

San Joaquin Valley & Associated Counties Regional Planning Unit

# REGIONAL PLAN



2025 - 2028

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## I. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

With the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014, Congress moved the national workforce system in a new direction in terms of how to approach economic and labor market demands. While establishment of local workforce areas over the last four decades has always taken into account local labor markets, WIOA recognizes that economies tend to be regional, spilling easily over jurisdictional boundaries that commerce finds inconsequential. WIOA's recognition of regional economies gave rise to California's establishment of Regional Planning Units (RPU), which represent groups of local workforce areas that work collaboratively to develop strategies reflecting regional economic needs of business and the workforce. In accordance with federal and state guidance, the San Joaquin Valley and Associated Counties (SJVAC) RPU has developed this four-year Regional Plan to guide strategic initiatives throughout Program Years (PY) 2025-28, which covers July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2029.

### A. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

Passed by Congress with a wide bipartisan majority, WIOA is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in a global economy. WIOA represents the most recent version of federal workforce legislation providing funding to states and local areas to administer and operate workforce development programs. WIOA was preceded by the Job Training Partnership Act (active from 1982 to 2000) and the Workforce Investment Act (active from 2000 to 2015).

WIOA requires that a workforce development board (WDB) be established in each local workforce development area (LWDA). The area's chief local elected officials appoint members to the WDB. Local workforce development boards are business-led and the majority of members must come from the business community. Required WDB members also include representatives from labor, education, economic development, and specific federally funded workforce programs. The chief local elected officials may also select representatives from other groups, such as community-based organizations, to sit on the WDB.

While the PY 2025-28 Regional Plan addresses the programs, services, and activities of many organizations that derive their primary funding from a wide range of federal, state, and private programs, it is WIOA that requires the development and publication of the Plan and that prescribes its core content.

### B. Regional Plans and the WIOA Planning Structure

The SJVAC RPU Regional Plan is best understood within the context of a three-tiered planning structure envisioned by WIOA that requires development of plans at the state, regional, and local levels.

**State Plans:** Under WIOA, state plans communicate the vision for the statewide workforce development system. WIOA planning requirements aim to foster effective alignment of federal investments across job training and education programs, in order to coordinate service delivery among programs for shared customers; improve efficiency; and ensure that the workforce system connects individuals with high-quality job opportunities and employers. Cross-program planning promotes a shared understanding of the workforce needs within each state. California's PY 2024-2027 Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan represents agreement among the WIOA core program and other partners and serves as the framework for the development of public policy, fiscal investment, and operation of the state workforce and education systems.

**Regional Plans:** In states such as California, where Governors have established workforce planning regions encompassing one or more LWDAs, regional plans are required. Local WDBs within the region participate in a planning process that describes elements such as: analysis of regional labor market data, development and implementation of sector initiatives for targeted industries and in-demand occupations; coordination of workforce services with regional economic development services and providers; and establishment of regional service strategies, including use of cooperative service delivery agreements. The SJVAC RPU is one of California's fifteen workforce regions.

**Local Plans:** The local plan is intended to serve as a four-year action plan to develop, align, and integrate the local area's job-driven workforce development systems and provide a platform to achieve the local area's vision and strategic and operational goals. Features of the local plan include: coordination among economic development, education, and workforce partners to build a skilled workforce through innovation in, and alignment of, employment, training and education programs; implementation of job-driven strategies and services through the local career center system; and delivery of education and training to ensure that individuals, including youth and individuals with barriers to employment, have skills necessary to compete in the job market and that employers have a ready supply of skilled workers.

WIOA requires that Local Plans be incorporated into the Regional Plan. Therefore, the PY 2025-28 SJVAC RPU Regional Plan includes the PY 2025-28 Local Plans developed by the region's eight local WDBs.

### **C. California's Strategic Workforce Priorities**

California's Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan describes the state's priorities for the public workforce system. Under the leadership of the Governor and the Secretary of the Labor and Workforce Development Agency, California's vision for the future of workforce development is centered on the establishment and growth of a workforce system that promotes opportunity, job quality, and environmental sustainability for all Californians. The state is committed to developing a workforce system that enables economic growth and shared prosperity for employers and employees, especially those

with barriers to employment, by investing in industry partnerships, job quality, and meaningful skills attainment. One area in which the California Workforce Development Board (CWDB) pursues these aims is through its “High Road” programming. High Road refers to a “family of strategies” for achieving a participatory economy and society by aligning workforce, economic policy, and different interests with long-term goals of environmental sustainability, high-quality jobs, and a resilient economy. High Road emphasizes the complementary nature of these aims over the long term. In practice, High Road policy builds upon areas where the interest of employers (in trained and productive workers), workers and jobseekers (in good quality and accessible jobs), and environmental protection (for a sustainable future for all) overlap to create pathways to high-quality jobs while raising the profile of existing ones.

In consideration of the practical implementation of High Road principles in workforce development policy, the CWDB describes in the current State Plan four distinct “flavors” or styles of intervention. These interventions are directly relevant to High Road projects but also inform, to a greater or lesser extent, all of CWDB’s workforce efforts. They include: (1) lifting all workers to the “High Road;” (2) professionalizing precarious work (i.e., employment that is temporary, non-standard, and insecure, often with poor pay and no protection); (3) democratizing access to high-quality, middle-skill jobs; and (4) participatory planning for a low-carbon economy.

In accordance with the requirements of WIOA, both the SJVAC RPU Regional Plan Local Plan and the eight associated Local Plans support the State Plan priorities by:

- Maintaining a dual focus on providing programs and services that meet the needs and support the goals of businesses and job seekers/workers.
- Concentrating on industry sectors which drive growth and prosperity within local labor markets and regional economies.
- Targeting jobs that offer career advancement opportunities and that lead to positions that pay family-sustaining wages and provide pathways to self-sufficiency and the middle class.
- Committing to the adoption and implementation of strategies and processes that support environmental sustainability and climate resilience through workforce development.

#### **D. Overview of the SJVAC RPU and the Region**

The parties to the Regional Plan are the eight local workforce development boards within the RPU, which include seven boards representing single counties (Fresno, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Tulare) and one consortium board representing three counties (Kern, Inyo and Mono). Through their Central California Workforce Collaborative (CCWC) network, the WBDs were all actively involved in the regional planning process by reviewing State guidance; engaging external expertise to assist in the process; providing resource documents; organizing regional forums; and meeting as a group to share insights, make decisions, and establish priorities for regional

coordination. As the designated lead for the RPU, development of the PY 2025-28 Regional Plan was managed by the Stanislaus County WDB.

The boundaries of the RPU are those defined by the ten counties referred to above. The area comprises approximately 40,760 square miles, roughly 25% of California. With approximately 4.3 million residents, the region is more populous than 25 states.

## E. Guiding Principles

In addition to support for the State Plan, the SJVAC RPU Regional Plan is built upon five principles, which represent the values, vision, and commitment of the Central Valley's workforce stakeholders. They include:

The Workforce System is Demand-Driven: Industry drives job demand and businesses define skills needed for jobs. It is the obligation of the workforce system to train candidates in these skills, preparing them for careers.

Regional Sector Pathways are an Effective Approach to Meeting Demand: Structured, high-quality education, training, and support programs offer opportunities for success for everyone who is preparing for a career.

The Workforce System Encompasses All Stakeholders: The system is not merely WIOA programs. Rather, it is comprised of the work, resources, and unique capabilities of all organizations and individuals with a stake in building and maintaining a prosperous, competitive economy.

Long-Term Regional Collaboration: The Central California Workforce Collaborative (CCWC) is a manifestation of a partnership that has existed for 40 years. Through the joint efforts of the eight WDBs, this collaboration has yielded many benefits.

Climate Resilience and Environmental Sustainability Are Critical to the Regional Economy: Every occupation and industry is affected by climate change and/or influences the environment to varying degrees. As California moves toward a carbon-neutral economy, entire industries are changing, along with the jobs, knowledge, and skills needed within those sectors.

## F. Approach to and Context for Plan Development

To support development of the PY 2025-28 Plan, the region contracted with experienced workforce and economic development subject matter experts to design the stakeholder engagement process, analyze labor market and workforce data, facilitate community forums, and craft the language of the plan. Local board directors, managers, and staff were active during every stage of the plan development. The content of the Plan contemplates myriad opportunities and challenges that are expected to persist over its four-year span. Among these are:

### **Potential Challenges**

An Aging Workforce: A large number of baby boomers and even later generations are retiring, creating a potential gap in experienced workers.

Skill Shortages Resulting from Automation: Rapid technological advancements, including artificial intelligence and robotics, may render certain skills obsolete, requiring significant workforce upskilling.

Attracting and Retaining Talent: Competition for skilled workers is expected to intensify, making it challenging to attract and retain talent.

A Multigenerational Workforce: Managing diverse generations with different expectations and work styles within the same workplace.

Work-Life Balance and Flexibility: Balancing employee demands for flexible work arrangements with the need for productivity and performance.

Funding for the Workforce System: Managing costs that continue to rise and the increasingly complex needs of customers, while funding for the system has not kept pace.

### **Key Opportunities**

Leveraging artificial intelligence in recruitment: Utilizing these tools to analyze candidate data and efficiently identify talent matches.

Upskilling and reskilling initiatives: Investing in training programs to equip current employees with the skills needed for emerging technologies.

Focus on employee experience: Prioritizing employee well-being, engagement, and career development to improve retention.

Remote work and hybrid models: Offering flexible work arrangements to cater to diverse employee needs.

Data-driven decision making: Utilizing data analytics to inform workforce strategies and talent management.

Building a learning culture: Encouraging continuous learning and adaptability to keep pace with technological advancement.

## **G. Program Year 2025-28 Regional System Priorities**

During the process used to develop the PY 2025-28 Regional Plan, business and industry leaders, community members, regional stakeholders, and system partners were invited to participate in a series of discussions regarding the direction of the local workforce system over the next four years. As a result of these discussions, the following priorities have been identified:

- Focus on key industries
- Support businesses in managing change
- Engage businesses in the design and delivery of training
- Address climate impacts on economy and work
- Identify and train the workforce in core employability skills
- Prepare youth and young adults for careers
- Recognize changes in worker priorities
- Leverage under-resourced workers
- Bring services to communities
- Expand collaboration

Section IX of this plan summarizes these and other regional issues, strategies, approaches, and key considerations that workforce system leadership and system partners will examine over the four-year course of this plan.



## II. ANALYTICAL OVERVIEW OF THE REGION

The Regional Plan for the Central Valley provides an overview of the region's economy and workforce environment and describes collaborative strategies across the eight local workforce development areas. Leveraging a broad range of expertise and resources, the SJVAC RPU has completed an analysis of labor market data, as well as economic conditions and trends in the region, and analysis of the educational attainment of the current workforce.

As the lead organization for the SJVAC RPU, Stanislaus County WDB engaged the Tulare County WIB to complete data analysis required for the Plan. In January 2025, Tulare County published the results of this analysis in a report titled "[San Joaquin Valley Regional Planning Unit: Data Analysis for Regional Plan PY 2025-28.](#)" The analysis is accessible in its entirety through the preceding hyperlink.

### ***Data Analysis Methodology***

The data presented by Tulare County WIB representatives (hereafter "the analysts") supports regional planning objectives linked to the labor market and workforce. The analysts used publicly available data from several federal agencies, including the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bureau of Economic Analysis, and the Census Bureau, as well as from Lightcast, a private data analytics service that conducts additional analysis using public data sets, private sources, and proprietary data analytics.

Aside from Decennial Census data, which this report only contains embedded in survey benchmarks and other data smoothing methods, all data analysis is based on survey methods and derivations of those outputs. The main survey used is U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS). This is a yearly survey on a wide-reaching array of economic, social, demographic, and employment topics. Survey results are presented in 1-year estimates (ACS 1-year) and 5-year estimates (ACS 5-year). Generally, the report relies on ACS 2023 1-year data, as it presents the most current available data. In some instances ACS 5-year estimates are presented. ACS 5-year estimates cannot and should not be directly compared with ACS 1-year estimates.

In addition, the analysts make use of Industry and Occupational data that was prepared by the California Employment Development Department (EDD) for Unemployment and industry level analysis. These EDD reports also use a combination of the U.S. Department of Labor's Current Population Survey (CPS) and Current Employment Statistics (CES). EDD generally rounds figures to the nearest -100, and the estimates presented should not be interpreted as a census of workers.

Projections of employment or industry activity are derived using myriad methods. No single method, combination of methods, or algorithm can be used to predict the future. However major industry trends should be considered when devising workforce development strategies.

Lightcast shares its methodology publicly and it is available for review at no cost. A non-comprehensive list of resources is attached to the Regional Plan Data Analysis report for readers to use to further examine data.

### **Overview**

Data analysis conducted to support the SJVAC RPU's PY 2025-28 Regional Plan serves as a critical tool to support workforce planning and strategic decision-making aimed at fostering economic growth and addressing workforce challenges within the region, including the development of career pathways linked to growth industries and other strategic and promising sectors. This comprehensive analysis of the region's labor market and economic trends will inform workforce development strategies for the coming years.

The report on which data in this section of the Plan is based highlights resilience in recovery from the pandemic, showcasing significant job growth and economic gains across key sectors and industries. Between 2019 and 2024, total nonfarm employment grew by 9.67%, with sectors like Educational and Health Services (+19.55%) and Trade, Transportation, and Utilities (+12.77%) leading this expansion. However, the region continues to see weakness relative to the rest of the state when it comes to high wage employment in sectors such as technology, media, and other higher end service and manufacturing jobs.

The San Joaquin Valley has taken advantage of its geographic endowments to support the emerging logistics and e-commerce economy. Affordable land and the central location of the region relative to the rest of the state have led to strong job growth in associated industries. These growth sectors are driven by increased consumer demand for healthcare and logistics services, positioning the Central Valley as a critical hub for e-commerce and community services. Conversely, traditional sectors like agriculture experienced job losses, with Crop Production declining by 7,531 jobs (-12%). This trend reflects broader challenges such as water scarcity, advancements in automation used in agriculture, and Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) related water conservation, which all underscore the importance of adapting workforce strategies to these economic shifts.

Despite these advancements, challenges remain in addressing structural employment disparities and workforce skill gaps. The region is undereducated and earns less relative to the rest of the state. Addressing these educational and skill deficits is critical to unlocking the full potential of the region's workforce. By investing in targeted training programs and educational initiatives, the region can bridge these gaps, ensuring sustained economic growth and a more equitable labor market.

### **A. Analysis of Employment and Unemployment Data**

Generally, unemployment rates in the counties that comprise the SJVAC RPU can be several percentage points higher than the statewide average. Much of this discrepancy is due to the high share of farm jobs relative to the rest of the economy, as well lower

skilled employment that can lead to lower perceived or real job security. Table 1 shows that the overall unemployment rate is higher than it was five years ago, but this does not necessarily reflect a weakening of the overall labor market which continues to show expansion. A larger share of the population entering the workforce and searching for jobs, as well as persons switching careers or positions looking for higher pay or better opportunities, can also explain this rise.

In comparison to the whole of California, the SJVAC RPU has a slightly higher base unemployment rate, but largely mirrors statewide changes over a 5-year period.

**TABLE 1**  
**Unemployment Rates in SJVAC RPU**  
 September 2024: Not Seasonally Adjusted Data

Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA)	September 2019	September 2023	September 2024	Sept. 2019-Sept. 2024 Change	Year-Over Change (Sept. 23-Sept. 24)
California	4.0%	5.0%	5.3%	1.3%	0.3%
SJV RPU	5.87%	6.68%	7.14%	1.27%	0.46%
<b><u>LWDAs</u></b>					
San Joaquin	5.0%	5.8%	6.2%	1.2%	0.4%
Stanislaus	4.9%	5.8%	6.3%	1.4%	0.5%
Merced	5.9%	7.5%	7.8%	1.9%	0.3%
Madera	5.3%	6.2%	6.7%	1.4%	0.5%
Fresno	5.7%	6.3%	6.9%	1.2%	0.6%
Kings	6.1%	6.9%	7.3%	1.2%	0.4%
Tulare	8.2%	8.9%	9.3%	1.1%	0.4%
Kern/Inyo/Mono <sup>1</sup>	6.2%	7.0%	7.5%	1.3%	0.5%

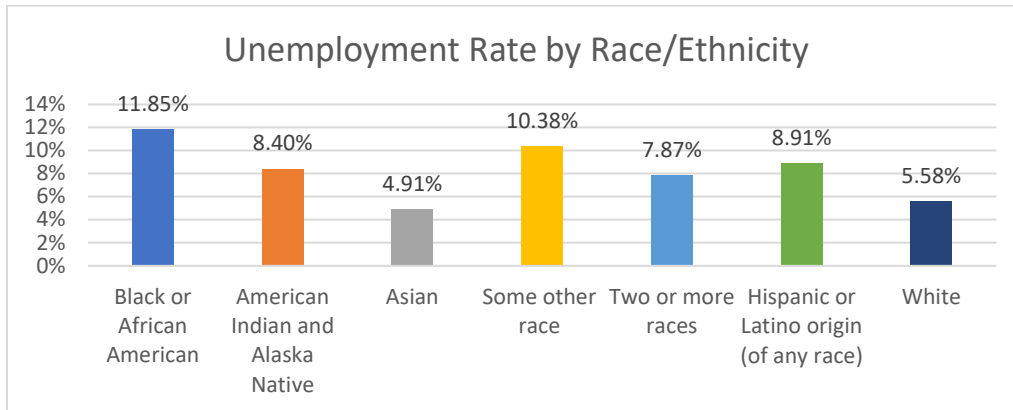
Source: Employment Development Department

<sup>1</sup>Kern, Inyo, and Mono counties are combined into a single Local Workforce Development Area

**A Closer Look at Unemployment Rates – Race/Ethnicity**

The following graph uses ACS 1-Year data to examine differences in unemployment status among self-reported racial and ethnic groups. White and Asian subgroups performed best, with other minorities or self-identified racial groups having higher rates of unemployment. Black, American Indian, and Hispanic/Latino (see note below) showed much higher rates of unemployment. These systemic challenges can be tied to factors such as educational attainment, language barriers, and their over-representation in low-wage, high turnover industries. Workforce development boards and educational institutions will need to continue targeted outreach and investments into these communities to continue closing the gap.

**Graph 1**  
**SJCAV RPU Estimated Unemployment Rates by Race/Ethnicity**  
**2023 1-Year ACS Estimates**



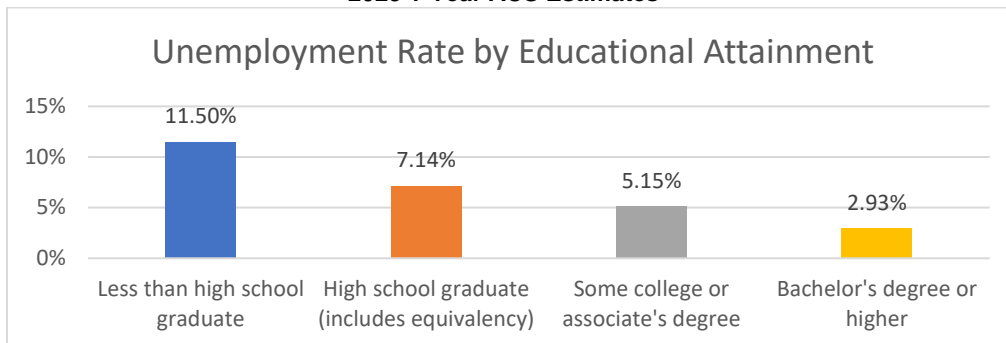
Source: ACS 1-Year Estimates, S2301 Employment Status. Does not include Mono/Inyo counties. County populations are too small to have accurate estimates for 1-Year Estimates

**A Note on Race and Ethnicity:** The large number of people who identify as some other race reflects a survey method decision in the way the U.S. Census Bureau classifies individuals by race. The Bureau classifies Hispanics/Latinos as an ethnic group instead of a racial group and considers ethnicity and race not to be mutually exclusive. As such, one can be Hispanic ethnically and White or Black simultaneously and the Census has different variables to reflect this. However, this ethnicity and race distinction appears to be blurred among ACS respondents. The Census Bureau reports that the vast majority of respondents who identify as some other race were Hispanics/Latinos. This same blurring of race and ethnicity may also inflate the two or more race count.

**A Closer Look at Unemployment Rates – Educational Attainment**

Below, Graph 2 illustrates the power that progressive levels of education play in providing job security and lower rates of unemployment. The types of occupations that higher educational attainment allow stabilizes and otherwise provides job security in a way that those without a high school degree do not experience.

**Graph 2**  
**SJVAC RPU Estimated Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment -**  
**2023 1-Year ACS Estimates**



Source: ACS 1-Year Estimates, S2301 Employment Status

**Labor Force Participation**

Labor Force Participation is a measure of the population of those working or seeking work as a ratio to the full population size of a given area. The United States experienced a severe dip in Labor Force Participation during the pandemic, but it has largely recovered to previous trendlines, last estimated at 63.8%. According to those same estimates, the State of California recorded a Labor Force Participation of 64.3% and the SJVAC RPU, in the same snapshot, stood at 61.3%.

**Table 3**  
**Labor Force Participation - ACS 1-Year Estimates**

	2021	2022	2023
United States	63.00%	63.50%	63.80%
California	63.40%	63.90%	64.30%
SVU RPU	59.38%	61.17%	61.30%

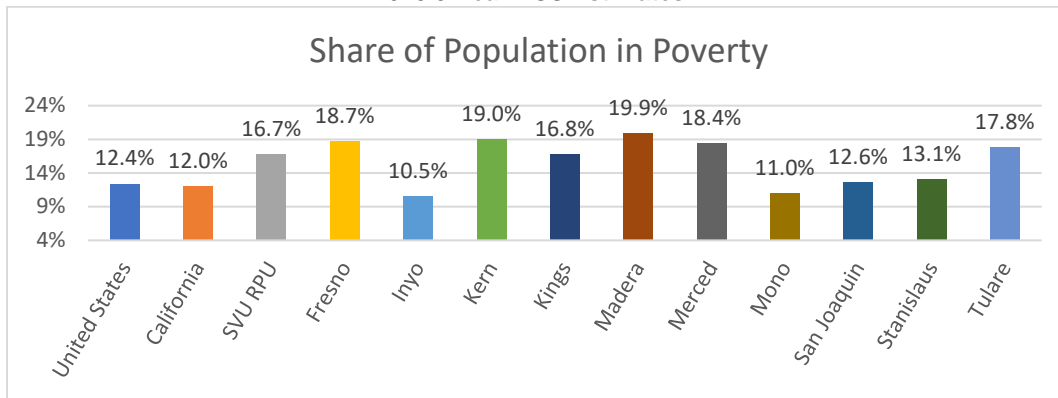
Source: 2023 ACS 1-Year estimates, S2301 Employment Status

While the region has generally lagged behind in Labor Force Participation rates, this should be viewed within the context of historical baselines and the growth in population that the SJVAC RPU has experienced relative to both the state and the rest of the nation. The total labor force is growing and remains robust, despite high baseline unemployment.

**Poverty in the Region**

Poverty rates in the SJVAC RPU, as one might expect based on the median earnings, are higher than in California as a whole. Interestingly, poverty measures are higher in the southern portion of the region than in the North. This may be due to the proximity to the greater Bay Area and Sacramento economies that they share. However, there are likely other underlying factors. Poverty rates have been declining for most of the region over the last several years due to a number of economic and policy factors including the post-pandemic labor shortage, changes in minimum wage, and farmworker pay structures.

**Graph 3**  
**Share of Population in Poverty - Nation, State, SJVAC RPU, and Counties**  
**2023 5-Year ACS Estimates**

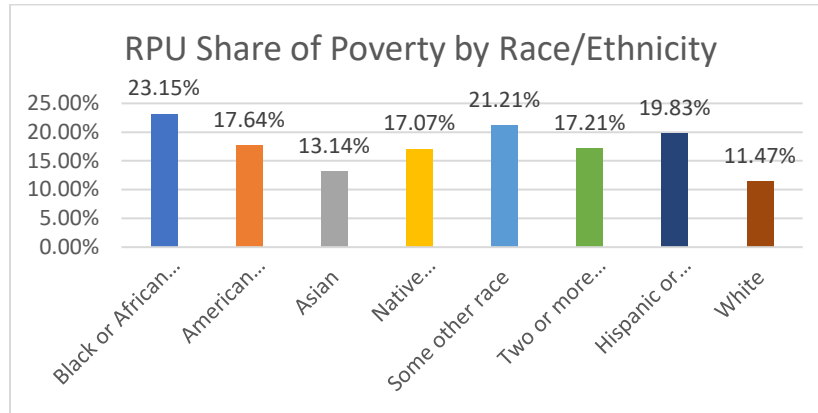


Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, S1701 Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months

**A Closer Look at Poverty – Race/Ethnicity**

As one might expect, the racial makeup of poverty is not evenly experienced. White, non-Hispanic, populations outperform all other recorded ethnic or race categories collected by the American Community Survey with the lowest estimated poverty rates. This tracks largely with educational attainment and unemployment statistics across the different ethnic and race groups.

**Graph 4**  
**Share of Population in Poverty, by Race/Ethnicity - San Joaquin Valley RPU**  
**2023 1-Year ACS Estimates**

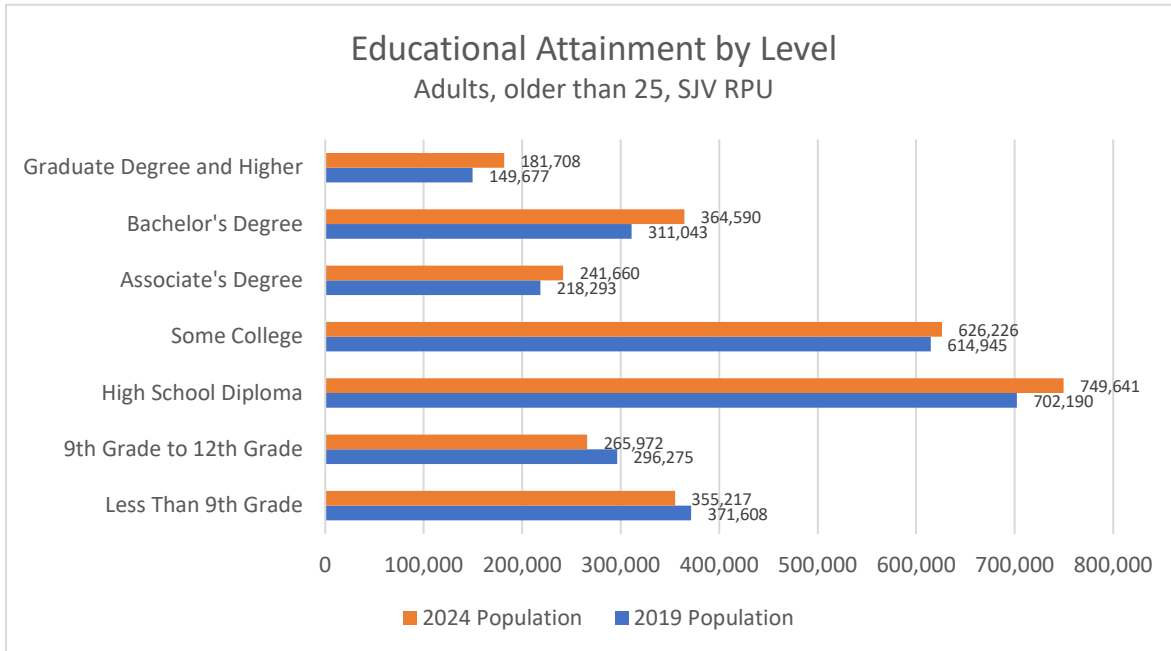


Source: ACS 1-Year Estimates, S1701 Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months

**B. Analysis of the Educational and Skill Levels of the Workforce**

Overall, Educational Attainment has improved for the RPU over the last five years. As seen in the following graph 5, high school diplomas, those attending college, and college degrees all increased, while those with less than a high school education decreased. With continuing emphasis on high school graduation and alternative technical pathways programs, trends seen here should continue.

**Graph 5**  
**SJVAC RPU Educational Attainment by Level Adults older than 25**  
**2023 1-Year ACS Estimates**



Source: ACS 2023 1-Year Data, EDD RPU Data Portal

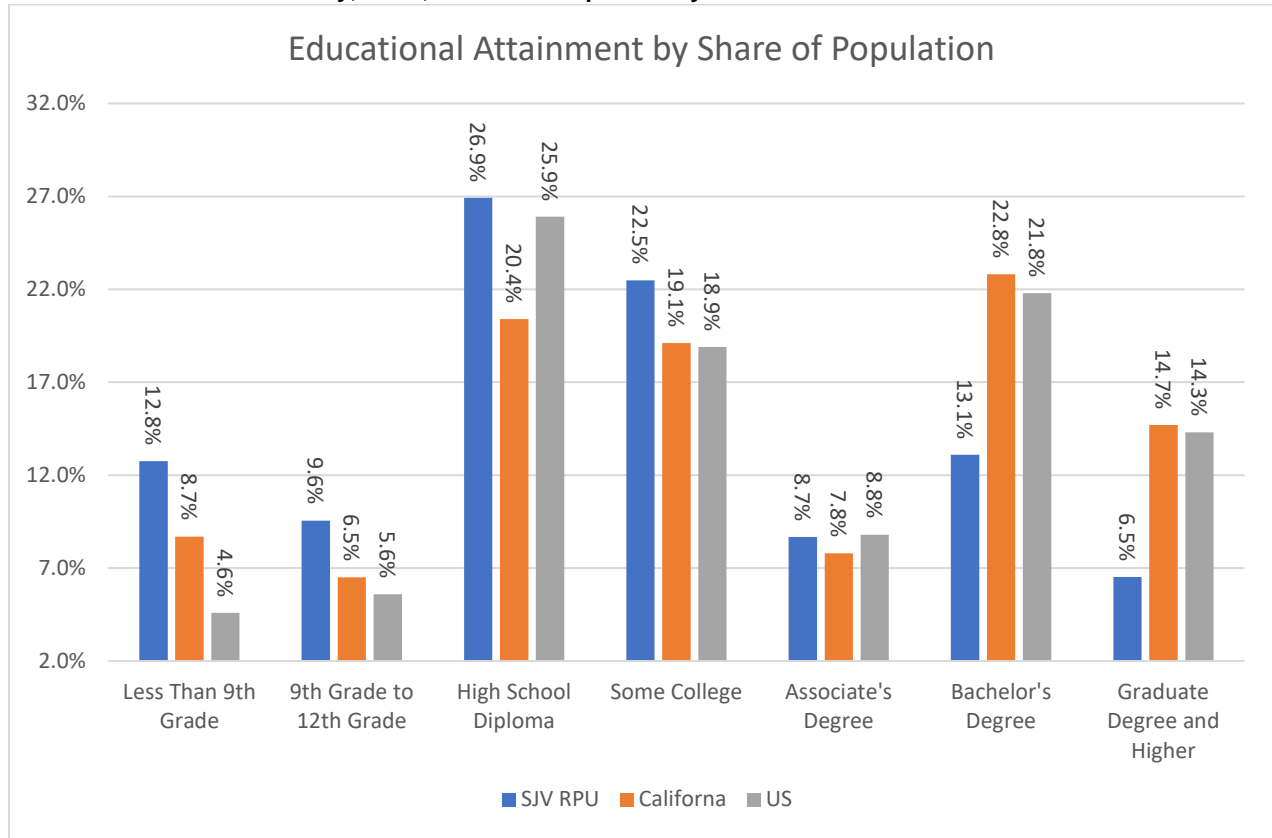
***Educational Attainment – Missed Opportunities***

Despite educational gains, the SJVAC RPU still lags behind the rest of the state and the nation in overall education levels. One major weakness in the region is the lack of post-secondary education options. Currently, the region is served by three California State University campuses (Stanislaus, Fresno, and Bakersfield) and one University of California campus (Merced). There are no public, 4-year degree offering institutions in 6 of the SJV RPU’s 10 counties.

There is a robust community college system that has increasingly taken a leading role in post-secondary education and licensing, but those seeking bachelor’s and graduate degrees are continually underserved and often seek education outside of the region, contributing to the loss of human capital in the Valley.

Additionally, rural communities often face barriers like long travel distances to colleges, fewer advanced placement courses, and lower internet connectivity, all of which can hinder educational progress. These disparities are critical, as they limit workforce opportunities and economic development in rural California, perpetuating cycles of lower income and reduced mobility. Addressing these challenges requires targeted investments in educational infrastructure, digital access, and community support programs to ensure rural residents can compete on an equal footing with their urban counterparts.

**Graph 6**  
**Educational Attainment by Share of Population**  
**Country, State, and San Joaquin Valley RPU Adults Older Than 25**



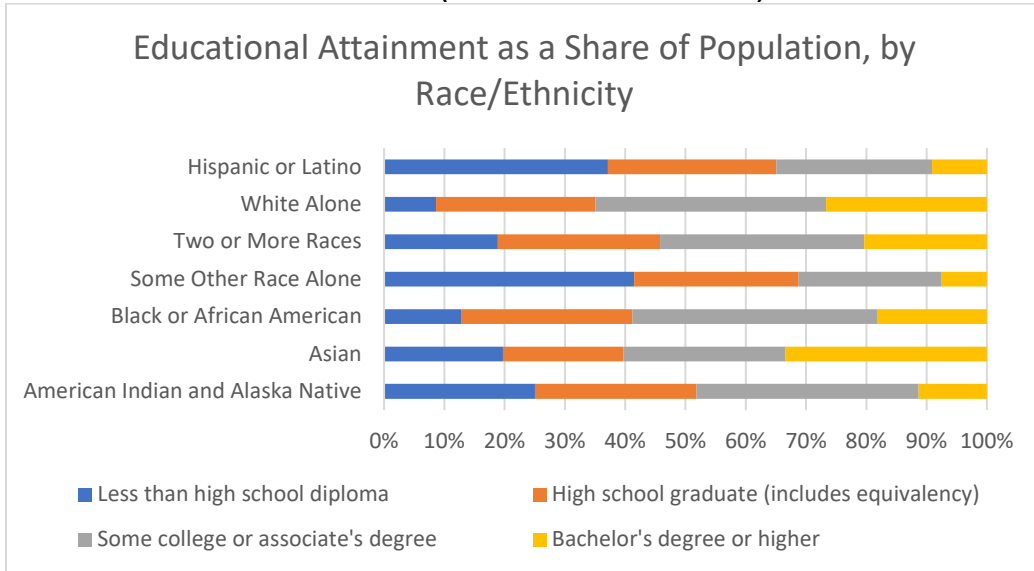
Source: EDD RPU Data Portal, Educational Attainment

***A Closer Look at Educational Attainment – Race/Ethnicity***

The stacked bar chart below compares the differences in educational attainment between race/ethnic groups as a ratio. Overall, this reveals that those identifying as Hispanic or Latino have the largest share of their population not possessing a high school diploma or equivalency. This may be due to the large relative share of foreign-born population that come to the U.S. as adults. However, at the other end of the educational attainment spectrum, they are also one of the demographic groups most underrepresented with higher levels of education attainment, such as bachelor’s or graduate/professional degrees.



**Graph 7**  
**Educational Attainment as a share of population, by Race/Ethnicity**  
**EDD Statistics (from ACS 5-Year Data 2022)**

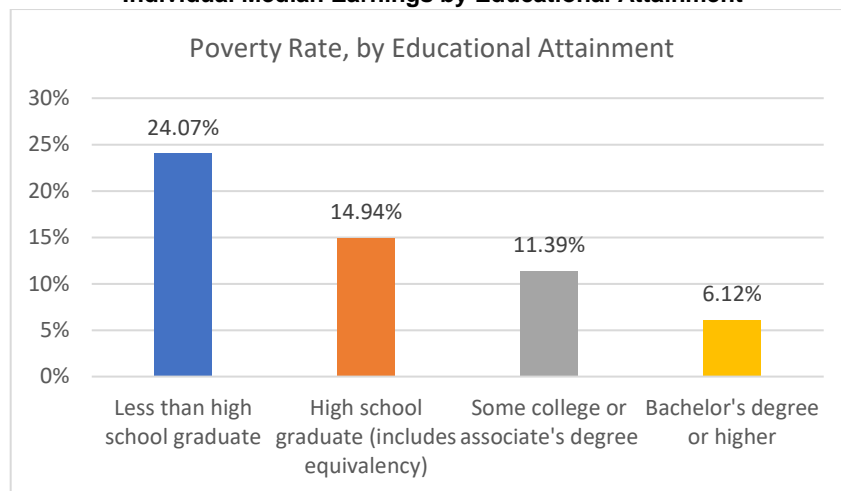


Source: EDD RPU Data Portal, Race/Ethnicity

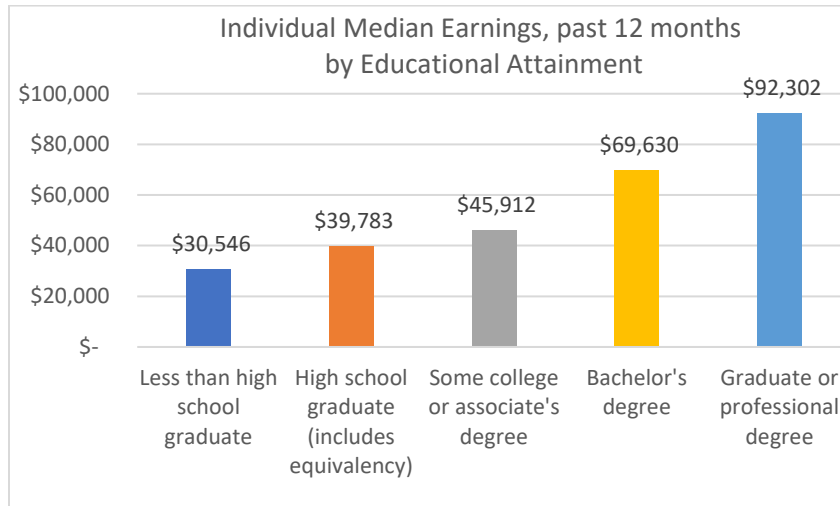
**A Closer Look at Educational Attainment – The Key Antipoverty Program**

Educational Attainment significantly increase access to better-paying and more stable job opportunities. Individuals with a high school diploma are more likely to secure employment with benefits, while those with college degrees often access higher-paying professions in industries like healthcare, technology, and finance. Education also provides critical skills such as problem-solving, communication, and adaptability, which are increasingly valued in today’s economy.

**Graph 8 and 9**  
**SJVAC RPU Poverty Rate by Educational Attainment**  
**Individual Median Earnings by Educational Attainment**



ACS 1-Year Data (2023)



Source, both graphs: ACS 2023 1-Year Data, San Joaquin Valley RPU Weighted Averages

### C. Analysis of Industries and Occupations with Existing and Emerging Demand

This analysis takes into account both existing industry and occupational demand and demand that is emerging throughout the region. The regional Plan Data Analytics report may be viewed here: [SJVAC-Data-Analysis-Report-2025-2028](#).

#### Industry Sector Growth

Looking at industries that gained jobs in the last five years, the following list and analysis of growth industries filters out those with fewer than 1,000 jobs and 5-year growth of less than 7%. This removes small industries that can skew data analysis.

Transportation, Warehousing, Logistics: This collection of industries displayed strong growth in the region and appeared at or near the top of both largest and fastest growth. This is a continuing development in the economy that does not show signs of relenting, although it may slow as markets become more saturated.

Healthcare and Social Services: Hospitals, doctors offices, social services, and other public health and social services are large and important employers. This industry, especially with skilled nursing, offers the most direct path to high wages and social mobility

Construction and Related Industries: While representing a smaller portion of the labor market, this is an important sector to invest in and keep a close eye on, given its status as a leading economic indicator as well as offering high wages for skilled trade work.

Education and other Public Sectors: In many areas of the region, especially in rural towns, this sector is the highest paying and requires the most education. Teachers, public administrators, and public safety are vital skills and resources to the region’s communities and a lack of investment can risk atrophying already stressed public entities.

Restaurants and Recreation: While not an industry that is seen as a lynchpin of economic activity, it does suggest a robust economy with spending money that can support and expand these offerings. Another contributing factor can be found in an increase in outdoor tourism driven by the pandemic and supported by the many public lands, national parks, and other natural outdoor tourism activities in the SJVAC RPU.

Manufacturing: Manufacturing, outside of post-harvest processing, remains a niche industry with low demand. It remains to be seen what public investments from federal and state levels as well as an increased emphasis on domestic manufacturing can manifest within the region.

Within the PY 2025-28 Regional Plan Data Analysis report, Table 5 illustrates industries (using 4-digit NAICS coding) that have gained jobs over the past 5 years. The left column organizes industries based on estimated total jobs gained and the right column organizes industries based on a percent change to attempt to capture industries that are quickly expanding. >

**TABLE 5**  
Real Gross Domestic Product, by County (2019-2023)  
Thousands of chained (2017) dollars

Counties in RPU	2019	2022	2023	2019-2023 Economic Growth (5-year)	2023 Economic Growth (1 year)
California	2,969,609,000	3,184,007,800	3,248,656,600	9.3%	2.0%
SJV RPU <sup>1</sup>	187,698,433	190,837,086	195,682,118	4.25%	2.54%
<b><u>Counties<sup>1</sup></u></b>					
San Joaquin	31,274,535	33,301,759	33,097,405	5.83%	-0.6%
Stanislaus	23,329,680	23,803,366	24,067,824	3.16%	1.1%
Merced	9,251,024	9,511,320	9,548,937	3.22%	0.4%
Madera	6,222,075	6,043,485	6,226,914	0.08%	3.0%
Fresno	45,018,790	46,107,283	47,612,742	5.76%	3.3%
Kings	6,457,601	6,868,202	7,041,297	9.04%	2.5%
Tulare	18,480,075	18,399,182	18,824,792	1.87%	2.3%
Kern	45,410,206	44,626,843	46,941,848	3.37%	5.2%
Inyo	1,223,022	1,089,927	1,141,849	-6.64%	4.8%
Mono	1,031,425	1,085,719	1,178,510	14.26%	8.5%

<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Economic Analysis data is collected and presented by county. For this section we have broken out the different counties in the Kern/Inyo/Mono LDWA consortium. Figures for the RPU were developed from BEA county-level data.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

**Industry Sector Losses**

The following analysis of industry losses removes industries with job changes over 5 years that were higher than -2%

Agriculture: The largest employer for most of the region is the agricultural industry and it continues to show a decline in employment. Despite these job losses, agricultural output has remained steady which suggests an improvement in labor productivity. The industry continues to take advantage of automation innovations, as well as shifts in crop planting. These factors, along with uncertainty and expected contraction in farmed area due to climate change and public policy (namely SGMA), may lead to a further contraction in the farm labor market.

Retail and Related In-Person Commerce: While logistics, home delivery, and transportation have expanded in the SJVAC RPU, in-person commerce and retail establishments have shown large declines. Some of this can be attributed to the direct competition e-commerce offers, other automation activities can also be factors.

Federal and State Government: In comparison to the expansion and immediate requirements of local government employment, certain state and federal employment has been pulled back in the past 5 years. This may be a shift of certain public administration from those authorities down to the local level as well as efficiency gains made by state and federal officials, but it is a cautionary sign of reduced public investment into the region.

Within the PY 2025-28 Regional Plan Data Analysis report, Table 8 illustrates industries (using 4-digit NAICS coding) that have lost jobs over the past 5 years. The left column organizes industries based on estimated total jobs lost and the right column organizes industries based on a percent change to attempt to capture industries that are quickly expanding.

TABLE 8

**2019-2024 Losses for Industry Sector Jobs in San Joaquin RPU**

Lightcast database analysis using QCEW, ACS, BEA, and other publicly available data. 4-digit NAICS classification

<u>Industries That Lost the Most Jobs</u> (2019-2024 Change in Number)	<u>Jobs Lost</u>	<u>Industries That Declined Fastest</u> (2019-2024 Change in Percent)	<u>Percent Change</u>
Crop Production	(7,531)	Business Support Services	(57%)
Support Activities for Crop Production	(3,948)	Insurance Carriers	(50%)
Business Support Services	(3,345)	Facilities Support Services	(39%)
Insurance Carriers	(2,804)	Vocational Rehabilitation Services	(33%)
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Retailers	(2,588)	Furniture and Home Furnishings Retailers	(25%)

Employment Services	(2,534)	Clothing and Clothing Accessories Retailers	(23%)
Private Households	(2,100)	Wired and Wireless Telecommunications (except Satellite)	(23%)
State Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals	(1,700)	Support Activities for Air Transportation	(20%)
Vocational Rehabilitation Services	(1,531)	Private Households	(19%)
Depository Credit Intermediation	(1,221)	Support Activities for Mining	(19%)
Support Activities for Mining	(1,206)	Nondepository Credit Intermediation	(17%)
Animal Production	(1,139)	Printing and Related Support Activities	(16%)
Utility System Construction	(1,084)	Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools	(15%)
Furniture and Home Furnishings Retailers	(946)	Depository Credit Intermediation	(14%)
Facilities Support Services	(928)	Utility System Construction	(14%)
Wired and Wireless Telecommunications (except Satellite)	(819)	Crop Production	(12%)
Education and Hospitals (State Government)	(816)	Employment Services	(9%)
Grocery and Related Product Merchant Wholesalers	(810)	Taxi and Limousine Service	(9%)
Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools	(790)	Beer, Wine, and Distilled Alcoholic Beverage Merchant Wholesalers	(7%)
Department Stores	(730)	Department Stores	(7%)
Federal Government, Civilian	(677)	Grocery and Related Product Merchant Wholesalers	(6%)
Support Activities for Air Transportation	(477)	Education and Hospitals (State Government)	(6%)
Management of Companies and Enterprises	(437)	State Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals	(5%)
Child Day Care Services	(427)	Highway, Street, and Bridge Construction	(5%)
Printing and Related Support Activities	(427)	Animal Production	(5%)
Nondepository Credit Intermediation	(390)	Miscellaneous Nondurable Goods Merchant Wholesalers	(4%)
Religious Organizations	(279)	Child Day Care Services	(4%)
Miscellaneous Nondurable Goods Merchant Wholesalers	(201)	Management of Companies and Enterprises	(4%)
Taxi and Limousine Service	(181)	Sporting Goods, Hobby, and Musical Instrument Retailers	(3%)
Beer, Wine, and Distilled Alcoholic Beverage Merchant Wholesalers	(171)	Support Activities for Crop Production	(3%)
Sporting Goods, Hobby, and Musical Instrument Retailers	(169)	Specialty Food Stores	(2%)
Highway, Street, and Bridge Construction	(119)	Federal Government, Civilian	(2%)
Other Wood Product Manufacturing	(74)	Other Wood Product Manufacturing	(2%)
Specialty Food Stores	(72)	Religious Organizations	(2%)

Source: Lightcast Industry Table, SJV RPU, 4 Digit NAICS

**Occupational Gains**

Occupational data differs from industry data in certain categorical and survey-design choices but attempts to highlight similar information. The main takeaways from analysis of occupations with the highest and fastest growth align largely with those of the industry level data.

Within the PY 2025-28 Regional Plan Data Analysis report, Table 9 illustrates both occupations that added the most jobs and occupations that grew the fastest.

**TABLE 9**

**2019-2024 Growth for Occupational Data in San Joaquin RPU**

Lightcast database analysis using QCEW, ACS, BEA, and other publicly available data. 4-digit SOC classification

<u>Occupations That Added the Most Jobs</u> (Five-Year Change in Number)		<u>Occupations That Grew the fastest</u> (Five-Year Change in Percent)		<u>Percent Change</u>
Total Jobs		Total Jobs		
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	24,628	Couriers and Messengers		117%
Laborers and Material Movers	18,908	Training and Development Specialists		84%
Driver/Sales Workers and Truck Drivers	10,228	Logisticians and Project Management Specialists		66%
Cooks	6,515	Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers		59%
General and Operations Managers	5,126	Miscellaneous Personal Appearance Workers		45%
Counselors	3,239	Home Health and Personal Care Aides		44%
Logisticians and Project Management Specialists	2,876	Bartenders		42%
Miscellaneous Business Operations Specialists	2,793	Marketing and Sales Managers		41%
Elementary and Middle School Teachers	2,513	Medical and Health Services Managers		41%
Shipping, Receiving, and Inventory Clerks	2,393	Software and Web Developers, Programmers, and Testers		40%
Marketing and Sales Managers	2,297	Human Resources Workers		38%
Physicians	2,214	Physicians		34%
Registered Nurses	2,209	Miscellaneous Business Operations Specialists		32%
Miscellaneous Healthcare Support Occupations	2,115	Shipping, Receiving, and Inventory Clerks		32%
Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	1,968	First-Line Supervisors of Transportation and Material Moving Workers		32%
Miscellaneous Managers	1,889	General and Operations Managers		32%
Security Guards and Gambling Surveillance Officers	1,827	First-Line Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers		32%
Human Resources Workers	1,807	Special Education Teachers		32%
First-Line Supervisors of Transportation and Material Moving Workers	1,782	Food Service Managers		31%
Substitute Teachers, Short-Term	1,731	Counselors		28%
Training and Development Specialists	1,697	Miscellaneous Managers		26%

Bartenders	1,591	Construction Managers	26%
Therapists	1,575	First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	25%
First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	1,505	Therapists	25%
Medical and Health Services Managers	1,497	Cooks	23%
Miscellaneous Personal Appearance Workers	1,462	Laborers and Material Movers	21%
Software and Web Developers, Programmers, and Testers	1,455	Driver/Sales Workers and Truck Drivers	20%
First-Line Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers	1,415	Security Guards and Gambling Surveillance Officers	19%
Special Education Teachers	1,412	Industrial Machinery Installation, Repair, and Maintenance Workers	18%
Couriers and Messengers	1,397	Butchers and Other Meat, Poultry, and Fish Processing Workers	18%
Butchers and Other Meat, Poultry, and Fish Processing Workers	1,374	Accountants and Auditors	15%
Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	1,293	Substitute Teachers, Short-Term	13%
Accountants and Auditors	1,268	Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	12%
Food Service Managers	1,186	Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	11%
Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers	1,178	Miscellaneous Healthcare Support Occupations	10%
Secondary School Teachers	1,104	Elementary and Middle School Teachers	10%
Industrial Machinery Installation, Repair, and Maintenance Workers	1,071	Secondary School Teachers	9%
Construction Managers	1,045	Registered Nurses	8%

Source: Lightcast Occupation Table, SJV RPU, 4 Digit SOC

### ***Occupational Losses***

Occupational data differs from industry data in certain categorical and survey-design choices but attempts to get at the same information. As with occupational gain, data on occupational losses align with industry level data.

Within the PY 2025-28 Regional Plan Data Analysis report, Table 10 illustrates both occupations that lost the most jobs and occupations that declined the fastest.

TABLE 10

Five-Year Losses for Occupational Data in San Joaquin RPU

Lightcast database analysis using QCEW, ACS, BEA, and other publicly available data. 4-digit SOC classification

<u>Occupations That Lost the Most Jobs</u> (Five-Year Change in Number)		<u>Occupations That Declined Fastest</u> (Five-Year Change in Percent)	<u>Percent Change</u>
Miscellaneous Agricultural Workers	(19,263)	Radio and Telecommunications Equipment Installers and Repairers	(53%)
Cashiers	(6,032)	Tellers	(42%)
Retail Salespersons	(4,003)	Crushing, Grinding, Polishing, Mixing, and Blending Workers	(26%)
Childcare Workers	(2,570)	Graders and Sorters, Agricultural Products	(25%)
Waiters and Waitresses	(2,055)	Childcare Workers	(19%)
Bailiffs, Correctional Officers, and Jailers	(1,793)	Claims Adjusters, Appraisers, Examiners, and Investigators	(18%)
Graders and Sorters, Agricultural Products	(1,421)	Bailiffs, Correctional Officers, and Jailers	(16%)
Radio and Telecommunications Equipment Installers and Repairers	(1,412)	Hosts and Hostesses, Restaurant, Lounge, and Coffee Shop	(16%)
Tellers	(1,407)	Engineering Technologists and Technicians, Except Drafters	(15%)
Construction Laborers	(1,100)	Derrick, Rotary Drill, and Service Unit Operators, Oil and Gas	(15%)
Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers	(1,087)	Miscellaneous Teachers and Instructors	(14%)
First-Line Supervisors of Sales Workers	(1,043)	Medical Records Specialists	(14%)
Office Clerks, General	(1,021)	Credit Counselors and Loan Officers	(14%)
Receptionists and Information Clerks	(657)	Cashiers	(14%)
Miscellaneous Teachers and Instructors	(652)	Miscellaneous Agricultural Workers	(12%)
Crushing, Grinding, Polishing, Mixing, and Blending Workers	(612)	Waiters and Waitresses	(12%)
Hosts and Hostesses, Restaurant, Lounge, and Coffee Shop	(594)	Retail Salespersons	(11%)
Engineering Technologists and Technicians, Except Drafters	(593)	Insurance Claims and Policy Processing Clerks	(11%)
Counter and Rental Clerks and Parts Salespersons	(530)	Billing and Posting Clerks	(10%)
Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	(521)	Painters and Paperhangers	(10%)
Billing and Posting Clerks	(474)	Clinical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians	(10%)
Dishwashers	(470)	Dishwashers	(9%)
Painters and Paperhangers	(432)	Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	(9%)
Derrick, Rotary Drill, and Service Unit Operators, Oil and Gas	(415)	Receptionists and Information Clerks	(8%)
Claims Adjusters, Appraisers, Examiners, and Investigators	(372)	Construction Laborers	(8%)
Medical Records Specialists	(302)	Tax Examiners, Collectors and Preparers, and Revenue Agents	(8%)
Credit Counselors and Loan Officers	(280)	First-Line Supervisors of Sales Workers	(6%)



Insurance Claims and Policy Processing Clerks	(236)	Counter and Rental Clerks and Parts Salespersons	(6%)
Welding, Soldering, and Brazing Workers	(207)	Drywall Installers, Ceiling Tile Installers, and Tapers	(5%)
Recreation and Fitness Workers	(206)	Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers	(5%)
Tax Examiners, Collectors and Preparers, and Revenue Agents	(202)	Welding, Soldering, and Brazing Workers	(4%)
Clinical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians	(195)	Helpers, Construction Trades	(4%)
Drywall Installers, Ceiling Tile Installers, and Tapers	(171)	Office Clerks, General	(4%)
Helpers, Construction Trades	(87)	Clergy	(3%)
Securities, Commodities, and Financial Services Sales Agents	(74)	Securities, Commodities, and Financial Services Sales Agents	(3%)
Clergy	(69)	Recreation and Fitness Workers	(3%)
Carpet, Floor, and Tile Installers and Finishers	(46)	Carpet, Floor, and Tile Installers and Finishers	(2%)

Source: Lightcast Occupation Table, SJV RPU, 4 Digit SOC

### III. REGIONAL INDICATORS

The California Workforce Development Board has established “regional indicators” to assess coordination and measure progress within California’s 15 RPUs. The indicators serve to track processes and activities utilized by regions, providing a foundation for regional approaches that align with the needs of businesses in key sectors.

Regions must choose at least two of the following indicators:

Indicator A: The region has a process to communicate industry workforce needs to supply-side partners.

Indicator B: The region has policies supporting equity and strives to improve job quality.

Indicator C: The region has shared target populations of emphasis.

Indicator D: The region deploys shared/pooled resources to provide services, training, and education to meet the target population's needs.

#### A. Regional Indicators and Associated Metrics

The SJVAC RPU has selected indicators B and D. The following are the outcomes and metrics established for these two regional indicators of efficiency and effectiveness.

***Metrics for Indicator B: The region has policies supporting access and strives to improve job quality.***

**Outcome 1:** The region has developed benchmarks and measurements to track progress toward ensuring access and job quality and serving employers that provide quality jobs that provide economic security through family sustaining wages and comprehensive benefits.

The region developed a statement on system access along with corresponding principles that will support regional work and can be adopted by local boards to fulfill goals within their areas. Each local area will determine its primary target population. WIOA performance measures provide the foundation for metrics associated with this outcome.

**Outcome 2:** The region has developed benchmarks measures to track individuals that complete training and/or attain industry-recognized credentials aligned with the sectors and occupations emphasized in the Regional Plan.

The SJVAC region has developed training completion benchmarks and measures for target populations. The CalJOBS system will be used to track data.

***Metrics for Indicator D: Region deploys shared/pooled resources to provide services, training, and education to meet target populations’ needs.***

**Outcome 1:** The region has a system in place to track co-enrollment strategies to serve participants holistically and track individuals that complete training and/or attain industry

recognized credentials aligned with the sectors and occupations emphasized in the Regional Plan.

The local boards within the SJVAC RPU utilize the CalJOBS system to manage co-enrollments, while recognizing that the system has limited capabilities for co-enrollment reporting. Some local boards in the region offer cohort training for their customers. In such cases, services are coordinated, and customer progress information is shared. For example, as part of the English language learners served under SJVAC RPU's Regional Planning Implementation grants 4.0 and 5.0, individuals enrolled in training were tracked to determine how many obtained an industry-recognized credential and, of these individuals, how many receive certificates aligned to the region's target sectors and local demand occupations.

**Outcome 2:** The region has developed benchmarks and methods to track workforce staff and partner professional development training on services, job training, and education programs to meet target populations' needs.

- The SJVAC RPU conducts a bi-annual assessment of staff development needs to determine training that will be made available to regional partners and staff. Trainers are identified and properly procured, and a training calendar is developed. Those who participate in regional training complete evaluations at the conclusion of each session and follow-up surveys are conducted to gauge participants' retention of information and the impact of training in the workplace. Training topics are aligned with goals of both the Regional Plan and each of the eight WDBs' Local Plans.
- The region addresses all priority training areas for frontline staff that are identified in State policy guidance on required content for Local Plans. These areas include:
  - Expand proficiency in digital fluency and distance learning.
  - Ensure cultural competency, and.
  - Understand of the experiences of trauma-exposed populations

**Outcome 3:** Leveraging resources across local areas for regional initiatives.

This outcome is measured through collaboration and leveraging of financial resources, including the following:

- HR Hotline Service: The SJVAC and Middle Sierra regions contract with the California Employers Association to offer "HR Advice on Demand" services for local employers. Participating WDBs include Kern/Inyo/Mono, Madera County, Merced County, Mother Lode, Stanislaus County, and Tulare County. Each participating local area contributes a fair share of the cost for these services.
- Regional Equity Recovery Partnership (RERP) Grant: The SJVAC region and partners leveraged \$3,941,926 in support of RERP grant services to targeted populations.

- Joint Procurement of a One-Stop Operator: The WDBs in Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, and Stanislaus counties entered into an agreement for the procurement of a One-Stop Operator. This consortium is currently procuring a new OSO to be in place by July 1, 2025. The new Sub-regional contract will include Kings, Madera, Stanislaus, and San Joaquin Counties.

## **B. Impact of Indicators and Metrics on Service Delivery**

The SJVAC RPU's regional indicators, metrics, and outcomes will have the following anticipated effects on programs, services, strategies, and approaches at the local service delivery level.

***Local Service Delivery Impact for Indicator B: The region has policies supporting equity and strives to improve job quality.***

The development of the regional statement on access and related corresponding principles enables local boards to develop local service delivery goals and strategies resulting in increased participation by and outcomes for underserved and vulnerable populations. Service strategies that target populations that are most in need of services strive to increase enrollments in WIOA services; referral to and co-enrollment in partner programs and services; co-case management of participants across two or more partners; completion of academic and vocational training; credential attainment; job placement in career path employment; wages; and job retention. Over time, local strategies utilized to improve services and outcomes for targeted populations will be shared and, potentially, scaled across the SJVAC region.

***Local Service Delivery Impact Indicator D: Region deploys shared/pooled resources to provide services, training, and education to meet target populations needs.***

Tracking referrals and co-enrollments will enable local boards to identify strategies for holistic service delivery that result in better employment, earnings, and retention outcomes for participants. The indicator's focus on training for local boards' staff and partners will enable frontline staff and others to provide services that address participant barriers and respond to their needs. In addition, continued leveraging of financial resources among local boards will provide WDBs greater budget flexibility to meet their organizational needs.

To support Indicator D, local board Directors and board Chairs have agreed to meet annually to discuss regional and local activities, share best practices, and have conversations on challenges and opportunities.

## IV. FOSTERING DEMAND-DRIVEN SKILLS ATTAINMENT

Labor market information and intelligence gathered from representatives of businesses in priority sectors help to inform the content and quality of local and regional workforce programs. The workforce programs administered by local boards in the Central Valley are intensively focused on career pathways within key sectors of the regional economy.

### A. In-Demand Industry Sectors for the Region

SJVAC RPU's PY partners have again selected the following sectors as priorities:

- Advanced manufacturing
- Construction (including public infrastructure)
- Energy (including green energy)
- Healthcare
- Transportation and logistics
- Agriculture

The SJVAC Regional Plan continues to prioritize these sectors due to their prevalence within the region and predicted strength well into the foreseeable future. While some of these sectors have less growth than others, over the four-year period covered by the plan, there is demand for workers in these industries based on worker replacement considerations and regional demand for workers in emerging sectors, such as clean and renewable energy.

An analysis of the region's in-demand industries and occupations is provided in Section II-C of the Plan.

#### ***Regional Labor Market Conditions***

Despite the gravity of the acute public health crisis that the COVID-19 pandemic presented, the labor market and regional economy have proven to be remarkably resilient. Nearly all major industries have shown expansion. As the economy bounced back more quickly than originally anticipated, original labor market data trajectories become more apparent. A previous regional analysis done in 2021 noted the emergence of several key industries along with the potential weakening of the total farm labor employment. For instance, the Transportation and Logistics sector has shown strong growth in the region. This is due to relatively inexpensive land, access to major highway arteries, and an increasing share of retail trade being conducted online and with fast delivery guarantees.

Other notable gains are found in Mining, Logging, and Construction, Educational and Health Services, and Leisure and Hospitality. Wildfires in 2021 and 2022 left large areas of dead timber within various public and private jurisdictions that will continue to take many years to evaluate and remove. While state and local governments have taken recent steps to limit the expansion of fossil fuel extraction, there remains a robust

extractives industry, specifically in Kern County. Public Health outcomes for much of the San Joaquin Valley region are lower relative to the rest of the state owing to poverty, lack of health care access, environmental pollutants, and other reasons specific to the geography and economy of the region.

There are some variances in the total job gains within the RPU's eight local workforce areas, but notably all have shown substantial growth. Despite having a slightly higher unemployment rate compared to the rest of the state, this suggests a robust labor market that has approached all-time highs in many of the region's counties.

### ***Economic Growth and Incomes***

The Central Valley region has generally seen positive economic growth in the five years from 2019 to 2024, the last year of available county level data that the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis has released. Historically, the agriculture industry has represented a major share of economic activity for much of the region. Economic output from this sector, along with the extractives sector, relies heavily on worldwide commodity markets and is subject to pricing swings year to year. This can have the effect of clouding overall growth numbers and masking growth in the non-farm economy. Still, agriculture is the economic anchor for the region, and a bad year for agricultural output will have spillover effects in tax revenue, public services, and other closely related industries.

Since 2019, the region has seen a slower cumulative growth in economic output compared to the rest of the state, although that trend was reversed in 2023. A slowdown in the technology sector, the entertainment industry, and other high value economic activities present in other regions of the state can help to explain these circumstances.

## **B. Sector and Related Industry-Focused Initiatives**

There are fully developed sector-focused career pathway programs in the Central Valley, many of which were developed based on specific requests from and input by industry. Other initiatives are emerging. While many of these sector initiatives already cross local boundaries, others are suitable for scaling up throughout the region. Examples of current and anticipated sector and industry-focused initiatives include:

### ***Healthforce Partners - Healthcare***

The healthcare sector in the Northern San Joaquin Valley needs qualified workers. Community residents want to pursue healthcare careers. To achieve these compatible goals, healthcare employers, educators, workforce development professionals, and community leaders worked together to launch an innovative partnership: HealthForce Partners Northern San Joaquin Valley. The mission is to serve as a catalyst to improve career pathway opportunities for community residents and to increase the supply of skilled healthcare workers. HealthForce Partners brings together leaders from healthcare, education, and workforce development to develop strategies that meet the needs of the region's employers and expand educational and work opportunities for community

residents. The partnership convenes key stakeholders to identify workforce gaps and develop solutions to address them. Programs include, but are not limited to: Registered Nursing, Certified Nursing Assistant, Medical Assistant, and Behavioral Health.

This program continues to expand to keep pace with the needs of the healthcare sector. Healthforce has and continues to provide insight on the needs of the health care sector for multiple local areas. Healthforce Partners is actively working toward having a presence in more AJCCs to help staff and the public fully understand the needs of the healthcare field and the experiences and skills necessary to fill critical roles in the healthcare field.

### ***Tulare - Kings Health Care Partnership – Healthcare***

This industry-driven partnership addresses the workforce, education, training, and competitiveness needs of the healthcare industry in Tulare and Kings counties. Established in 2009, it has 6 participating organizations representing over 9,000 employees. The partnership hosts an annual exploratory career conference for high school students, plans and facilitates an annual teacher externship event, and works to address industry pipeline needs through ongoing partnerships with education and workforce development. Tulare County WIB provides staffing support for this partnership, as this approach continues to function as an effective means of engagement with industry.

### ***EMS Corp – Healthcare***

Stanislaus County and Fresno County are engaged in the EMS Corp, which targets youth and young adults. The goal of the program is to prepare for entry level positions in the Emergency Medical Technicians field. This is considered a starting point on a career path to many other occupations in the healthcare sector. With additional education and training, EMT's may eventually become hospital support staff, Licensed Vocational Nurses, Registered Nurses, Surgical Technicians and other healthcare professionals. The EMS Corp is designed to spark interest in and give underserved youth an opportunity to join the healthcare sector workforce.

### ***South Valley Industrial Collaborative - Manufacturing***

The South Valley Industrial Collaborative (SVIC) is a partnership for community excellence that provides a platform to build industry-led, industry-driven, and community-supported partnerships to strengthen economies in the South San Joaquin Valley. This partnership grew out of an Industrial Advisory Board for which the Tulare County WIB provided staffing support. It is now an industry controlled 501(c)(6). The South Valley Industrial Collaborative provides a sub-regional platform, particularly focused on Tulare and Kings counties, for industry and businesses to collaborate and connect with regional, state, and national partner organizations to support the region's efforts to become a globally competitive location for manufacturing and industrial jobs. Key priorities for the SVIC Focus Teams are talent acquisition, development and retention; policies and regulations impacting business; and infrastructure.

***Tulare - Kings College and Career Collaborative – Multiple Industries***

Workforce boards from Tulare and Kings counties co-facilitate a workgroup to strengthen and scale industry partnerships. This year, the workgroup prioritized the launch of three regional industry advisory boards to connect education and industry. Workgroup members include representatives from chambers of commerce, the K-12 education system, post-secondary education, and workforce development. Volunteers have agreed to staff and support the advisory groups, develop an industry-focused structure, participate in facilitation of training, and launch three regional advisory boards: Business and Finance; Information and Communication Technology; and Arts, Media, and Entertainment. The workgroup is also considering advisory boards for Manufacturing and Product Design and Building Trades and Construction.

***Tulare-Kings TRAIN – Multiple Industries***

The Training Resources Aligned for Industry Need (TRAIN) Network facilitates coordination between local workforce areas and educational institutions by aligning program development with the needs of businesses in the region's target sectors. This is achieved through established sector partnership convenings, shared labor market analyses, and direct engagement with industry representatives to identify skills gaps. Education partners use this input to adapt curricula and create programs that address workforce demands, ensuring alignment with industry standards and regional economic goals. Current sector partnerships include one in healthcare and an industrial partnership, as described above, with plans to launch an agriculture sector partnership by utilizing leveraged funds.

***Fresno-Madera K-16 Collaborative***

Fresno State Foundation, on behalf of the Central San Joaquin Valley K-16 Partnership was awarded \$18.13M by the California Department of General Services, Office of Public School Construction's Regional K-16 Education Collaborative Grant Program to equitably strengthen education-to-workforce pathways and ensure that educational, vocational, and workforce programs work in partnership to address issues of income, racial, and gender disparities in education and employment.

***Kern County - Displaced Oil and Gas Workers Fund (DOGWF)***

Kern County Employers Training Resource was awarded the Displaced Oil and Gas Workers Fund (DOGWF) Grant in the amount of \$11,244,000 from the State of California EDD and California Labor and Workforce Development Agency. The grant's purpose is to provide services to oil and gas workers who have been displaced due to the recent shift in the oil industry in California. Participants will receive training services through a diverse selection of Industries while also receiving supportive services. The goal is to transition participants into other industry sectors that provide stable careers and comparable wages to the oil industry. The grant will serve 750 participants.



### ***Central San Joaquin Valley K-16 Partnership***

This collaboration of the Fresno-Madera K-16 Collaborative and the Tulare- Kings College and Career Collaborative was created to strengthen the region's education and socio-economic conditions, leadership, support, and impact on K-16 students and adult learners. The aim of the partnership is to eliminate intersegmental silos and unite partners to build relationship infrastructure for future work. By braiding approaches and resources, the partners are confident there will be a significant increase in filling an LMI-supported job talent pipeline to ensure that individuals thrive personally and professionally.

### ***Biomethane Production – Green Energy***

The Central Valley has seen substantial renewable energy production and infrastructure construction over the last five years. One area that is evolving and on the cusp of moving from small independent operations to more commercial production is biomethane producing anaerobic digesters, which use organic matter (dairy manure was the first) to produce two key products: renewable biomethane that is fed back into the grid through current infrastructure and remaining organic matter that is used as a natural fertilizer for agriculture. Growth is being spurred by new regulations. Specifically, these are the Mandatory Commercial Organics Recycling provisions that were put in place in 2016 under AB 1826 which phased up in September 2020. These provisions require all businesses with more than 2 cubic yards of solid waste to recycle a minimum of 50% of their organic waste, rather than dispose of it in the land fill. This has created a secondary market for the purchase of organic waste which supports transport, builds supporting equipment, and provision of supporting infrastructure from SCE and PG&E. The first large scale projects in the upper and lower parts of the Central Valley (complexes at least 100 acres each) have completed feasibility studies. This sector of the economy is currently impacting all Central Valley counties. This is exemplified by a facility in Madera County and by investments in and scaling projects in Stanislaus and Merced counties. The workforce system can provide training and placement services to support this emerging energy subsector.

### ***Carbon Capture and Sequestration Project***

Kern County is working on a carbon management business park that could clean the air in the Central Valley by participating in the U.S. Department of Energy's "Local Energy Action Program called "LEAP." Participating in the LEAP Program would be the first such initiative to explicitly align with the economic development and social related priorities of the County's B3K Prosperity economic development collaboration. The LEAP Technical Assistance Grant seeks to help communities access the economic and environmental benefits of clean energy and clean energy manufacturing. Opportunities and potential benefits include lower local air pollution, lower utility costs and energy burdens, improved access to reliable energy, enhanced economic productivity, and new clean energy supply chain and manufacturing.

***The Good Jobs Challenge***

The Good Jobs Challenge is a 4-county regional project led by the Fresno Economic Development Corporation where Madera, Fresno, and Tulare WDBs serve as backbone leads for the Transportation, Construction, and Manufacturing industries to facilitate sector partnerships between industry and education partners, determine gaps in training curriculum and pipeline, and increase access to training and expand work opportunities to upskill individuals. Madera's Transportation partnership has led to the development of our first Truck Driving Extravaganza and Job Fair as well as the development of a School Bus Driver training program between Advanced Career Institute and the Madera Unified School District to meet the needs of local employers.

***Valley Build – Construction***

The Valley Build High Road Construction Careers (HRCC) project is led by the Fresno Regional WDB and serves an expansive region that includes the following fourteen (14) counties: Alpine, Calaveras, Fresno, Kings, Inyo, Kern, Madera, Mariposa, Mono, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Tulare, and Tuolumne. The project provides inclusive access to MC-3 pre-apprenticeship training and related services that enable individuals from all backgrounds to qualify for employment and acceptance into apprenticeships in the skilled building and construction trades. The goal of the project is to build a network of community partners throughout the region to promote Valley Build and to recruit target candidates for pre-apprenticeship training.

***Central Valley Forestry Corps***

The Central Valley Forestry Corps is a partnership between the Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board, the Mother Lode WDB, Madera WDB, Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission's Local Conservation Corps, Reedley College, and Columbia College. The Central Valley Forestry Corps will train the next generation of forestry workers to address the natural disasters occurring within our forests. Beginning with funding from CalFire, the initiative is preparing an untapped workforce within the Central Valley to assist in the removal of more than 100 million dead trees. Training is crucial to decrease the number of wildfires in California.

***Inland Ports Initiative***

Fresno, Merced, and San Joaquin counties collaborated on a grant application to the California State Transportation Agency Port and Freight Infrastructure Program that seeks to improve the capacity, safety, efficiency, and resilience of goods movement to, from, and through California's ports. With a key focus on the transportation and warehousing sector, tied to this initiative will be training for workers across a wide range of occupations.

***Fresno-Merced Future of Food (F3)***

Serving Fresno, Kings, Tulare, Madera, and Merced counties, the Fresno-Merced Future of Food Innovation (F3) coalition, led by the Central Valley Community Foundation, will receive approximately \$65.1 million from Economic Development Administration (EDA) to accelerate the integration of technology and skills in the region's agriculture industry, improving productivity and job quality for existing farmworkers while driving a more resilient and sustainable food system. The coalition unites partners such as University of California, Merced, the California Farmworkers Foundation, industry leadership like the California Fresh Fruit Association, regional philanthropy, and local government around a vision for a more innovative, equitable, and resilient agricultural industry in one of the country's most important food-producing regions. Today, California's Central Valley produces 25 percent of the nation's food supply yet has one of the highest food insecurity rates among low wage farm workers. EDA funding will launch iCREATE, a new ag-tech hub, with the mission to accelerate the development and transfer of technology between researchers at local universities and farmers across the region, with a focus on reaching BIPOC or underserved small farmers. At the same time, community colleges throughout the Central Valley will receive access to new technology and training to equip workers with the skills needed to access higher quality, higher paying jobs in ag tech, improving both farm productivity and wages.

***UC Merced Water Systems Management Lab Project***

The project examines the impacts of the drought on California agriculture. Recent California climate extremes, which include among the most severe droughts on record, highlighted rapidly changing conditions that affect water supply for agriculture and the state's growing population. Incremental water management and institutional learning at all levels has provided building blocks to better manage water shortages. At the same time, communities connected to agricultural areas share, to varying extents, multi-year drought impacts such as water shortages, high temperatures, and their lingering effects through dry wells, fire risk, and degraded air and water quality. A project team made up of UC and CSU academics, in partnership with the Public Policy Institute of California Water Policy Center, will develop various milestone products including economic impact assessments, policy briefs, and an open access web tool that builds from currently available tools, and past collaborations. From this information, the workforce system in the Central Valley will assess and respond to workforce needs arising from water management strategies.

***Stanislaus 2030 – Multiple Industries***

Stanislaus 2030 leads collective action towards implementing the economic and workforce initiatives identified in its Investment Blueprint through coordination and aligning efforts across governmental agencies, private-public partnerships, educational institutions, businesses, service providers, and community groups for the greatest impact for all in local communities.

Child Care Expansion: \$1 million toward Child Care Expansion that will be administered by First 5 Stanislaus. These funds will support the Stanislaus 2030 Child Care Implementation Plan, which aims to scale home-based childcare entrepreneurship across the county. Stanislaus 2030 and First 5 will continue to engage collaborative partners over the next two years to achieve the goal of launching or expanding 200 home-based childcare businesses, which will create an additional 1,600 licensed child care spaces across the county.

Small Business Development: \$2 million from Stanislaus County will be administered by the Stanislaus Workforce Development Agency to manage projects to bolster the small business ecosystem, including launching a one-stop platform for businesses to access support and financing, a CDFI Cohort Program to manage loans and provide technical assistance, and a Business Support Cohort Program to build and expand capacity for businesses to develop service offerings, streamline operations, and improve service delivery. Considering that 99.9% of businesses in Stanislaus County are small businesses, with 56.8% of Stanislaus' workforce employed by a small business, this funding will be instrumental in catalyzing the bedrock of the region's economy.

Talent Development: \$1.5 million will also be managed by the Stanislaus Workforce Development Agency to strengthen the manufacturing talent pipeline, ensuring the local workforce meets the demands of expanding industries. The fund will offer grants and technical assistance to local education and workforce institutions for programs that advance strategies identified in the Stanislaus County Manufacturing Strategic Workforce Plan, and will enhance industry and education collaboration, address manufacturing perception challenges, improve job quality, expand apprenticeships and other "earn and learn" models, pilot and test innovative strategies to reduce time to certificate/credential completion, and develop robust career pathways.

### ***Regional Equity and Recovery Partnerships (RERP)***

Through the High Road approach of advancing economic opportunities and strengthening the workforce based on industry demand, the SJVAC region's "Skills to Success" projects will provide access to various training programs and work-based learning and increase opportunities and access for targeted populations. The targeted populations will gain access to the necessary skills to fill the skill gaps and become self-sufficient.

Fresno Regional WDB – Construction and Manufacturing: With the anticipated influx of public infrastructure spending, FRWDB in coordination with Fresno City College and the State Center Adult Education Consortium seeks to address the human capital needs of the Fresno metropolitan area and the surrounding rural communities by providing short-term training that will equip residents to secure quality, good wage jobs in the two sectors.

Kern, Inyo, Mono WDB – Healthcare: The Kern/Inyo/Mono RERP project, in partnership with education, is designed to address industry needs and educational capacity to

increase the pipeline of healthcare workers. The RERP initiative will address unmet needs and expand access to healthcare careers and quality jobs, especially among minority residents. Presently, Employer Training Resources has a partnership with Bakersfield College, Cerro Coso Community College, and Taft College to increase the number of individuals trained to be Registered Nurses, Licensed Vocational Nurses, Nursing Assistants, Medical Assistants, Emergency Medical Technicians, and Dental Hygienists.

Madera County WDB – Manufacturing: The project in Madera County will focus on manufacturing training for middle-skill jobs in the industrial maintenance, manufacturing and welding career pathways. Participants will earn a certificate of achievement in one of the pathways that prepares them for entrance into the manufacturing workforce or the ability to transfer to a four-year college program.

Merced County WDB – Manufacturing: Merced County will focus on the development of GED/High-School Diploma-to-Skilled Manufacturing pipeline. The project will cover Merced County as a whole but will utilize culturally competent outreach strategies to focus on residents living outside of the County's two largest cities (Merced and Los Banos) in the County's more rural communities.

San Joaquin County WDB – Manufacturing and Transportation and Logistics: The San Joaquin County WDB will address the workforce gaps in warehousing, goods movement, distribution and manufacturing. In partnership with the Delta Sierra Adult Education Alliance (DSAEA), the WDB will provide onramps to career paths in the transportation-distribution-logistics and advanced manufacturing sectors for community residents, including pathways to middle skill jobs requiring some college.

Stanislaus County WDB – Manufacturing: Stanislaus County will assist workers to enter the manufacturing occupations, discover their personal interests and strengths, and prepare for an apprenticeship that will lead to high wage occupations and journey-level skill attainment. Stanislaus County will offer options for job seekers to enter the manufacturing occupational career ladder and provide incumbent workers with tools necessary to further their value to employers.

Tulare County WIB – Construction, Manufacturing, Transportation and Logistics: The Tulare Workforce Investment Board (WIB) intends to use this investment to accelerate the work the WIB and its community colleges are doing together to ensure that the local economy expands and that its historically marginalized populations have an opportunity to participate in the resulting prosperity by securing quality jobs in demand sectors.

### **C. Strategies to Communicate with Regional Employers**

Most business contacts are made at the local level between the eight WDBs and employers within their service areas. This is primarily accomplished through direct contact and outreach by Business Service Representatives, and through sector partnerships. When two or more local boards work with the same business across their jurisdictions, they make every effort to collaborate and coordinate messaging and service delivery.

These efforts are common in rapid response and layoff aversion activities, the formation of industry-focused partnerships that cross regions, and with businesses that are establishing new operations in two or more areas in the Central Valley.

The region contracts with the California Employers Association to offer employers a no-cost option to assist businesses with their human resource needs. A Human Resources (HR) Hotline allows employers to call in five days a week and connect with a live HR director who is ready to answer questions on a variety of HR topics. In addition, no-cost monthly webinars are available that cover a variety of topics businesses are faced with. The utilization of the HR Hotline has allowed local boards throughout the region to engage with and offer value added resources to businesses. Local boards will continue to promote the HR hotline with the goal of encouraging more businesses to take advantage of this valuable service.

Several WBDs in the region are advancing sector partnerships in regional priority industries. The creation and facilitation of sector partnerships allows local boards to engage with employers to find solutions that will help advance in demand sectors. The utilization of sector partnerships and sector strategies greatly increases the collaboration and relationships between industry and local boards. Over the next four years local boards will continue to develop, foster, and advance industry-wide sector partnerships to expand business relationships throughout the region.

Local boards have collaborated on the development of a regional website focused on services for businesses. The Valley Work site communicates how workforce programs assist businesses, provides examples of strategies that have been deployed to support Valley-based companies, and includes contact information for employers. To improve the utility of the site, local boards continue to examine ways in which it can be revised for greater access to information about regional support for businesses. Under consideration and review are information about the HR Hotline service; promoting recruitment events, such as job fairs throughout the region; providing information beyond direct local board services, such as “employer tax credit” information; highlighting sector strategy initiatives; and various other enhancements. The local boards continue to work through the Central California Workforce Collaborative as described in Section VII (A) and its workgroups to design, develop, and implement improvements to the Valley Work site.

## V. ENABLING UPWARD MOBILITY FOR ALL CALIFORNIANS

Workforce system leaders throughout the Central Valley fully support the State Plan's focus on ensuring that workforce and education programs are accessible for all Californians, especially populations that experience barriers to employment. The region is committed to promoting access for everyone to training and services needed to prepare for careers that offer opportunities for long-term economic self-sufficiency and economic security.

### A. Working with Businesses that Provide Quality Jobs

The eight local boards all focus on identifying businesses that pay competitive wages and offer benefits and on matching qualified job seekers to openings with these businesses. Still, the nature of the work requires local workforce systems to assist job seekers from a wide range of backgrounds with varying levels of skills and experience. Local boards' strategies concentrate on the use of career pathway programs to train and prepare job seekers to become competitive candidates who qualify for good jobs that are commensurate with their skills and experience. Job placement on the path to a high road job is the first step for many participants.

#### ***High Road Jobs Strategy***

The local boards have prioritized sectors that represent high demand, high wage jobs. Such jobs exist in healthcare, logistics, construction, manufacturing, clean energy, and other industries targeted by the region. Companies in these sectors that pay the highest wages and offer the best overall packages to employees are those that are highly competitive and/or have unique positions within the economy. They include large companies, utilities, public agencies, and businesses whose workers are represented under collective bargaining agreements, among others. There are also small and medium-sized businesses that offer very attractive wages and benefits in an attempt to secure the best talent, enabling the businesses to grow and to fare better in the marketplace. As stated above, the local workforce system targets these companies and refers qualified candidates for available jobs. Because many of the job seekers accessing local workforce systems have limited work experience and entry-level skills, local boards also work with a wide range of other businesses, including those with jobs paying lower wages and offering fewer benefits. These jobs are not intended to be jobs with no potential for advancement. Rather, for job seekers on a career path, they provide the opportunity to gain experience, build their resumes, and put skills (including those that are newly acquired as the result of training) to work in a competitive work environment. The jobs are a step on a career path to high skilled, high wage, high road jobs.

#### ***Focus on Career Pathways***

The local boards represented by the SJVAC RPU have implemented regional career pathway strategies that begin with the provision of information. Such information is available through a regional initiative that culminated in the development of a website,

[www.careersinthevalley.com](http://www.careersinthevalley.com), which encompasses the entire SJVAC RPU. Job seekers engage in career exploration that informs choices about the jobs and careers they want to train for and increases their knowledge about training, skills, and experience necessary for these jobs and careers. For example, healthcare is the sector with the highest demand for jobs in the Central Valley and it provides a range of career ladder and career lattice opportunities. Most job seekers do not come to the one-stop system with skills that will enable them to become a Registered Nurse (RN) within a year. However, there are less skilled positions that can be trained for in that timeframe. Workforce system participants become aware of the steps necessary to move from a Certified Nursing Assistant position to that of RN. The position is part of the career path they have selected. The entry-level job and its wages are a stop on the way to a career destination.

### ***Promoting Job Quality***

The local boards promote job quality by looking for the best job matches for participants at all skill levels. They also do so through investments, such as focusing on on-the-job training positions that pay wages above a prescribed level and by only approving training that prepares individuals for high demand jobs in priority sectors through career pathways programs and other models focused on high growth and other demand industries.

There is no regional policy on job quality, as there is no structure through which a “region” can adopt policy. Policy is the purview of workforce development boards. Some WDBs have adopted or are working toward a definition within their respective local areas. Tulare County WIB has developed a forward-thinking definition that is “modular” in its design, recognizing that a “quality” job may vary based on a worker’s characteristics, career path, family size, priorities, and other factors. The Kern-Inyo-Mono WDB has defined a quality job for its Better Bakersfield and Boundless Kern (B3K) Prosperity Neighborhood Initiative as one paying no less than \$21.80 an hour.

In October 2022, The Stanislaus County Workforce Development Board adopted a tiered approach self-sufficiency standard which included a Good Jobs definition. Stanislaus 2030 released the 2022 Market Assessment Executive Summary in which they identified a good job starting at \$28.58. As a foundation, a good job means workers earning enough for the family to achieve self-sufficiency and economic mobility. Jobs in the report were categorized as “good”, “promising”, or “other” based on earnings, benefits and durability.

This definition of Good Jobs includes:

- i. Pay at least the target annual wage, meeting expenses and savings needs without California “safety net” benefits (e.g. SNAP, TANF, Medicaid).
- ii. Provide employer-sponsored health insurance, proxy for likelihood of other benefits like paid leave and retirement contributions; and
- iii. Afford stable career options to continue holding a good job in the future, considering factors like automation and career progressions

Other local areas in the region are working on producing a definition of job quality that aligns with median pay scales relevant to the local labor market. In some cases, this may



be related to a percentage of the Lower Living Standard Income Level for the area. Workforce leadership will continue to engage board members in discussions about job quality to determine what fits best with the policy framework of their local workforce systems.

## **B. Shared Target Populations and Targeted Service Strategies**

While the SJVAC RPU covers a massive area representing about one-fourth of California's geography, there are many commonalities throughout the region, including populations that are most in need of workforce services. The region's ability to identify shared populations and develop common strategies to meet the needs of these job seekers is enhanced by the WDBs' commitments to collaboration that are described throughout this plan.

### ***Shared Populations***

Across the entire region, target populations include English language learners, individuals who lack a high school credential, those who are basic skills deficient, CalWORKs recipients, individuals with disabilities, formerly incarcerated individuals, communities that are digitally disenfranchised, non-custodial parents with child support enforcement orders, disconnected youth, and veterans, among others. At a sub-regional level, there are also target groups shared by two or more boards. For example, boards in the northern part of the Valley serve many individuals who become commuters to jobs in the Capital region and the Silicon Valley. Counties which are home to the Valley's largest cities are increasingly focused on working with homeless and housing insecure individuals and families. Five of the region's boards completed a grant project that addressed workforce and support needs of individuals experiencing opioid addiction. Local boards agree that many served by their workforce systems have multiple barriers to employment.

### ***Targeted Service Strategies***

The region's local boards use many of the same strategies to address the needs of target populations. Often, due to distance factors, these are common strategies among the local boards, rather than systems that share providers or services. Joint grants in which multiple boards participate (e.g., Prison to Employment, Regional Equity and Recovery Partnerships) offer opportunities to apply common service strategies for target populations. One example is the use of Navigators across many grants. This strategy has proven successful in working with job seekers with disabilities, English language learners and other vulnerable populations. Moving forward, regional workforce leaders expect many opportunities to identify services strategies that may be effective for target populations across many local areas. As local boards address workforce needs during economic recovery, issues will likely arise that require new approaches that could be developed regionally and implemented locally.

## VI. CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The PY 2025-28 planning period marks the first time the eight local boards within the San Joaquin Valley are addressing environmental sustainability and climate resilience within the Regional Plan. However, the WDBs and their workforce system partners are not unfamiliar with these challenges and their impact on the regional economy and local labor markets. Within the expansive ten-county region, issues such as dead and dying trees, movement away from fossil fuels, and water conservation needs are beginning to affect the focus and content of workforce programs. Strategies have been developed to address the workforce needs associated with these and other issues impacting the environment. What is needed to gain momentum in these efforts is an overarching plan and structure to shape workforce programs into effective models to support a climate neutral transition.

### Opportunities for Building a Climate Resilient Economy and Workforce

As part of the process of developing the Regional Plan, local boards examined research and looked to existing efforts dealing with environmental sustainability in the Central Valley. A 2024 report by the Clean Air Task Force (CATF), [\*An Exploration of Options and Opportunities for the San Joaquin Valley's Clean Energy Future\*](#) stood out as uniquely pertinent to the interests of the local boards with respect to climate and the environment. The report reflects more than a year of intensive efforts to engage local government leaders, community leaders, subject matter experts, and state agencies on what a clean energy future might look like in the region. These leaders developed the following vision statement that shows how clean energy investments can contribute to the region:

*The San Joaquin Valley will leverage clean energy investments to authentically engage impacted communities, create a dynamic and inclusive economy that elevates local talent and enduring community benefits, generates high-road jobs, cultivates innovation, supports federal and state decarbonization efforts, and accelerates achievement of the region's sustainability goals.*

According to the report, the region has high resource potential and multiple pathways to support a clean energy future. The Valley is well suited to be a key player in the clean energy transition given its existing industrial base, rich land resources, skilled labor, multiple academic institutions, access to major transportation routes, and existing transmission infrastructure, alongside solar and other renewable energy and fuel potential. Clean energy brings new opportunities, not only by the direct value and jobs it creates, but also through its potential to attract other supply chain and manufacturing sectors, which can create sustained economic activity for the region.

Key activities for state and local partners will include:

- More detailed planning, including the completion of the Jobs First plans (discussed below);
- The development of locally determined community benefit agreements and/or frameworks;

- Workforce training needs assessment and training initiatives; and
- Federal, state, philanthropic, and private investments in project implementation.

The report states that Valley leaders have taken ownership of this effort and are continuing to push forward a thoughtful, self-determined, and coordinated approach to clean energy planning and established the following objectives:

### SJV Clean Energy Objectives

Objectives		Potential Outcomes
Equity	Help those who least benefit from the current economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility</li> <li>• Embed environmental justice &amp; Justice40<sup>23</sup> principles</li> <li>• Create local wealth</li> <li>• Construct an economy that benefits everyone in some way</li> </ul>
High Road Jobs	Create quality jobs that stay in the Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure sustainable, long-term jobs with investment in workforce and professional development and training programs</li> <li>• Create quality jobs that provide a living wage and benefits, such as health care and retirement</li> </ul>
Wealth Creation	Attract business and investment to the Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of entrepreneurs and business headquarters in the Valley</li> <li>• Attract private investment and Intellectual capital</li> <li>• Invest in workforce development and training so local residents can access high-road jobs</li> </ul>
Health	Result in cleaner environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Projects result in cleaner air, with the reduction of local fossil fuel consumption, and cleaner water</li> <li>• Consider including additional recreational facilities in negotiated community benefits</li> </ul>
Builds Upon Existing Assets	Complement existing SJV industries and build upon existing infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complement ongoing local initiatives and infrastructure projects in both industrialized and rural communities (civil, physical, educational, etc.)</li> </ul>

Experts from RAND, the international consulting firm, worked with Valley leaders through an iterative process to develop the San Joaquin Valley Clean Energy Portfolio Toolkit, which consists of:

- A spreadsheet-based Portfolio Design Tool to help stakeholders create portfolios of clean energy buildout over time in the Valley;
- A mathematical Portfolio Evaluation Model (modeling) to evaluate each portfolio along a variety of key metrics; and
- A Portfolio Explorer that provides interactive visualizations of the model results.

Among the workforce-focused themes that are consistent across the evaluated portfolios are:

Expansion of clean energy generation can create thousands of jobs annually within the Valley. Depending on the amount of different technologies in each portfolio, roughly half

of those direct jobs would be permanent jobs. For most technologies, well over half of all direct jobs are considered high-road jobs that pay more than the median U.S. income. Adding in indirect and induced jobs roughly doubles the estimated job creation.

Some technologies create more jobs than others. Hydrogen, bioenergy, and biogas projects create more jobs than solar per unit of energy they produce, and more of those jobs are permanent jobs. While utility-scale solar creates fewer jobs than other technologies per kilowatt-hour, solar still has the biggest clean energy resource potential, and given its scale, could still be a significant job creator. Solar energy is also used to support other technologies, such as hydrogen production, which, in turn, creates more jobs.

The modeling estimates are a lower bound for jobs created in the Valley. Efforts could be made to attract jobs to the region that might go elsewhere in the country. Clean energy development, in conjunction with jobs that are created to support or attracted to clean energy development (indirect and induced jobs), can serve as a foundation for additional job growth in the region.

The modeling does not show significant workforce constraints given existing workforce size, composition, and skills. However, existing workers will likely need training to successfully pivot to clean energy opportunities. Workforce training will be necessary and San Joaquin Valley leaders will need to do a gap analysis of what training is needed to meet clean energy transition jobs. The number of people who may require training is consistent with current graduation rates from community college training programs for similar skills in the region.

By working with leaders who are engaged in the work described in CATF's Clean Energy Future report, the region's local workforce development boards can align their climate-focused planning with those of industry, economic development, government, and other critical stakeholders.

### **Utilizing the California Jobs First Initiative as a Launchpad for Climate-Focused Workforce Development**

In 2021, California launched a \$600 million initiative (formerly known as the Community Economic Resilience Fund or CERF) to support thirteen (13) economic regions in creating quality jobs and bolstering their resilience to climate and global challenges impacting the state's diverse regional economies. As part of this program, each of the 13 regions has built a California Jobs First Collaborative tasked with developing a clear vision for their region's economic future.

The Central Valley is home to three California Jobs regions: Northern San Joaquin Valley, the Central San Joaquin Valley, and Kern County. Collaboratives in each of these regions are coordinated independently, with specific target industry sectors and foundational elements, enabling strategies that tie into a broader plan for an inclusive regional economy. The local boards within each region have been instrumental in the leadership

of these efforts across the Valley. This includes the Central San Joaquin region, where the Tulare and Madera County boards lead sub-regional efforts, and in the Northern San Joaquin Valley, where the Merced County Workforce Development Board serves as regional convener.

California Jobs First Northern Region: The North Valley THRIVE Strategic Plan charts the roadmap to a sustainable and inclusive future, where the people of San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Merced counties together realize the region's full potential. Stakeholders envision a future where the region is known for what people create and how they innovate, as well as for how communities care for each other and the land in and around local communities. Regional leaders will continue to be a key part of the dynamic Northern California mega region, with growing links to the Bay Area and Sacramento regions. The North San Joaquin Valley (NSJV) Strategic Plan outlines a transformative vision for the region's economic future by focusing on first deploying new technologies within the region, then on translating and manufacturing of advanced products and technologies within the region, and simultaneously on nurturing home-grown start-ups that take root within the region and help form distinct industry. Strategies focus on four priority sectors: Advanced Manufacturing, Clean Energy, Carbon Management, and Circular Bioeconomy. These sectors are identified as pivotal in transitioning the NSJV toward a more sustainable, equitable, and high-value economy that can meet the challenges of the 21st century, such as climate change, re-localization of supply chains, and increasing economic resilience in the face of technological disruption.

California Jobs First Central Region: The Sierra San Joaquin Jobs (S2J2) project is led by the Central Valley Community Foundation (CVCF) and is a four-county project consisting of Fresno, Madera, Tulare, and Kings counties. Utilizing a bottoms-up approach, local conveners have allowed for maximum input and inclusion at the local level by facilitating community conversations on the needs and challenges of each area and prioritizing project goals to elevate up to the region. CVCF kicked off an 8-week Spring Sprint in May 2024, to establish workgroups around the region's eight key priority areas: Climate Solutions, Responsible Food and Agriculture Systems, Circular Manufacturing, Water, Broadband, Small Business, Community Health, and Education and Skill Building. CERF Catalyst funds in the amount \$5.5 million of are available to support efforts in these priority areas. Local evaluators have screened and advanced project proposals to regional evaluators for funding consideration. The WDBs have been invited to serve on the Education and Skill Building Leadership Group to determine next steps for this component of the S2J2 regional plan. Four specific Investment Plans are included under the Climate Solutions: Clean Energy, ZEV Transition, Nature Based Solutions, and Carbon Capture. As S2J2 moves forward, the project will translate the broader strategies into specific, actionable initiatives. CVCF will engage in detailed planning and coordination of stakeholders to further define and prepare for implementation.

California Jobs First Kern County: The Kern County region's response to the California Jobs First initiative is led by the Kern High Road Transition Collaborative (KHRTC), a collective of members from disinvested communities, labor, business, government, and

other community stakeholders, such as economic development, philanthropy, education, and workforce development partners. The priority tradable industries emerging from this analysis are clean energy, advanced manufacturing, and agriculture. KHRTC prioritized clean energy for its competitive advantage in the Kern County region, positive impact on the environment, and strong alignment with state priorities. Advanced manufacturing, as a cross-cutting aspect of other industry verticals like agriculture, clean energy, and aerospace and defense, offers opportunities for inclusive employment that keeps industry value chains within the region, bolstering economic resilience. The announcement of new large, private solar and wind projects in the area, including Camino Solar Project and Alta Wind Battery Energy Storage, has led to expectations that clean energy jobs will grow rapidly in the Kern County.

## **VII. ACCESS AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE**

Each of the local boards represented by the SJVAC RPU supports and promotes equal access to all services and activities of its local workforce system. As such, workforce leaders and system staff will continue to use and will improve upon messages that communicate commitment to equal access to career information, job readiness services, training, support in securing and maintaining a job, and career advancement.

### ***Promoting Equal Access***

The workforce system relies on required system partners, community-based organizations, local government, economic development, education and training providers, and local businesses to achieve the goals and performance objectives of WIOA and related programs. Working together effectively requires that stakeholders share common principles that guide their work. While local boards expect that all partners are fundamentally committed to providing equal access to opportunities for services, training, and employment, the WDBs seek to ensure such access exists. Clear and consistent information and messaging is key to increasing the shared commitment of all stakeholders to providing equal access for all job seekers. The Central Valley is home to people of different ethnicities, nationalities, religions, cultures, and languages. Therefore, local boards communicate to providers and businesses the importance of equal access in all transactions. Each local board has and will continue to adopt its own approaches to promoting access, leveraging ideals, values, and messages that resonate in the communities they serve.

### ***Workforce System Commitment to Access***

As expressed throughout the Regional Plan, the region's workforce leaders are committed to access in every aspect of their operations and programs. Efforts to ensure full access to workforce development programs and services for all individuals and communities exist throughout the region. Local boards engage in collaborative efforts such as the High Road Construction Initiative, which aims to support underserved, low-income communities. Partnerships include key stakeholders, such as economic development, community colleges, local education, agencies, and training providers. Local boards collaborate with the California Department of Rehabilitation to provide accommodations and remove barriers for individuals with disabilities. In addition, programs such as Student Training and Employment Program (STEP), which is jointly administered by the Department of Rehabilitation and the Foundation for California Community Colleges, assist students with disabilities in gaining valuable work experience and accessing information about career opportunities.

## **VIII. ALIGNING, COORDINATING, AND INTEGRATING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

As described, the workforce development boards of the Central Valley have a long history of collaborating, regionally and sub-regionally, on sector strategies, initiatives serving key groups, and on the design, development, operation, and administration of successful workforce programs. Local boards within the region consistently strive to use limited resources as effectively as possible. The following is an overview of current and potential future efforts to achieve regional coordination and alignment of services, systems, and strategies.

### **A. Regional Service Strategies**

Regional agreements, strategies, and initiatives include the following:

#### ***Central California Workforce Collaborative Regional Agreement***

For more than a decade, the boards that comprise the SJVAC RPU have had a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in place that provides a framework for collaboration among the local boards and creates opportunities to coordinate, especially with regard to special projects and initiatives that cross local area boundaries. The purpose of the MOU is to maintain cooperative and mutually beneficial relationships. The MOU describe CCWC members as “a confederation of equals.” The CCWC operates under a general working structure, rather than as an entity. Both the current and prior MOUs stress the importance of collaboration with regard to securing regional funding and leveraging of resources to strengthen the workforce system throughout the Central Valley. The MOU emphasizes the independence of the eight boards and the fact that all parties agree to respect one another’s organizational practices and management structures in the execution of collaborative activities. The agreement empowers the boards to: develop and implement collaborative efforts at a regional and sub-regional level; conduct formal and informal meetings under the CCWC name to discuss best practices; utilize the CCWC name in sponsorship materials for third party organizations; and, on a project by project basis, designate local workforce development boards as the “lead agency” for regional and sub-regional initiatives. Furthermore, the CCWC MOU establishes a format for meetings, which may be held in person, via electronic media, or through conference calls, and for keeping minutes of scheduled meetings. Responsibilities for organizing meetings rotate among the boards. The agreement is periodically reviewed and updated, confirming the value that the boards place on cooperation and bringing greater capacity and resources to the region.

#### ***Central Valley Industry Engagement Roundtable***

Supporting regional and local efforts to serve business is the Central Valley Industry Engagement Roundtable (CVIER), which includes participation by all eight local boards in the Central Valley along with Mother Lode WDB. Also participating in CVIER are the EDD, the Small Business Development Center, and the California Labor Federation.



CVIER members have identified and responded to the need to increase staff knowledge about labor market information, Incumbent Worker Training, rapid response services, and sector partnerships. The group originally met monthly to coordinate messaging, discuss rapid response strategies, and develop business-responsive approaches for the region. Given the progress that the region has made, the group now convenes quarterly.

### ***Regional and Sub-Regional Grants***

One of the longstanding benefits of collaboration among local boards in the Central Valley has been jointly securing competitive grants. Based on the focus of the projects, collaborative grants may include participation by WDBs throughout the region or as few as two local boards. Regional grants include, but are not limited to:

Central Valley Forestry Corps: Fresno (lead), Tulare, Kern, Madera, Motherlode Job Training – Forestry and Fire services management programs. Programs are in process.

EMS Corp Grant: Fresno, Kings, Tulare, Stanislaus - Youth Entry into Emergency Medical Technician as a pathway to Medical occupations. Planning and implementation phases of the grant are in process.

Prison to Employment Grant (P2E): San Joaquin County (lead), Stanislaus County, Merced County, Madera County, Fresno County, Tulare County, Kings County, and Kern-Inyo-Mono Counties WDBs. The grant is in process.

Student Training and Employment Program (STEP): Tulare, Stanislaus, Fresno. Targets In-School Youth 16-21 with disabilities. Grants are in progress.

The Good Jobs Challenge: Madera, Fresno, and Tulare WDBs serve as backbone leads for the Transportation, Construction, and Manufacturing industries to facilitate sector partnerships between industry and education partners. Grant is in progress.

S2J2 Initiatives: Included are three separate initiatives for the three California Jobs First regions in the Central Valley. Projects address strategies around climate and environmental sustainability. Grants are in preliminary stages of program implementation.

Regional Equity and Recovery Program (RERP): Stanislaus (lead) San Joaquin, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Tulare, Kern/Inyo/Mono. The grant is in process.

### ***Regional Scaling of Local Models***

As described in connection with regional sector strategies, bringing successful local models to scale throughout the region is an ongoing goal for the SJVAC RPU. An example of a local initiative that many local boards remain interested in replicating is the apprenticeship programs that have been developed by the San Joaquin County WDB in partnership with local high schools and county government.

### ***The Regional Organizer Function***

CWDB requires that each RPU assign one local board as the Regional Organizer entity, with the activities being assigned to a designated staff person from that agency. The role of the SJVAC RPU Regional Organizer includes the following responsibilities:

- Attend bi-monthly meeting with the State Workforce Development Board to receive direction and guidance on Regional Planning Units' Objectives.
- Maintain communication with local WDBs on state objectives and regional initiatives by attending the Central California Workforce Collaborative meetings.
- Maintain momentum toward accomplishing Regional Plan goals by working with RPU sub-committees and/or designees.
- Support collaboration of regional workforce leaders.
- Coordinate the implementation of the Regional Plan.
- Support industry sectors partnerships by attending the Central Valley Industry Engagement Roundtable.

The Regional Organizer also serves as the "Regional Training Coordinator" for SJVAC Region. In this capacity, duties include:

- Conducting an assessment staff development needs and priorities to determine professional development activities.
- Procurement of trainers to meet regional staff development needs.
- Ensuring regional staff and partners receive necessary training and professional development to accomplish Regional Plan goals.

The role of the Regional Organizer is currently funded through discretionary grants from the CWDB and EDD.

## **B. Regional Administrative Cost Arrangements**

While the region does not have formal administrative costs arrangements in place, local boards' collaborative efforts yield efficiencies. An example is a shared contract with a one-stop operator that benefits five local boards. Madera County WDB manages as master agreement with the vendor (Beaudette Consulting, Inc.), which separately invoices each local workforce area for the services it provides. Participating WDBs include Madera County (lead), Kings County, Merced County, San Joaquin County, and Stanislaus County.

Additional collaborative initiatives that may be of interest to the local boards include:

- A single local board to function as a regional Eligible Training Provider List Coordinator;
- A single local board to function as a multi-WDB Monitoring Coordinator;
- Joint marketing efforts benefiting multiple local boards; and
- Coordination by a local board of procurement of an AJCC Certification consultant.

## **IX. PROGRAM YEAR 2025-28 REGIONAL SYSTEM PRIORITIES**

Based on the input that regional workforce leaders and stakeholders provided during discussions held throughout the process used to develop the PY 25-28 Plan, the following issues were identified as priorities for further examination, exploration, development, and/or enhancement over the four-year period covered by the Regional Plan. The Directors of the RPU's eight local boards will work with their WDB members, elected officials, business leaders, and local partners and stakeholders to set the agenda for review of these priorities and, following such review, determine where, when and how action should be taken.

The themes represented by the priorities that follow were identified through input from WDB leaders, system partners, and regional stakeholders at a series of discussion, including the three community forums that are described in Attachment 1.

### **1. Focus on Key Industries**

Given the importance of targeted industry sectors and other significant industries to the economic vitality of the region and the finite availability of economic and workforce development resources, local boards, education partners, training providers, and other system stakeholders should focus on sectors of the economy that represent the greatest potential to create wealth and opportunities for businesses and residents throughout the Valley. The priority industries outlined in the SJVAC RPU Regional Plan coincide with business and community perceptions of sectors offering significant opportunities. Stakeholders note the strategic position of the Valley as a hub for logistics and transportation; the need for a stable healthcare infrastructure for the region's growing population; and the continued importance of agriculture as the economic foundation of the San Joaquin Valley.

### **2. Support Businesses in Managing Change**

Businesses of all types and sizes face constant change and managing change is part of the normal course of business operations. However, many companies throughout the Valley were profoundly impacted by a range of disruptions to sales, supply chains, and operations that occurred in connection with the pandemic, and adjusted their business models to continue their operations. For a significant number of businesses, these adjustments included right-sizing their operations to remain viable. While such actions were necessary, some businesses, subsequently, have reduced capacity for change management. With rapid adoption of advanced technology in the marketplace, changing behaviors among workers, an insufficient pool of applicants for many essential positions, and rising costs of goods and services, commercial enterprises may require more support than ever before. The workforce development system is ideally positioned to consult with businesses and to develop solutions in the areas of sourcing, hiring, training, and managing talent. Local boards and partners should adopt a more consultative posture in supporting their business customers.

### **3. Engage Business in the Design and Delivery of Training**

While businesses are a clear end-user of the full range of workforce development services provided by local boards and many system partners, too often career services, training, and even direct services for businesses are designed without their input. Business leaders should be the “managing partners” in the design of workforce services and, especially, programs that train candidates for employment in the skills companies need most. WDBs and system partners should consider opportunities to expand existing sector partnerships and to develop new ones as a structure for securing business intelligence and direction on services and training. At the same time, system partners should develop strategies that encourage businesses to become more active as trainers of new and current workers, using models such as customized training, on-the-job training, and apprenticeships.

### **4. Address Climate Impacts on Economy and Work**

While approaches to addressing climate and environmental sustainability issues are a new element of Regional Plans, these challenges are not new concerns for workforce system stakeholders. Air pollution, a transition from fossil fuels, preemptive control of forest fires, and, especially, water management are areas in which stakeholders are providing training and are continuing to assess needs for new programs and curricula. The approaches outlined in Section VI of the Regional Plan aligns with priorities of system partners and local stakeholders.

### **5. Identify and Train the Workforce in Core Employability Skills**

There are skills that are widely desired by businesses across many industries, and some skills are often considered universally needed for all jobs. System stakeholders call out foundational skills (i.e., so-called “soft skills,” such as promptness, team work, acceptance of supervision, critical thinking, problem solving); basic skills (English and math skills); communication skills (verbal, written, and appropriate to the workplace); digital literacy (ability to use basic technology tools and systems); financial literacy; and job retention skills as among the general skills most valued by companies of all types and sizes. Business and industry leaders continue to stress that individuals with these skills are the most desirable, are the easiest to train, and are, generally, the best fit. Workforce system partners throughout the region should work to identify a full complement of core employability skills and devise strategies for assessing and training in these skills areas.

### **6. Prepare Youth and Young Adults for Careers**

An array of strategies and approaches are needed to prepare youth and young adults for a lifetime of employment and for career advancement that enables self-

sufficiency, provides a family-supporting income, and creates opportunities for stability and prosperity. Information on jobs and careers should be available to children at an early age and more detailed information should be available to them as they progress through grade school, middle schools, and high school. WDBs and system partners should work closely with schools to provide information that supports career exploration and students' decisions on career-related programs and content available at the middle and high school levels. Opportunities for youth employment are critical, as first jobs, whether subsidized or not, provide important hands-on learning experiences that will stay with workers throughout their careers. Workforce programs should also continue to provide opportunities for disconnected youth and young adults to re-engage with education, training, and work.

## **7. Recognize Changes in Worker Priorities**

Business leaders, educators, workforce development professionals, social services providers, and other stakeholders continue to describe shifts in attitudes, behaviors, preferences, and priorities among workers and candidates for employment. Many indicate that, while these changes have been evolving over the last decade or even longer, such shifts were accelerated by circumstances surrounding the pandemic. For many individuals, particularly younger workers with less experience and attachment to the workforce, factors such as work-life balance, “meaningful” or “purpose-driven” work, flexibility, and opportunity to be part of decision-making are more important than factors like pay, stability, and promotional opportunities. Many businesses describe workers' lack of punctuality, adherence to work schedules, and short tenure as challenges to business operations. System partners need to recognize and respond to changes in worker priorities by developing corresponding career services and training. Such services may acknowledge that employment and career decisions are individual choices, but highlight advantages of employment retention, including stability, wage increases, and opportunities for advancement. Support for businesses may include strategies that encourage worker retention.

## **8. Leverage Under-Resourced Workers**

With the need for talent continuing to outstrip supply, local boards and system partners must develop strategies to expand the pool of available workers. Stakeholders cite individuals from various under-resourced populations as strong candidates for jobs, even in positions for which they have not traditionally been hired in large numbers. These populations include, but are not limited to, individuals with disabilities, older workers, justice-involved individuals, English language learners, and young workers. Business and workforce leaders should work together to identify the training and services that will best prepare such individuals to be strong candidates for in-demand jobs.

**9. Bring Services to Communities**

The Valley is expansive and, while most of its population is located in urban centers and adjacent suburban communities, many individuals live in rural areas where access to services is limited and transportation to brick-and-mortar facilities, such as AJCCs, is challenging. The workforce system partners should continue to collaborate on strategies to bring services to remote communities. Such strategies could include virtual service delivery, mobile services, pop-up locations, and part-time or periodic sharing of partner facilities.

**10. Expand Collaboration**

WIOA prescribes specific partner relationships for the public workforce system that include complementary federally funded programs. Local boards throughout the Valley have expanded their partnerships to include many state and locally funded programs and organizations, as well as community partners. Workforce systems may benefit from collaborations with a wide range of organizations that have not traditionally been viewed as partners. Stakeholders suggest that partnerships that could enhance the system and add significant value for customers include public health and behavioral health agencies, early childhood education providers, industry associations, organized labor, and various population-based service providers.

**X. ATTACHMENTS**

The following items are Included as part of the Regional Plan.

Attachment 1: Stakeholder and Community Engagement Summary

Attachment 2: Public Comments Received that Disagree with the Local Plan

Attachment 3: Signature Page

## **Stakeholder and Community Engagement Summary**

To facilitate the engagement of stakeholders in regional planning for the workforce development delivery system and the development of the original PY 2021-24 Regional Plan, the SJVAC RPU hosted a series of ten community and stakeholder forums focused on topics affecting strategies and services across the system. These forums included:

### Opportunities and Challenges for the Workforce Development System:

Questions/topics addressed include, but were not limited to:

- Considering the regional economy and industries that are contributing to growth and prosperity, what opportunities exist to help workers develop necessary skills and otherwise prepare for jobs with current and projected demand?
- What strategies should workforce system agencies employ to better understand generational and evolving needs of workers?
- What are the greatest obstacles for individuals looking to prepare for “good jobs?” Are there strategies that the workforce system could use to minimize or eliminate these obstacles?
- As businesses continue to face recruitment and hiring challenges, are there strategies that the workforce system could implement to lessen these difficulties?
- Other input on workforce development opportunities and challenges.

This forum was held in-person on two occasions:

- October 22, 2024.
- November 18, 2024.

### The Changing landscape of Jobs and the Economy:

Questions/topics addressed include, but were not limited to:

- Compared to a decade ago or even more recently, what changes are most prevalent in the regional economy?
- How are changes in local industries and businesses affecting the types and availability of jobs?
- What impact are economic changes having on workers and individuals looking for work?
- What changes do economic trends suggest for workforce development and skills training programs?
- Other input on workforce development opportunities and challenges.

This forum was held via Zoom on December 5, 2024.



**Regional Plan Stakeholder and Community Engagement Outreach**

Mode of Outreach	Target of Outreach	Summary of Attendance	Comments
Published on department website, email, and Social media posts on LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram.	General Public and regional primary points of contact.	A total of 13 attendees attended the South sub regional forum	
Published on department website, email, and Social media posts on LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram.	General Public and regional primary points of contact.	A total of 17 attendees attended the North sub regional forum. Attendees included the following businesses and agencies: Merced Worknet, Stanislaus County Workforce Development, West Modesto Community Collaborative, Modesto Junior College, Central Valley Opportunity Center, Merced College, Paradigm, OE3, Go Educate	
Published on department website, email, and Social media posts on LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram.	General Public and regional primary points of contact.	A total of 80 attendees attended the online forum that took place on Zoom. Attendees included the following businesses and agencies: San Joaquin County, Madera County Workforce Investment Corporation, CAPK, Proteus, Inc, Teamsters Local 87, Garden Pathways, EDD, Department of Rehabilitation, The Wonderful Company, Employers' Training Resource, Bakersfield College, Bakersfield Adult School, Kern Health Systems, Kern County Department of Human Services, Kern Workforce and Economic Development, SER SCSEP Project, Wasco, Union High School District, California Indian Manpower Consortium, Inc, PCL Industrial Services, Inc., Social Vocational Services.	

<b>PUBLIC COMMENTS THAT DISAGREE WITH THE Program Year 2021-24 REGIONAL PLAN</b>
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1.	<i>From:</i>	<i>Date:</i>
<i>Comment:</i>		

2.	<i>From:</i>	<i>Date:</i>
<i>Comment:</i>		

**SIGNATURE PAGE**

The following signatures represent approval of the San Joaquin Valley Regional Planning Unit's Program Year 2025-28 Regional Plan by the eight Workforce Development Boards that comprise the region.

For the **Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board:**

<b>Name, Chairperson</b>	<b>Date</b>

For the **Kern, Inyo, Mono Workforce Development Board:**

<b>Name, Title</b>	<b>Date</b>

For the **Kings County Workforce Development Board:**

<b>Name, Title</b>	<b>Date</b>

For the **Madera County Workforce Development Board:**

<b>Name, Title</b>	<b>Date</b>

**SIGNATURE PAGE (cont.)**

For the **Merced County Workforce Development Board:**

<b>Name, Title</b>	<b>Date</b>

For the **San Joaquin County Workforce Development Board:**

<b>Name, Title</b>	<b>Date</b>

For the **Stanislaus County Workforce Development Board:**

<b>Name, Title</b>	<b>Date</b>

For the **Tulare County Workforce Development Board:**

<b>Name, Title</b>	<b>Date</b>