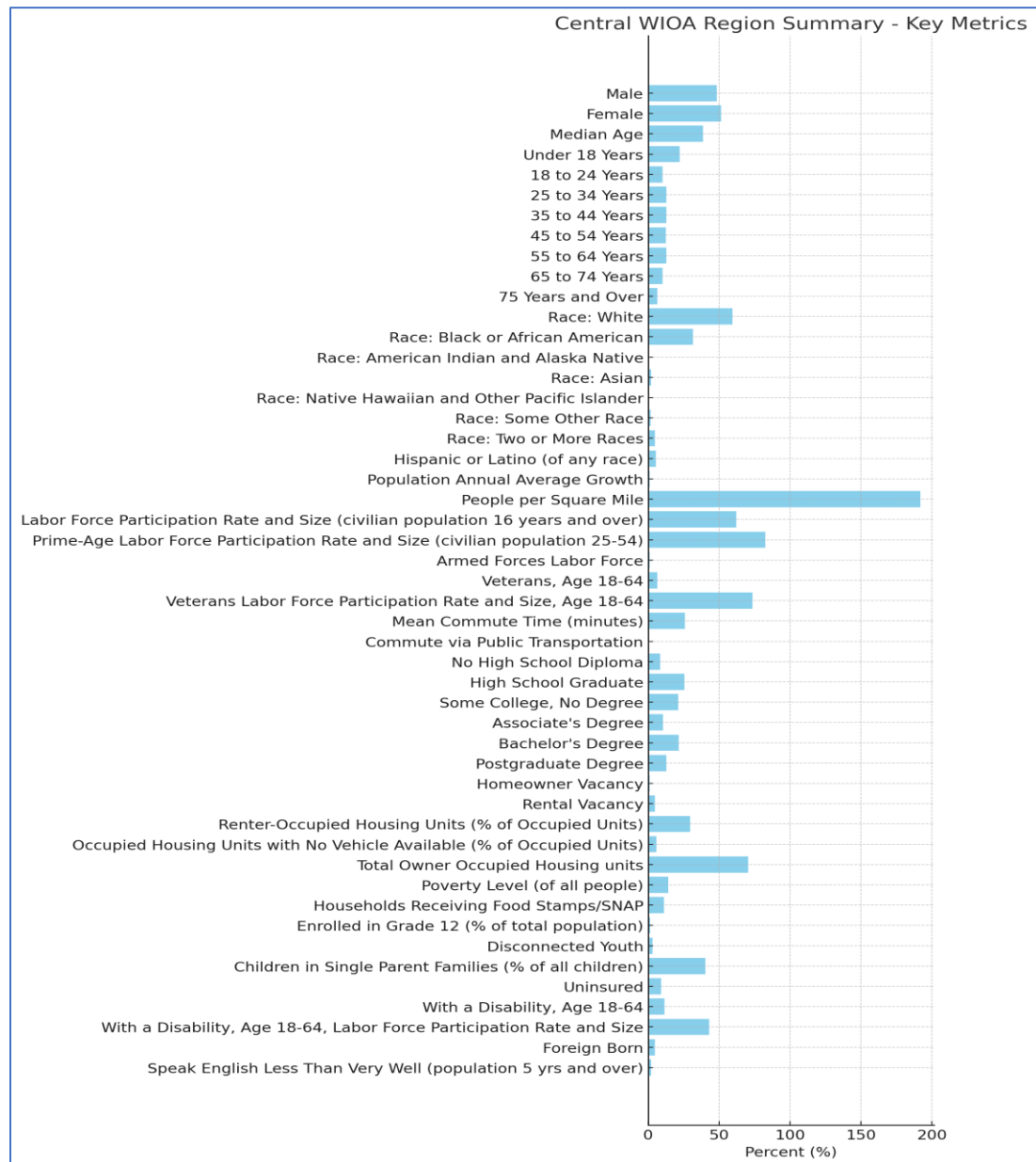
The unemployment rate for the Central WIOA was 4.6% as of September 2024. The regional unemployment rate was higher than the national rate of 3.9%. One year earlier, in September 2023, the unemployment rate in the Central WIOA was 2.8%.



The chart below highlights percentage-based data such as population demographics, economic metrics, educational attainment, housing, and social factors. The gender distribution is fairly balanced between males and females and the age distribution shows significant representation in the working-age population, particularly 25-44. Race and ethnicity are also diverse. The Region enjoys a notable Veteran's labor force participation which bolsters the Region's highly trained demographic who are still interested in working and not retiring. The worker commute time is highlighted as well as the small percentage commuting via public transportation. This indicates that most of the current workforce has access reliable transportation. Most of the Region's workforce has at least a high school diploma or equivalent which is important to note in order to keep with the requirements for the projected growth for the Region's jobs. Unfortunately, a smaller percentage holds associate, bachelor or post graduate degree. It will be important for the Region to advise members of the workforce of the impending skillset in the growth areas so they can add stackable credentials while working to maintain marketability in the evolving workforce.

The chart also indicates several vulnerable areas for the Region's workforce. The need to increase the education levels is only one. The Region shows very little inventory for housing, emphasizing the scarcity of affordable housing options. There is a significant number of households without a vehicle accessible. With nearly no public transportation in the Region, it will be difficult for unemployed individuals be prepared to enter the workforce without an intervention. Other indicators of workforce challenges include the number of single-parent families, uninsured populations, households receiving Food Stamps, and Individuals with Disabilities. The Region has significant

numbers of each of these categories. While it identifies groups to be added to the participant rate to fill vacancies, there are significant challenges to their success above and beyond the training and skills needed. These are the same opportunities identified with the Coordinating Council for Workforce Development's work. The Region will closely monitor the State-level work and align our goals and objectives with the breakdown of those same employment barriers.



Source: JobsEQ®

1. American Community Survey 2018-2022, unless noted otherwise
2. Median values for certain aggregate regions (such as MSAs) may be estimated as the weighted averages of the median values from the composing counties.
3. Disconnected Youth are 16-19-year old's who are (1) not in school, (2) not high school graduates, and (3) either unemployed or not in the labor force.
4. Census Population Estimate for 2023, annual average growth rate since 2013. Post-2019 data for Connecticut counties are imputed by Chmura.
5. The Census's method for calculating median house values changed with the 2022 data set, so pre-2022 values are not directly comparable with later data.

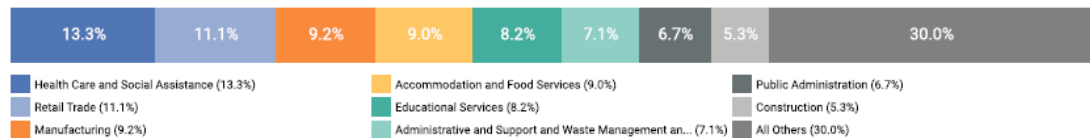
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The various charts outlining the growing industries and occupations highlight the critical jobs and sectors for the Region. Healthcare, Manufacturing and Retail are the stars of the Region's employer base. There are significant opportunities back-office, administrative roles to support these industries along with the Region's strong education and public sector employment base. The Region includes the Capital City of the State to house State and Federal government and numerous colleges and universities. All of these sectors involve a supply of administrative roles. As such the needs of the Region are diverse and supply a variety of opportunities for any job seeker to enter the workforce in area of interest to the individual. That said, the number of economic development announcements over the last several years have focused largely on manufacturing expansion and new facilities. The Region's workforce will need to be ready to continue to respond to the workforce needs of that sector.

Industry Snapshot

The largest sector in the Central WIOA is Health Care and Social Assistance, employing 88,096 workers. The next-largest sectors in the region are Retail Trade (73,017 workers) and Manufacturing (61,064). High location quotients (LQs) indicate sectors in which a region has high concentrations of employment compared to the national average. The sectors with the largest LQs in the region are Utilities (LQ = 1.57), Public Administration (1.45), and Finance and Insurance (1.21).

Total Workers for Central WIOA by Industry



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

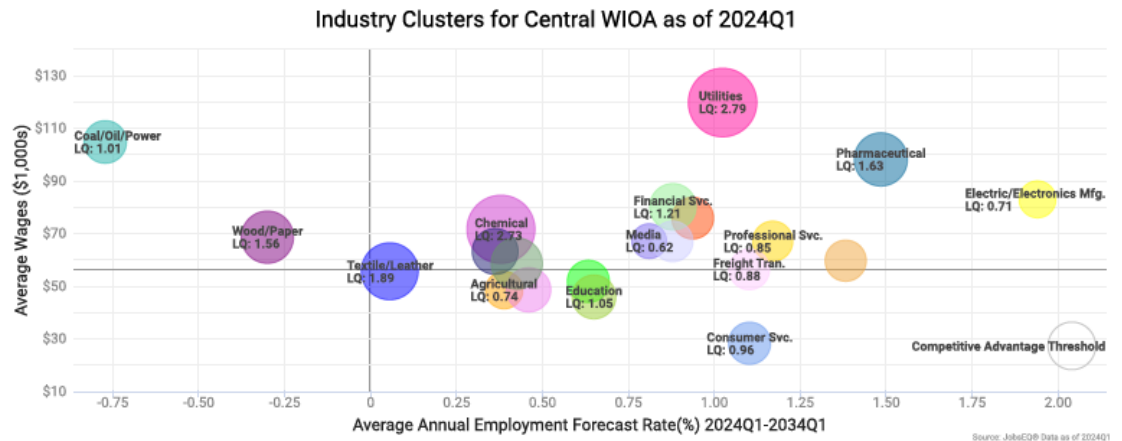
Employment data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and imputed where necessary. Data are updated through 2023Q4 with preliminary estimates updated to 2024Q1.

Sectors in the Central WIOA with the highest average wages per worker are Management of Companies and Enterprises (\$105,173), Utilities (\$103,693), and Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (\$88,454). Regional sectors with the best job growth (or most moderate job losses) over the last 5 years are Health Care and Social Assistance (+7,570 jobs), Transportation and Warehousing (+5,074), and Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (+3,738).

Over the next 5 years, employment in the Central WIOA is projected to expand by 29,231 jobs. The fastest growing sector in the region is expected to be Management of Companies and Enterprises with a +2.1% year-over-year rate of growth. The strongest forecast by number of jobs over this period is expected for Health Care and Social Assistance (+6,258 jobs), Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (+2,495), and Accommodation and Food Services (+2,477).

Industry Clusters

A cluster is a geographic concentration of interrelated industries or occupations. The industry cluster in the Central WIOA with the highest relative concentration is Utilities with a location quotient of 2.79. This cluster employs 8,466 workers in the region with an average wage of \$119,777. Employment in the Utilities cluster is projected to expand in the region about 1.0% per year over the next ten years.



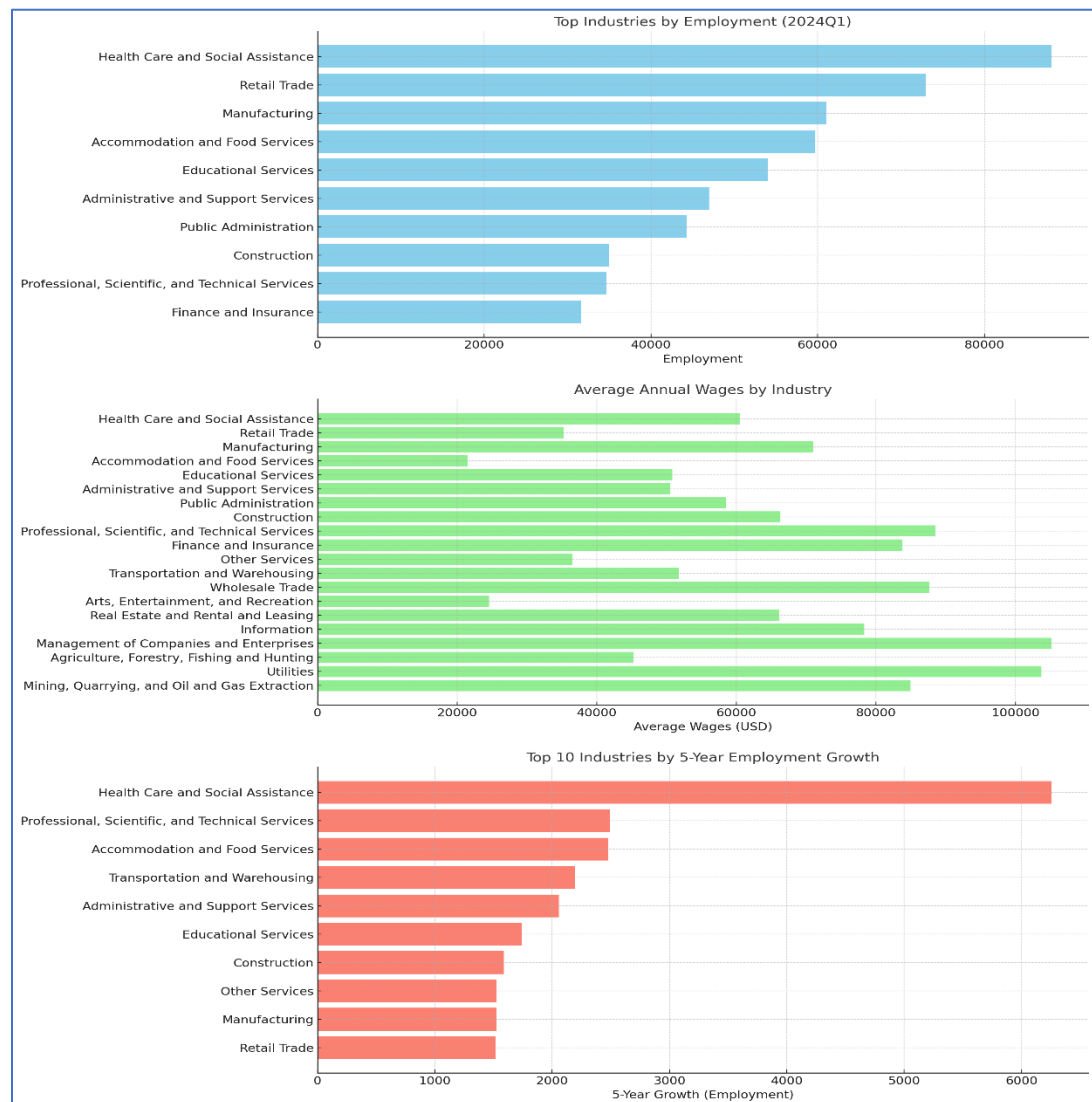
Location quotient and average wage data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, imputed where necessary, and updated through 2023Q4 with preliminary estimates updated to 2024Q1. Forecast employment growth uses national projections from the Bureau of Labor Statistics adapted for regional growth patterns.

Occupation Snapshot

The largest major occupation group in the Central WIOA is Office and Administrative Support Occupations, employing 87,561 workers. The next-largest occupation groups in the region are Sales and Related Occupations (62,433 workers) and Transportation and Material Moving Occupations (61,088). High location quotients (LQs) indicate occupation groups in which a region has high concentrations of employment compared to the national average. The major groups with the largest LQs in the region are Production Occupations (LQ = 1.18), Protective Service Occupations (1.18), and Office and Administrative Support Occupations (1.10).

Occupation groups in the Central WIOA with the highest average wages per worker are Management Occupations (\$117,100), Legal Occupations (\$100,900), and Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations (\$98,600). The unemployment rate in the region varied among the major groups from 0.8% among Legal Occupations to 5.0% among Transportation and Material Moving Occupations.

Over the next 5 years, the fastest growing occupation group in the Central region is expected to be Healthcare Support Occupations with a +1.8% year-over-year rate of growth. The strongest forecast by number of jobs over this period is expected for Transportation and Material Moving Occupations (+3,855 jobs) and Management Occupations (+2,640). Over the same period, the highest separation demand (occupation demand due to retirements and workers moving from one occupation to another) is expected in Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations (55,923 jobs) and Office and Administrative Support Occupations (49,737). This data reinforces the Central Region's selection of Healthcare and Transportation, Logistics, and Distribution as significant areas of workforce exploration and investment.



Source: JobsEQ®

Data as of 2024Q1

Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding.

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

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

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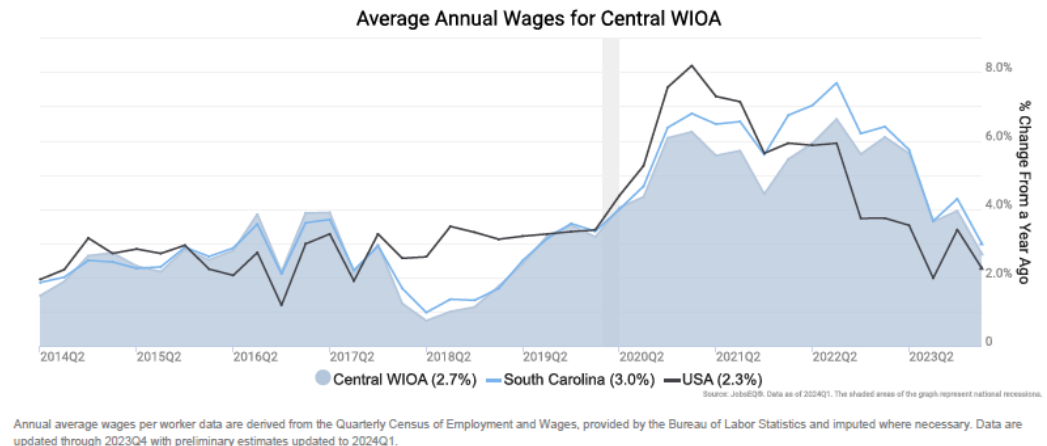
The last analysis examines the Region's wage trends. The chart below compares the Region's average wages to the National averages. Not surprising based on the growth, the Region has experienced in recent years, the wage is trending upward but also not surprising the area continues to lag behind the National averages. The South tends to enjoy a lower cost of living in general and the Central Region has several large areas of rural space which also has a lower cost of living. Those things combined lend itself to lower wages. Watching the balance of wages and the rising cost of living will be important to measure the value of the Region's growth for the workforce.

The chart below illustrates wage trends in the Central WIOA region compared to South Carolina and the United States, with data as of 2024 Q1:

1. **Current Average Wages:**
 - The average annual wage in the Central WIOA region was **\$56,451**, lower than the national average of **\$70,857**.
2. **Wage Growth:**
 - Wages in the region grew by **2.7%** over the past year, slightly below South Carolina's growth rate of **3.0%** but higher than the national rate of **2.3%**.
3. **Historical Trends:**
 - The chart shows fluctuations in wage growth over time, with periods of higher growth peaking around 2021, followed by a general decline in growth rates leading into 2024.
4. **Regional Comparison:**
 - While the Central WIOA region closely tracks South Carolina in terms of growth trends, it consistently remains below the national average in terms of wage levels.

Wage Trends

The average worker in the Central WIOA earned annual wages of \$56,451 as of 2024Q1. Average annual wages per worker increased 2.7% in the region over the preceding four quarters. For comparison purposes, annual average wages were \$70,857 in the nation as of 2024Q1.



- 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.
- The three local areas that make up the Central Region all have a wide range of training to meet the industry needs within their area and the region. Each area is also involved with various partners, initiatives, etc. to benefit area employers and job seekers, including those with barriers to employment. Some of those include:**
- **Registered Apprenticeship (Technical Colleges in each area/Apprenticeship Carolina)**

- The Catawba Priority Populations Committee has hosted several events for area employers to highlight services available for employees with disabilities. Partnering with Able SC for these events has been a great resource for area employers.
- The Catawba area also has partnerships with Foster Care for those aging out of the system at 18; Children's Attention Home; and Lancaster Children's Home. Strong relationships have been formed with area high school guidance counselors who refer those graduating without plans for further education, to SC Works for services.
- The Catawba Region continues to offer and improve the Job Endurance Training (JET), which is designed to facilitate the understanding of the core soft skills required to survive and thrive within the workplace. JET curriculum addresses the following soft skills concepts : Communication, Problem-Solving, Conflict Resolution, Teamwork, Integrity, and Time Management along with assessments to test the employee's knowledge. Activities to promote teamwork and capture attention are also included in the curriculum. Catawba expanded the program and offered it to employers to allow them to incorporate JET into their new hire and quality improvement/retention programs. By providing a JET Train the Trainer workshop, Catawba's Business Solutions Team allows not only the training but also provides the curriculum by USB drive and notebook so that each company can create their own courses.
- The Midlands area has focused on outreach to youth involved with the foster care system through collaboration with the MIRCI Youth Drop-in Center, regular meetings with Youth residing at Epworth Children's Home, the Nancy K Perry Shelter, and the Lexington County homeless youth shelter. The area has begun outreach to the other foster care facilities and added a representative from the SC Youth Advocacy Program to the local Board.
- The Lower Savannah Region has over the last five years made a significant investment in Business Services with a focus on increasing both Registered Apprenticeships as well as On-the-Job Training to aid both job seekers and employers with finding the talent to keep them globally competitive across all three funding streams. We continue to utilize this as marketing and outreach for employers and job seekers throughout the Central Region. One such example is a registered apprenticeship with the Aiken County Public School System. Through collaboration with Savannah River Site (SNS) and Aiken Technical College, Lower Savannah has built the foundation for a strong Apprenticeship Program on SRS affectionately known as the "The Site". The project has served over 135 co-enrolled WIOA participants participating in USDOL-registered apprenticeships on the SRS campus.
- The Lower Savannah Summer "Jumpstart" Program which focuses on soft-skills education and Work-based Learning (WBL) has proven very successful in addressing workforce concerns for our rising seniors (students moving from the 11th to the 12th grade). Jumpstart serves Youth participants across the 6-county region of Lower Savannah. The program has proven so successful that

it has won multiple innovation awards, and a modified version of the program is being considered not only for the Central Region but deployed statewide.

- In affiliation with the Aiken County Public Schools, the WIOA youth program continues to be a perennial sponsor and participant in the Aiken Works program hosted by the local school district. Aiken Works connects properly screened 9th through 12th graders with employers seeking to increase youth participation in the workforce. These students receive academic credit for successful participation and completion of the program.
- The Lower Savannah region is in the process of creating Memorandums of Understanding with Augusta University and Aiken Technical College to focus on Information Technology training that will not only benefit the Lower Savannah Region, but the entirety of the Central region job-seekers and employment organizations. This is particularly necessary with Augusta being named the Cyber-Security Headquarters for the United States.
- The Lower Savannah Workforce Development Area operates a Mobile SC Works Center to provide Workforce Development services in the harder-to-reach and mobility-challenged sections of the Central Region. The unit is outfitted with 10 computer stations with internet connectivity and is ADA-compliant. The unit is also used at employer-sponsored events/job fairs.
- Building Occupational Opportunities in the Midlands (BOOM) is a construction job-training program for high school students with disabilities. The program provides an innovative pathway for disabled students to learn skills while still in high school and find employment with local homebuilders. BOOM includes earning OSHA certification and basic skills training in the area of construction. BOOM also supports job readiness to include resume writing, interview skills, and career communications. The project wraps up with students meeting with employer interviews striving for completing students with at least one employment offer.
- 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 in the Midlands Area.
- South Carolina I-77 Alliance is a county-driven nonprofit economic development organization dedicated to positioning and marketing the five counties (Chester, Lancaster, York, Fairfield, and Richland) as world-class business locations to attract capital investment and high-quality jobs to the region.
- Midlands Tech BOOST (Better Occupational Outcomes with Simulation Training) grant created three short-term, stackable certificates in healthcare that take less than one year to complete utilizing high-tech simulators, 3D/virtual reality technology, and online course materials and demonstrations. MTC consulted directly with major healthcare employers, who expressed the need for significantly more entry-level workers.

- Midlands Youth Apprenticeship Program is a partnership between the Columbia Chamber, Midlands Technical College, and participating school districts. MYA is a career-education pathway that helps build a viable, local workforce for high-demand, hard-to-fill positions. It provides high school juniors and seniors the opportunity to get paid to learn as youth apprentices. Youth apprentices receive paid on-the-job training along with job-related education at MTC. The MYA Program also provides businesses and organizations the unique chance to meet qualified high-school students from a variety of fields and backgrounds who are already achieving at a high-level. In the 2025-2026, this program will also include a Surgical Technician Apprenticeship program in one school district.
- REEMERGE is a 6-12-month reintegration program that uses employment, coaching, education, and entrepreneurship. Program participants receive a curriculum of study in HVAC, industrial electrical, landscaping, or carpentry, as well as real work experience, classroom study, and professional coaching. Participants will learn life-long skills that will provide them with new and exciting opportunities allowing them to provide for their families and, equally important, keeping them from returning to prison.
- 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 to find their way through the barriers and into sustainable employment. Pathway Home is a project aimed specifically at correctional facilities working with pre and post-release clients transitioning into sustainable employment. Projects like these help returning citizens transition into productive work and help to fill the employment gaps in the area with a new pool of job seekers.

Additionally, the WIOA program links customers/job seekers to employment and training opportunities. The strengths of all of these emerging programs relate to the focus on in-demand employers and industries. This concentration has contributed to the growth of the regional economy and job development. The initiatives represent more opportunities than ever for entry into in-demand careers. If there is a weakness to these - or any such programs - it is related to a lack of connectivity and data sharing. With many programs, whether designed to assist job seekers or businesses, there are going to be requirements or eligibility elements that must be met. While there is often overlap between customers of these programs, there remains a difficulty in connecting them seamlessly. This can be directly related to individual program performance metrics or confidentiality requirements that do not allow for direct sharing. These competing interests can lead to a perceived silo or disconnect between organizations. Consistent funding for programs can also lead to an issue of continuity, and therefore service gaps.

A focus on priority populations, or those with barriers to employment, has gained notable traction within the Central Region, and many workforce programs carry a priority to serve these individuals. Examples above include linkages to programs

for individuals with disabilities (BOOM) and returning citizens (REEMERGE and Pathway Home). As opportunities arise, the Region seeks additional funds in the area to pilot and operate programs to serve target populations. The WIOA programs in the Central Region continue to seek to serve those that have barriers as prime customers, with an emphasis on partnerships to leverage the highest quality service to address or eliminate barriers.

3. A description of plans for the development and implementation or expansion of sector initiatives for in-demand industry sectors or occupations for the region. Regions should consider the following:

- Current in-demand industry sectors and occupations within the region;
The Central WIOA region reported a total employment of 660,439 in the first quarter of 2024, reflecting an average annual growth rate of 1.4% over the past decade. This rate is slightly above the national rate of 1.3%. The region's average wage was \$56,451 per worker, showing a 3.6% average annual increase over the last ten years, which closely aligns with the national growth rate of 3.7%. These figures indicate a strong economic performance in line with national trends.

The top occupation groups in the region include Office and Administrative Support (13.3%), Sales and Related (9.5%), Transportation and Material Moving (9.2%), and Food Preparation and Serving Related (8.6%). These occupational groups provide crucial support for the region's industry clusters. Having a common set of occupations across various industries contributes to more stable employment growth.

Health Care and Social Assistance are the leading industries, with an annual growth rate of 1.9% in employment, followed by Retail Trade and Manufacturing, which are both growing at an annual rate of 0.9%. These figures highlight a stable and gradually growing regional economy, with strong representation in support, service, and production-oriented roles.

Total - All Industries
Central WIOA – 2024Q1

EMPLOYMENT



660,439

Regional employment / 164,954,062 in the nation

1.4% ↑

Avg Ann % Change Last 10 Years / +1.3% in the U.S.



100.0%

% of Total Employment / 100.0% in the U.S.



WAGES



\$56,451

Avg Wages per Worker / \$70,857 in the nation

3.6% ↑

Avg Ann % Change Last 10 Years / +3.7% in the U.S.



TOP OCCUPATION GROUPS



TOP INDUSTRIES

Avg Ann % Change in Employment, Last 10 Years

1.9 % ↑



Health Care and Social Assistance

0.9 % ↑



Retail Trade

0.9 % ↑



Manufacturing

Healthcare, retail, and manufacturing continue to show strength in the Central Region. According to the snapshot below, the Health Care and Social Assistance sector leads in employment, with 88,096 jobs, an average annual wage of \$60,532, and a projected growth rate of 1.4%. Retail remains a significant source of employment opportunities, offering 73,017 jobs. However, it has a modest growth projection of 0.4% and lower average wages of \$35,228. Manufacturing rounds out the top employment sectors. Although its projected growth and number of employees lag behind those of healthcare, it offers the highest average wages among the three sectors. Approximately 61,064 workers are employed in manufacturing, with average wages of \$70,980 and a growth rate of 0.5%.

Several factors contribute to these higher wages: many manufacturing jobs are full-time, often include regular overtime, and typically pay well even at the entry level. In contrast, both healthcare and retail have lower entry-level wages, and a significant portion of their workforce works less than full-time hours.

Notably, the Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services sector stands out with the highest average wages at \$88,454 and matches healthcare with a growth rate of 1.4%, despite employing a smaller percentage of the workforce. Meanwhile, industries like Accommodation and Food Services have large employment numbers but offer low wages of \$21,536 and moderate growth at 0.8%.

Industry Snapshot

EMPLOYMENT



WAGES



2-Digit Industry	Empl	Avg Ann Wages	LQ	5yr History	Annual Demand	Forecast Ann Growth
Health Care and Social Assistance	88,096	\$60,532	0.90		9,868	1.4%
Retail Trade	73,017	\$35,228	1.12		10,344	0.4%
Manufacturing	61,064	\$70,980	1.16		6,467	0.5%
Accommodation and Food Services	59,728	\$21,536	1.04		11,062	0.8%
Educational Services	54,013	\$50,842	1.02		5,436	0.6%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	46,982	\$50,571	1.15		5,808	0.9%
Public Administration	44,275	\$58,515	1.45		4,268	0.4%
Construction	34,953	\$66,299	0.88		3,341	0.9%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	34,699	\$88,454	0.72		3,325	1.4%
Finance and Insurance	31,626	\$83,780	1.21		2,937	0.9%
Remaining Component Industries	131,984	\$68,401	0.87		15,686	1.0%
Total - All Industries	660,439	\$56,451	1.00		77,995	0.9%

💡 Employment is one of the broadest and most timely measures of a region's economy. Fluctuations in the number of jobs shed light on the health of an industry. A growing employment base creates more opportunities for regional residents and helps a region grow its population.

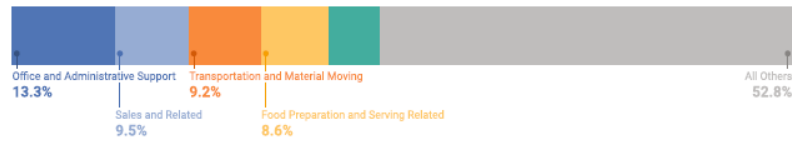
💡 Since wages and salaries generally compose the majority of a household's income, the annual average wages of a region affect its average household income, housing market, quality of life, and other socioeconomic indicators.

The staffing pattern for the Central WIOA region in the first quarter of 2024 shows that the local workforce is predominantly made up of support, service, and logistics roles. Office and Administrative Support occupations represent the largest group at 13.3%, followed by Sales and Related occupations at 9.5%, Transportation and Material Moving at 9.2%, and Food Preparation and Serving-Related roles at 8.6%.

Key occupations in the region include Retail Salespersons (17,034 employed), Fast Food and Counter Workers (16,363), and Customer Service Representatives (16,210). These positions typically offer relatively low average annual wages, all under \$40,000. In contrast, while there are fewer General and Operations Managers and Registered Nurses, they command significantly higher salaries, with averages of \$114,700 and \$83,100, respectively.

The data indicates a demand for both high- and low-wage jobs, with the highest annual demand found in Fast Food and Counter Workers (3,988 positions) and Cashiers (2,939 positions). Overall, the diverse occupational mix in the region supports flexibility and responsiveness to industry needs while highlighting the variability in wages related to job roles and skill levels.

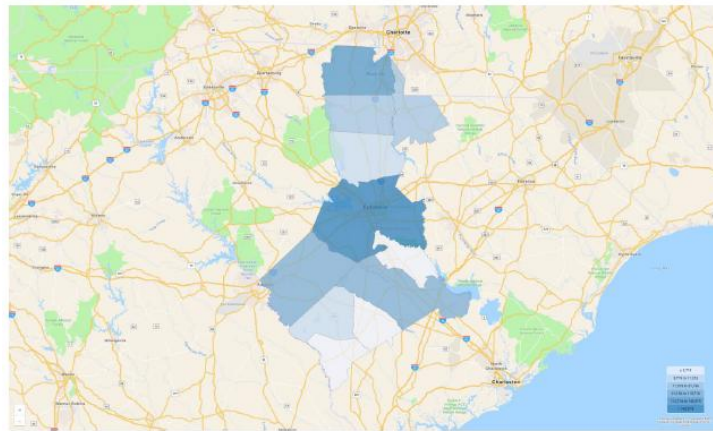
Staffing Pattern



6-digit Occupation	Empl	Avg Ann Wages	Annual Demand
Retail Salespersons	17,034	\$32,800	2,638
Fast Food and Counter Workers	16,363	\$26,500	3,988
Customer Service Representatives	16,210	\$39,100	2,192
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	16,070	\$37,900	2,378
Cashiers	15,575	\$26,700	2,939
General and Operations Managers	13,591	\$114,700	1,267
Registered Nurses	13,419	\$83,100	880
Office Clerks, General	11,745	\$38,300	1,393
Stockers and Order Fillers	11,372	\$35,300	2,083
Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	10,786	\$41,900	1,105
Remaining Component Occupations	518,275	\$68,100	59,959
Total	660,441		

💡 The mix of occupations points to the ability of a region to support an industry and its flexibility to adapt to future demand. Industry wages are a component of the cost of labor for regional employers.

Geographic Distribution



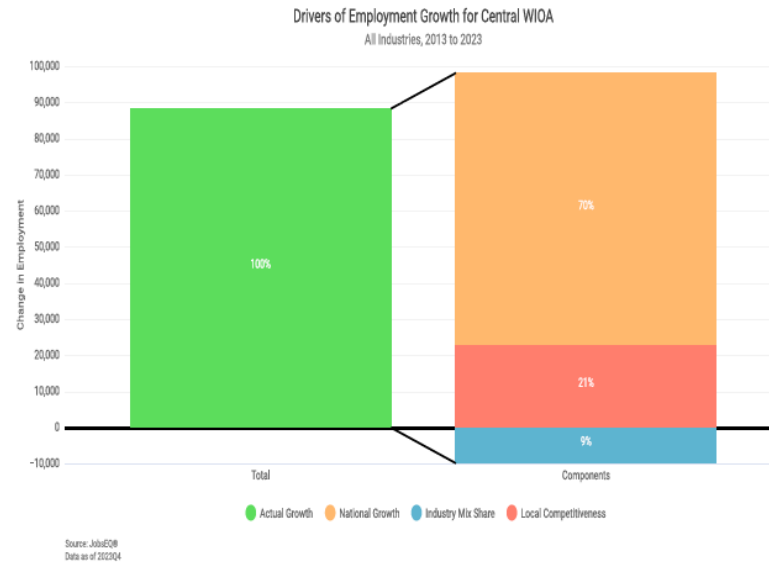
Region	Empl	Region	Empl
Richland County, South Carolina	238,278	Lancaster County, South Carolina	30,592
Lexington County, South Carolina	140,980	Chester County, South Carolina	11,106
York County, South Carolina	113,717	Fairfield County, South Carolina	6,589
Aiken County, South Carolina	70,402	Barnwell County, South Carolina	5,720
Orangeburg County, South Carolina	31,156	Calhoun County, South Carolina	5,171
		All Others	6,728

Source: JobGEM

💡 The geographic distribution of industry employment by place of work illustrates the impact on labor force demand and commuting patterns.

Drivers of Employment Growth

Over the ten years ending 2023, employment in Total - All Industries for the Central WIOA added 88,259 jobs. After adjusting for national growth during this period and industry mix share, the part of this employment change due to local competitiveness was a gain of 22,598 jobs—meaning this industry was more competitive than its national counterpart during this period.



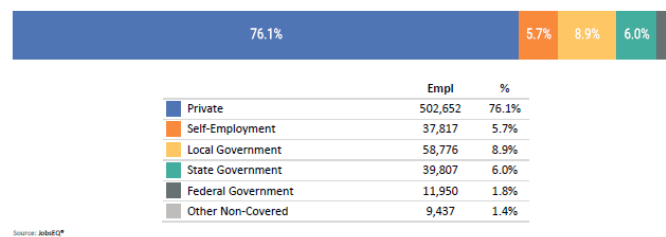
Shift-share analysis sheds light on the factors that drive regional employment growth in an industry. A positive change in local competitiveness indicates advantages that may be due to factors such as superior technology, management, and labor pool, etc.

National growth is due to the overall growth or contraction in the national economy. Industry mix share is the growth attributable to the specific industries examined (based on national industry growth patterns and the industry mix of the region).

Employment Distribution by Type

The table below shows the employment mix by ownership type for Total - All Industries for the Central WIOA. Four of these ownership types — federal, state, and local government and the private sector — together constitute "Covered Employment" (employment covered by the Unemployment Insurance programs of the United States and reported via the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages).

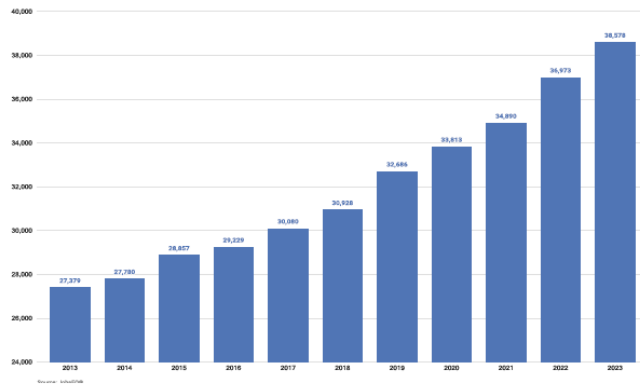
"Self-Employment" refers to unincorporated self-employment and represents workers whose primary job is self-employment (that is, these data do not include workers whose primary job is a wage-and-salary position that is supplemented with self-employment).



Strong entrepreneurial activity is indicative of growing industries. Using self-employment as a proxy for entrepreneurs, a higher share of self-employed individuals within a regional industry points to future growth.

Establishments

In 2023, there were 38,578 Total - All Industries establishments in the Central WIOA (per covered employment establishment counts), an increase from 27,379 establishments ten years earlier in 2013.

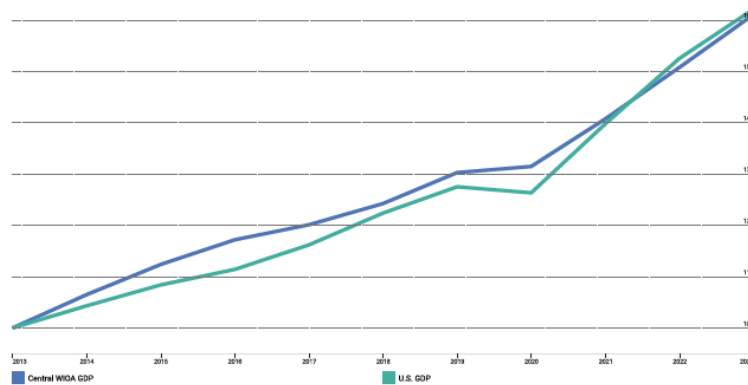


💡 New business formations are an important source of job creation in a regional economy, spurring innovation and competition, and driving productivity growth. Establishment data can provide an indicator of growth in businesses by counting each single location (such as a factory or a store) where business activity takes place, and with at least one employee.

GDP & Productivity

In 2023, Total - All Industries produced \$85 billion in GDP for the Central WIOA.

GDP: Indexed 2013 = 100



100.0 %

Industry Share of Total GDP /
100.0 % in the nation



4.9 % ↑

Avg Ann % Change Last 10 Yrs /
4.9 % in the nation



\$234k

Output per Worker /
\$296k in the nation



💡 Gross domestic product (GDP) is the most comprehensive measure of regional economic activity, and an industry's contribution to GDP is an important indicator of regional industry strength. It is a measure of total value-added to a regional economy in the form of labor income, proprietor's income, and business profits, among others. GDP values shown on this page are nominal GDP data.

💡 Growth in productivity (output per worker) leads to increases in wealth and higher average standards of living in a region.

Postsecondary Programs Linked to Total - All Industries

Program	Awards
Fortis College-Columbia	
Heating, Air Conditioning, Ventilation and Refrigeration Maintenance Technology/Technician	40
Kenneth Shuler School of Cosmetology-Columbia	
Aesthetician/Esthetician and Skin Care Specialist	83
Kenneth Shuler School of Cosmetology-Rock Hill	
Aesthetician/Esthetician and Skin Care Specialist	107
Midlands Technical College	
Heating, Air Conditioning, Ventilation and Refrigeration Maintenance Technology/Technician	55
Nursing Assistant/Aide and Patient Care Assistant/Aide	37
Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse	87
Orangeburg Calhoun Technical College	
Nursing Assistant/Aide and Patient Care Assistant/Aide	75
Southeastern Esthetics Institute	
Aesthetician/Esthetician and Skin Care Specialist	435
York Technical College	
Data Processing and Data Processing Technology/Technician	47
Nursing Assistant/Aide and Patient Care Assistant/Aide	62

Source: [JobsEQ®](#)

💡 The number of graduates from postsecondary programs in the region identifies the pipeline of future workers as well as the training capacity to support industry demand.

💡 Among postsecondary programs at schools located in the Central WIOA, the sampling above identifies those most linked to occupations relevant to Total - All Industries. For a complete list see JobsEQ®, <http://www.chmuraecon.com/jobseq>

- The status of regional collaboration in support of the sector initiatives;
Regional collaboration to support sector initiatives is a complex and ongoing process. Post-COVID, the region must restart the sector initiative that was previously underway. The region has endorsed an employer-run model focused on manufacturing based on the initial initiative. New champions have been identified, and a Steering Committee has been established to restart this effort with support from state board funds.

Although the Committee has limited time to work, it successfully gathered information on common concerns. Co-Chairs April Donley-Chester and Kevin Taylor were selected from the Steering Committee to continue the initiative after the facilitation funding expired. They identified apprenticeship growth and leadership training for front-line supervisors as initial priorities.

The first meeting with the Co-Chairs took place in April 2025. The meeting featured a presentation by ReTrain, which provided updates on its resources, as well as a discussion on apprenticeships led by another local employer. The Workforce Directors are available to support the Co-Chairs by identifying additional informational resources, networking opportunities, and any other needs the group may have. In turn, the Workforce Directors maintain commitment with the LinkedIn group for the initiative and the regular meetings. As additional financial resources become available, the region will collaborate to expand the Manufacturing group or venture into another sector.

- Current sector-based partnerships within the region;
The Manufacturing Sector-based partnership is the only formal one in the Central Region. That said there are additional sector initiatives in the Region,

some formal and some informal but they do not span the entire Region. Some examples of those partnerships include:

- ✓ Lower Savannah has a long history of the cyber-security partnership around the Savannah River Site. This initiative is particularly exciting because it engages multiple social level partners with the major employer to develop employment opportunities through Apprenticeship. Not only does this develop immediate opportunities for the workforce at SRS but it also increases awareness of opportunities in the IT field adjacent to cyber-security.
- ✓ Midlands has a years-long relationship with the SC Technical College Foundation, the Midlands Technical College Foundation, and Apprenticeship Carolina in the IT field with the Create Opportunity project. This engages non-traditional job seekers in the IT field through an intense classroom training period followed by an OJT placement with local employers to complete the apprenticeship.
- ✓ Midlands initiated a sector-approach to the water treatment field and has continued that work. The Steering Committee was made up of Richland County, Town of Lexington and the Saluda Water department to develop outreach materials and career progression pathways for wider use to explain the opportunities and pathway for the field. In addition to the work the Steering Committee produced, the outreach efforts were supported by a Pre-Apprenticeship project funded by DEW to engage high school students with a career through a part-time job with a water supplier.
- ✓ The Midlands area has also supported the Construction sector with Building Occupational Opportunities in the Midlands (BOOM). The project is a construction job-training program for high school students with disabilities. BOOM not only supports the K-12 system to identify workplace opportunities for the specialized population, it also provides the construction sector with a pipeline of entry-level employees who are ready to contribute right away.

Any one of these initiatives could be cultivated to wider expanse of employers and across the larger geographic area.

- Data-driven sector priorities within the region;
The recent Sector Strategy initiatives emphasize a strong demand for Manufacturing in the region, ranking third in demand after Retail. This focus prioritizes Manufacturing for our Sector Strategy efforts.

To identify in-demand occupations, we will use various data sources, including feedback from business members, SCWOS job listings, and O*NET services. This will help us navigate the diverse job titles within Manufacturing.

Current O*NET data shows entry-level opportunities in Manufacturing with growth rates classified as Much Faster and Faster than Average. Key positions include CNC Tool Programmers, Production Helpers, Maintenance Workers, and

Industrial Machine Mechanics.

The Central Region Sector Strategies were created using data-driven insights from Business Intelligence. A summary graphic illustrates opportunities in Manufacturing, Logistics/Transportation, and Healthcare.

Manufacturing was identified as the most beneficial entry point due to prevailing employment barriers. As the initiative expands into Logistics and Healthcare, ongoing data analysis will ensure alignment with market demand, with industry leaders determining key elements for evaluation.

- The extent of business involvement in current initiatives; and

The region was very pleased with the relaunch of the Manufacturing Sector partnership. Several years passed between the formation of the initial workgroup and the relaunch, resulting in none of the original team members remaining with their employers. Consequently, a full team had to be recruited for the relaunch.

The administration set goals for engagement by local area and created a target list to get started. Although it took some time, 13 companies from across the region ultimately agreed to participate on the Steering Committee. Plant management and HR professionals from the following companies signed on to support the relaunch and guided the initial discussions and agendas:

- AmbioPharma
- Archroma
- Chief Building
- Colite
- Cummins Meritor
- Element Electronics
- JTEKT
- Giti Tire
- Mekra Lange
- Michelin
- Southwood
- Starbucks Roasting
- Zeus

As funding for facilitator support came to an end, the committee members from Zeus and Southwood agreed to serve as co-chairs. They found the short engagement to be informative, engaging, and empowering. Additionally, they set a secondary goal to expand the partnership's reach to involve more manufacturers. Establishing a LinkedIn page for the group allowing for continual communication across any job changes and opportunity to reach out to peers in an easy business-friendly way.

- Potential public-private partnerships in the region to support sector strategies.

The relaunch of the Manufacturing Sector Partnership involved hosting a series of forums for business leaders in the Central region. These forums aimed to facilitate collaboration among peers in addressing the major issues that impact the competitiveness of their industry. They provided a platform where business leaders could connect with multiple public partners from education, workforce development, and economic development.

The purpose of the forums was to give public partners an accurate, real-time understanding of the needs within the target industry. By doing so, they established a coordinating body that aligns the programs and services of education, workforce development, and economic development partners with the requirements of the advanced manufacturing sector.

Zeus Industries, located in the Midlands and Lower Savannah regions, and Southwood Corporation from the Catawba region, led the initiative alongside several other companies. Both organizations are at the forefront of developing outreach methods to engage more regional companies and improve participation. We have the full support of the ecosystem in the Catawba region for our efforts.

There are also additional potential private-public partnerships as we roll out existing local initiatives into a larger geographic area, particularly in the Information Technology sector, such as cybersecurity at the Savannah River Site or full-stack developer projects in the Midlands. Furthermore, the transition of the Richland County Economic Development division into a public-private entity in July 2025 will likely introduce even more opportunities. The relaunch of the Manufacturing Sector Partnership involved hosting a series of forums for business leaders in the Central region. These forums aimed to facilitate collaboration among peers in addressing the major issues that impact the competitiveness of their industry. They provided a platform where business leaders could connect with multiple public partners from education, workforce, and economic development.

4. A description of regional service strategies that may be established as a result of the regionally coordinated delivery of services, including the use of cooperative service delivery agreements, when appropriate. Regions should address the following:
 - Existing service delivery strategies that will be expanded, streamlined, or eliminated;
 - New service strategies necessary to address regional education and training needs;
 - Strategies to address geographic advantages;
 - Approaches to improve services to individuals with disabilities, veterans, youth in or aged out of the foster care system, offenders, or other hard-to-serve populations;
 - Strategies to connect the unemployed with work-based learning opportunities;

and

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

Existing Service Delivery Strategies

- Strengthen collaboration with industries like Healthcare, Retail Trade, and Manufacturing to expand apprenticeship and on-the-job training opportunities.
- Enhance virtual service delivery platforms to improve access to career counseling, training, and job placement services. This will help the Central Region to focus on Technology as a tool to enhance workforce outcomes across the region.
- Streamline:
 - Communication across the Central Region to strengthen service delivery and promote best practices involving Catawba, Central Midlands and Lower Savannah Workforce Regions.
 - Consolidate overlapping programs across partners to simplify access and reduce administrative barriers.
 - Use a centralized data-sharing system to improve case management among core partners.
- Eliminate:
 - Barriers to internal SC Works communication within the local workforce area and across the Central Region to enhance internal SC Works Center operations and create a greater level of continuity in our service delivery model.
 - Discontinue underperforming programs or those with low enrollment and reallocate resources to high-demand industries like Professional Services or Construction.

New Service Strategies

- Develop training aligned with emerging skills in sectors like Transportation and Warehousing and Technology (e.g., logistics and IT certifications).
- Partner with local educational institutions to create micro-credential programs for in-demand technical skills.
- Address soft skills gaps by incorporating employability workshops into job-readiness programs.

Strategies to Address Geographic Advantages

- Leverage the region's proximity to major transportation hubs to promote careers in Transportation, Warehousing, and Distribution.
- Partner with regional economic development councils to attract businesses to underserved areas, creating localized training pipelines.
- Expand broadband access to rural areas to support remote work opportunities and online training.

Approaches to Improve Services for Hard-to-Serve Populations

- Individuals with Disabilities:
- Expand partnerships with vocational rehabilitation services to create more inclusive training and job placement programs.
- Veterans:

- Increase veteran-specific hiring fairs and partnerships with employers offering veteran preferences.
- Seek to increase Veteran affiliated persons on Local Workforce Board to increase veteran messaging and interaction across the Central Region
- Foster Youth:
 - Offer mentorship programs and financial incentives for employers hiring youth aged out of the foster care system.
 - Create a track of Youth Enrollment that takes into account the unique circumstances involve Foster Youth (ex. Enhanced soft-skills training, financial literacy, housing referrals, facilitation/retrieval of necessary workplace documentation, etc.)
- Offenders:
 - Implement re-entry programs focused on certifications in trades such as construction and manufacturing.
- General Hard-to-Serve Populations:
 - Increase outreach through community organizations to connect individuals with wraparound services like housing, transportation, and childcare.

Strategies to Connect the Unemployed with Work-Based Learning Opportunities

- Expand subsidized internships, apprenticeships, and transitional job programs, particularly in growth sectors such as Healthcare, Construction, and Transportation.
- Incentivize employers to offer work-based learning by providing tax credits or wage reimbursement.
- Integrate career coaching with work-based learning placements to improve retention and skill development.

Strategies to Integrate Existing Regional Planning Efforts

- Align workforce development goals with regional economic development plans to ensure coordinated efforts among business, education, and government partners.
- Develop a shared vision and performance metrics among core partners to track progress and align resource allocation.
- Hold regular cross-agency planning sessions to avoid duplication of efforts and identify shared priorities.

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

- Current or proposed resource leveraging agreements and
- The establishment of a process to evaluate cost sharing arrangements.

Current or Proposed Resource Leveraging Agreements

Existing Agreements:

- **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Core Partners:**
 - Leverage funding and resources from Title I (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs), Title II (Adult Education), Title III (Wagner-Peyser Employment Services), and Title IV (Vocational Rehabilitation Services).

- Utilize shared funding for job fairs, recruitment events, and workforce training initiatives.
- **Industry-Specific Partnerships:**
 - Collaborate with healthcare systems and manufacturing companies to co-fund apprenticeship programs and skills training.
 - Partnerships with transportation and logistics companies to create subsidized certifications in trucking, logistics, and supply chain management.

Proposed Resource Leveraging Agreements

- **Education-Workforce Collaboration:**
 - Partner with technical colleges and universities to pool resources for creating career-specific credentialing programs tailored to local industry needs.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:**
 - Engage regional employers to co-invest in work-based learning programs, such as internships and on-the-job training.
 - Utilize grants and matching funds from organizations like the South Carolina Department of Commerce and private foundations.
- **Shared Facilities and Technology:**
 - Co-locate career center offices with partner agencies to reduce overhead costs and improve accessibility.
 - Develop shared digital platforms for virtual job coaching, training, and application systems to minimize duplication of effort.
- **Sharing/Co-engagement of Workforce Development staff/Board:**
 - Leveraging funds to maintain and sustain Workforce Development support staff (ex. Business Services Staff/Teams, SCWOS Coordinators, etc.) This is a current shared cost as well as a potential future. Currently, Catawba and Midlands share accounting and HR staff of our mutual service provider. Additionally, Lower Savannah and Midlands share Administrative staff in the form of a SCWOS Coordinator. As staff expertise continues to be a challenge and resources are diminished, the areas will consider additional shared staffing opportunities.
 - Combined trainings of staff to create realized cost savings across the Central Region
 - Create a minimum of 2 combined trainings/meetings for local area Workforce Boards (1 for Officers and 1 for full Board members) to increase networking opportunities and defray the cost of providing 3 groups of Board Members the same training that all would benefit from receiving. These trainings/meetings would be facilitated both in-person and over virtual platforms to enhance participation across the region.

Establishment of a Process to Evaluate Cost-Sharing Arrangements

1. Define Shared Costs

- Identify cost categories eligible for sharing (e.g., staffing, facilities, technology, training resources).

- Separate direct costs (e.g., program-specific) from infrastructure costs (e.g., administrative overhead).
2. **Create a Cost Allocation Framework**
 - Use a **proportional allocation model** based on service usage, staffing levels, or enrollment data to determine partner contributions.
 - Establish a written agreement specifying the methodology, partner roles, and timelines.
 3. **Implement Transparent Reporting**
 - Develop a **quarterly reporting system** to track partner contributions, expenses, and resource utilization.
 - Use shared dashboards for real-time monitoring and data-driven adjustments.
 4. **Regular Evaluation Process**
 - Schedule annual reviews of cost-sharing arrangements to assess:
 - Alignment with workforce priorities.
 - Effectiveness of funding utilization.
 - Equity among partners based on services rendered and outcomes achieved.
 - Make recommendations for adjustments or renegotiations based on performance data and feedback from partners.
 5. **Continuous Improvement**
 - Engage an external auditor or mediator periodically to ensure transparency and compliance with federal/state funding guidelines.
 - Facilitate biannual meetings among core partners to discuss cost-sharing challenges, opportunities, and process improvements.
- This systematic approach ensures that resource leveraging is optimized, cost-sharing is equitable, and all partners are held accountable to their commitments.
6. A description of how transportation, access to childcare, or other supportive services are coordinated within the region, as appropriate. Regions should address the following:
 - How the provision of transportation or other supportive services could be enhanced regionally;
 - What organizations currently provide or could provide supportive services; and
 - Establishing a process to promote coordination of the delivery of supportive services.

To address the coordination of transportation, childcare, and other supportive services within the region, it is essential to focus on the current landscape and opportunities for improvement. Below is an outline that can help address the key aspects:

Supportive Services Coordination in the Region

Current Landscape

Transportation, access to childcare, and other supportive services are critical in addressing barriers to workforce participation. In the region, these services are provided by a combination of local transit authorities, community-based organizations, and nonprofit agencies. However, gaps in accessibility, funding, and coordination between service providers remain challenges.

Enhancement of Supportive Services Regionally

- **Integrated Planning:** Develop regional partnerships between transportation authorities, childcare providers, and workforce development agencies to align services with workforce demands.
- **Resource Mapping:** Create a comprehensive inventory of existing supportive services and identify areas with insufficient coverage or underutilized resources.
- **Innovative Solutions:** Explore creative solutions, such as:
 - Employer-sponsored transportation programs.
 - Micro-transit or ride-sharing partnerships to address last-mile challenges.
 - Flexible childcare arrangements, such as on-demand or evening care, to support non-traditional work hours.

Current Providers

- **Transportation:** Public transit systems, rideshare companies, and regional transportation authorities.
- **Childcare:** Licensed childcare centers, family childcare providers, and Early Head Start/Head Start programs.
- **Other Supportive Services:** Nonprofits and community action agencies offering housing assistance, mental health services, and financial support.

Potential collaborators:

- Employers willing to subsidize or co-fund supportive services.
- Regional planning councils to integrate supportive services into development plans.
- Educational institutions providing wraparound services for families of students.

Promoting Coordination of Supportive Services

To enhance coordination and efficiency:

- **Establish a Regional Advisory Group:** Convene stakeholders, including workforce boards, transportation agencies, childcare providers, and community organizations, to guide decision-making and share best practices.
- **Develop a Referral System:** Create a centralized referral and case management system to connect individuals to supportive services quickly and effectively.
- **Shared Funding Models:** Explore joint funding opportunities, such as federal grants, to pool resources for region-wide initiatives.
- **Monitor and Evaluate:** Implement performance metrics to track usage, identify gaps, and assess the impact of coordinated services on workforce outcomes.

By fostering collaboration among stakeholders and leveraging innovative approaches, the region can reduce workforce participation barriers and promote economic mobility.

7. A description of how workforce development services are coordinated with economic development services and providers within the region. Regions should address the

following:

- Current economic development organizations engaged in regional planning and
- Education and training providers involved with economic development.

Coordination of Workforce Development and Economic Development Services

Current Economic Development Organizations Engaged in Regional Planning

The region benefits from the active participation of several economic development organizations that play a critical role in shaping regional planning initiatives. These organizations typically include:

- **Regional Economic Development Agencies:** Focused on business recruitment, retention, and expansion to drive economic growth.
- **Chambers of Commerce:** Advocating for local businesses and workforce needs while promoting economic policies that support growth.
- **Regional Councils of Governments (COGs):** Offering planning and grant administration services for economic and community development projects.
- **State Economic Development Departments:** Providing resources, incentives, and strategic initiatives to attract new industries to the region.

These organizations collaborate on strategic initiatives such as business park development, industry cluster analysis, and infrastructure projects, which inform workforce priorities.

Education and Training Providers Involved with Economic Development

Education and training providers play a pivotal role in aligning workforce capabilities with the needs of local industries. Key contributors include:

1. **Community Colleges:** Delivering customized training programs for high-demand industries, often in partnership with employers and economic developers.
2. **Technical Colleges:** Offering skills-based certifications in areas like advanced manufacturing, IT, healthcare, and skilled trades.
3. **Universities:** Supporting economic development through research partnerships, innovation hubs, and talent pipelines for high-skill industries.
4. **K-12 School Systems:** Implementing career and technical education (CTE) programs to prepare students for future workforce demands.
5. **Workforce Training Providers:** Operating in coordination with workforce boards to offer sector-specific upskilling and reskilling programs.

Coordination Strategies

To achieve seamless integration between workforce and economic development services:

Joint Planning:

- Conduct **regional labor market analyses** to align workforce training with the industries targeted by economic development efforts.
- Develop a shared **strategic vision** that includes both workforce and economic development priorities.

Employer Engagement:

- Leverage **industry partnerships** to gather real-time feedback on skills gaps, emerging job trends, and workforce needs.
- Co-develop **apprenticeships and on-the-job training** programs tailored to high-growth sectors.

Collaborative Programs:

- Initiate sector-specific training aligned with **targeted industries**, such as advanced manufacturing, logistics, healthcare, or clean energy.
- Create career pathways through **stackable credentials** that match local economic development priorities.

Cross-Sector Partnerships:

- Establish regional **Workforce and Economic Development Councils** to oversee collaboration and streamline efforts.
- Use shared funding streams, such as **federal grants (e.g., WIOA or EDA programs)**, to support joint initiatives.

Information Sharing:

- Develop a centralized database or platform to share labor market data, business intelligence, and workforce trends among stakeholders.
- Host **annual summits or quarterly meetings** for workforce boards, economic development agencies, and education providers to review progress and adjust strategies.

Performance Metrics:

- Evaluate outcomes based on **job placement rates, business retention and expansion**, and the growth of regional **target industries**.

Examples of Collaborative Initiatives

- **Workforce/Economic Development Grants:** Regional applications for state or federal funds to expand infrastructure, training, and employment opportunities.
- **Employer-Led Training Programs:** Partnerships between businesses and training providers to deliver tailored skill-building opportunities.
- **Workforce Hubs:** Physical or virtual centers where businesses, jobseekers, and training providers connect to drive local economic growth.

By fostering robust coordination between workforce development services and economic development efforts, the region can ensure a workforce pipeline that meets the demands of both current and emerging industries.

8. A description of the region's plan regarding coordination of local performance negotiations. Each LWDA will continue to negotiate performance goals with the state and will remain ultimately responsible for ensuring performance meets or exceeds the agreed upon goals.

Plan for Coordination of Local Performance Negotiations in the Central Workforce Region

To ensure that the Central Workforce Region meets or exceeds performance goals, the region will implement a coordinated approach involving collaboration among Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs), the regional workforce board, and the state. The strategy will emphasize alignment, accountability, and continuous improvement.

Regional Coordination Plan

1. Establish a Regional Coordination Framework:

- **Performance Alignment:** Convene representatives from all LWDAs within the region to review state and federal performance expectations under WIOA. Align these expectations with regional economic and workforce priorities.
- **Data Sharing:** Utilize a shared regional data platform to analyze historical performance, labor market trends, and demographic factors influencing goal achievement.

2. Collaborative Goal-Setting Process:

- **Pre-Negotiation Meetings:** Conduct preparatory meetings within the region to unify strategies before state negotiations. These meetings will focus on:
 - Identifying realistic yet ambitious performance targets.
 - Addressing anticipated challenges (e.g., shifts in the labor market or economic disruptions).
 - Establishing a unified voice for regional priorities.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Incorporate feedback from workforce stakeholders, including training providers, employers, and community organizations, to ensure negotiated goals are both achievable and impactful.

3. Support and Capacity-Building:

- **Technical Assistance:** Provide training for LWDA staff on negotiation strategies, performance metrics, and the factors influencing performance outcomes.
- **Resource Sharing:** Develop toolkits or templates for LWDAs to use during negotiations, ensuring consistency and leveraging best practices across the region.

4. Monitoring and Accountability:

- **Regular Check-Ins:** Implement quarterly regional performance review meetings where LWDAs report progress, share successes, and discuss areas needing improvement.
- **Real-Time Adjustments:** Use data-driven insights to adjust strategies mid-cycle to address underperformance in specific metrics.
- **Regional Peer Support:** Establish a mentorship program where high-performing LWDAs support those facing challenges in specific areas.

5. Continuous Improvement:

- **Performance Analysis:** Conduct an annual review of regional performance outcomes to identify trends, successes, and lessons learned.
- **Innovation Sharing:** Promote innovative practices from LWDAs that achieve or exceed performance goals to encourage adoption region-wide.

Roles and Responsibilities

- **Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs):**

- Maintain autonomy in negotiating specific performance goals with the state.
- Share progress and challenges with the regional board to foster transparency and collaboration.
- **Regional Workforce Board:**
 - Facilitate coordination among LWDAs.
 - Act as a liaison between LWDAs and the state for regional performance issues.
 - Offer guidance and support to ensure alignment with regional workforce strategies.
- **State Workforce Agency:**
 - Provide data, benchmarks, and guidance to inform local negotiations.
 - Offer technical assistance and feedback during and after the negotiation process.

Outcomes

This coordinated approach will:

- Ensure all LWDAs have the tools and resources needed to meet or exceed performance goals.
- Strengthen regional alignment with state and federal workforce objectives.
- Enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of workforce programs, driving better outcomes for job seekers and employers.

Local Workforce Development Boards:

Catawba Workforce Development Board
Mike Geddings, Chair

 Signature Date

Midlands Workforce Development Board
Reginald Murphy, Chair

 Signature Date

Lower Savannah Workforce Development Board
Gary Jones, Chair

 Signature Date

Local Grant Recipient Signatory Officials:

Catawba Workforce Development Area
Randy Imler, Executive Director
 Name Title

 Signature Date

Midlands Workforce Development Area
D. Britt Poole, Executive Director
 Name Title

 Signature Date

Lower Savannah Workforce Development Area
William Molnar, Ph.D., Executive Director
 Name Title

 Signature Date

Regional Plan Comments:

Comment 1
Originating Entity:
Comment:
Comment 2
Originating Entity:
Comment:
Comment 3
Originating Entity:
Comment:
Comment 4
Originating Entity:
Comment: