



WIOA SOUTH COAST REGIONAL PLAN

SC WORKS LOWCOUNTRY & SC WORKS TRIDENT
PY 2024 – 2027
PY2026 Modification

Submitted to the South Carolina Department of Employment and
Workforce

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

Regional Plan

July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2028

PY2026 Modification

Planning Region Name:

South Coast

Local Areas within the Planning Region:

Lowcountry Workforce Development Area

Trident Workforce Development Area

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INTRODUCTION

The South Coast Regional plan serves as an action plan to develop, align, and integrate service delivery strategies and resources between the Lowcountry and Trident Workforce Development Areas. Workforce development boards and chief elected officials in each workforce development area are engaged in a regional planning process that results in the preparation and submission of a single regional plan. The South Coast Regional plan incorporates the Lowcountry and Trident Local Plans. The following guiding principles are considered priorities and included in responses throughout the document.

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

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

PLANNING PROCESS

The Lowcountry and Trident Workforce Development Boards collaborated to create a unified plan addressing workforce needs across the South Coast Region. The regional planning process involved active collaboration among Core Partners; Workforce Development Boards; Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of Beaufort, Berkeley, Charleston, Colleton, Dorchester, Hampton, and Jasper Counties; Executive Directors of the Council of Governments, and the Council of Governments' workforce staff.

- **Labor Market Analysis and Identifying Workforce Needs:** In collaboration with the Lowcountry and Trident workforce staff, both workforce development boards conducted comprehensive labor market analyses to identify high-demand industries and occupations in the South Coast Region. Key sectors such as healthcare, manufacturing, logistics, and construction were prioritized. The analysis included evaluations of economic trends, demographic data, and skills gaps to assess workforce needs across the region.
- **Integration of Local Plans into the Regional Strategy:** The Lowcountry and Trident Local Workforce Development Plans served as foundational documents for the regional plan. Shared goals, such as expanding work-based learning opportunities and addressing barriers to employment, were identified and integrated into the regional strategy. The workforce department staff took the lead in drafting the regional plan, with significant input and consultations from the local workforce development boards and local CEOs. Conference calls were held to facilitate the planning process.

- **Public Review and Feedback:** Upon completing the draft of the regional plan, it was disseminated to local workforce development board members, workforce development partners, and local CEOs for their input, review, and suggestions. To ensure broad community engagement, the regional plan was released for a 10-day public comment period, which was widely advertised through local news outlets, social media, and relevant websites, including those of the Council of Governments and workforce development organizations.
- **Revision and Final Approval:** After the public comment period, all feedback was reviewed, and revisions were made to the regional plan to better align it with community needs and regional priorities. The revised plan was then submitted to the local workforce development boards for approval. In the Lowcountry Workforce Development Area, county council chairs received an email with the draft regional plan and an executive summary, requesting approval. It was noted that the county council meeting minutes were not available at the time of submission.
- **Final Submission for State Approval:** The completed South Coast Regional Plan was submitted to the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce (SCDEW) for final approval.

Timeline

- Core and Required Partner Review and update: August 3, 2026 – August 31, 2026
- Local elected officials review: September 14, 2026 – September 30, 2026
- Public Comment Period: October 5, 2026 – October 13, 2026
- Approval by TWDB: November 3, 2026
- Send to SCDEW for approval: January 10, 2027

SHARED STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS

Using the Lowcountry and Trident Local Plans as foundational documents for the regional plan. Below are the shared vision, goals, and strategies reflecting the collaborative efforts of the Lowcountry and Trident Workforce Development Boards to create a unified and effective workforce system for the South Coast Region.

Vision

Building a dynamic, inclusive, and collaborative workforce system that empowers job seekers with the skills to succeed, meets the needs of employers, and drives economic growth across the South Coast Region.

Goals

- **Support High-Demand Industries:** Address workforce shortages in priority sectors, including healthcare, manufacturing, logistics, construction, and hospitality.
- **Enhance Workforce Accessibility:** Reduce barriers to employment by providing transportation, childcare, and access to training opportunities for underserved populations.
- **Expand Work-Based Learning:** Increase apprenticeships, On-the-Job Training (OJT), internships, and school-to-work opportunities to develop real-world skills.

- **Unify Regional Services:** Streamline service delivery by fostering collaboration between workforce boards, educational institutions, and industry partners.
- **Empower Priority Populations:** Focus on individuals with barriers to employment, including those receiving public assistance, veterans, and low-income individuals, ensuring equitable access to workforce programs.
- **Foster Economic Development:** Partner with employers to align training programs with labor market needs, driving economic growth and regional competitiveness.

Strategies

South Coast Objectives and Strategies

Objective 1: Prepare Job Seekers for High-Demand Occupations aligns with Pillar I (Industry-Driven Strategies) and Pillar II (Worker Mobility).

- **Strategy 1.1:** Expand work-based learning opportunities, such as apprenticeships and Work Experiences in high-growth sectors like healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and IT.
 - **Implementation:** Partner with local employers and technical colleges to design apprenticeship and internship programs. Create Work Experience Opportunities with employers who host apprenticeships, and coordinate with SC Works Partners and local training providers to place job seekers in these programs.
- **Strategy 1.2:** Provide targeted soft skills training alongside technical certifications, emphasizing communication, teamwork, and problem-solving.
 - **Implementation:** Integrate soft skills modules into existing technical training programs. Collaborate with employers and training providers to offer training in soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and adaptability as part of Work Experience and Work-Based Learning Opportunities.

Objective 2: Enhance Workforce Infrastructure to Reduce Employment Barriers aligns with Pillar III (Integrated Systems) and Pillar II (Worker Mobility).

- **Strategy 2.1:** Facilitate partnerships among South Coast Partners and training providers to support seamless co-enrollment for job seekers in programs in in-demand sectors.
- **Implementation:** Share data on job seeker and employer needs, and coordinate resources. Host events in communities to make services more accessible to individuals.
- **Strategy 2.2:** Continue to conduct IBST and Partner meetings to standardize service delivery, focusing on meeting the needs of both job seekers and employers.
 - **Implementation:** Continue with the IBST Monday meetings that include SCDEW, WIOA, DSS, TTC, and VR to discuss needs and solutions of employers. Schedule events in the centers and communities to meet the needs of employers and jobseekers. An Employer resource guide is in the process of being created.
- **Strategy 2.3:** Continue to use a unified process to improve referral efficiency and ensure that job seekers receive appropriate services without duplication.
 - **Implementation:** Through the SC Works Operators, ensure all Career Services are made available in the centers and continue to provide ongoing training for all partner organizations on SCWOS. Make sure all partners are aware of and have access to the Learning Management System. Utilize

the Customer Satisfaction Surveys for individuals and employers to gather input, allowing for continuous improvements and addressing challenges, pain points, and needs.

- **Strategy 2.4:** Increase the number of available and affordable childcare options for guardians entering the workforce or obtaining education, and increase the number of transit options for individuals without vehicles to get to work.
 - **Implementation:** Bring together Workforce Partners to develop a resource guide that provides childcare options and educational opportunities both in-person and virtual.
 - **Implementation:** Promote the Vanpool program more to individuals and employers as a valuable resource to meet transportation needs.
- **Strategy 2.5:** Foster partnerships with employers in key sectors such as healthcare, IT, and skilled trades, creating pathways and networking opportunities to support regional talent development.
 - **Implementation:** Re-Launch Sector Strategy Partnerships in each in-demand sector identified in the local and regional plans. Host unified job fairs and hiring events in the South Coast Region to connect job seekers with potential employers in high-demand fields.

Objective 3: Align Workforce Efforts with State and Federal Initiatives aligns with Pillar I and Pillar V (Flexibility and Innovation).

- **Strategy 3.1:** Ensuring LMI is made available to all workforce development efforts to identify emerging needs in fields like healthcare and advanced manufacturing and utilize data-driven approaches and emerging technologies to anticipate workforce demands.
 - **Implementation:** Use the Sector Strategy Partnerships to address the needs of employers and jobseekers. Use the LMI data in the IBST to help set the direction and actions of the team. Partner with labor market research firms and local economic councils to analyze data.
- **Strategy 3.2:** Collaborate with training providers and SC Works Trident partners to create structured career pathways and resources that guide job seekers through credentialing, training, and job placement processes.
 - **Implementation:** Work with partners and training providers to design career maps that outline each step from certification to job placement. Create online guides and print materials for distribution at SC Works centers and community events.

Objective 4: Strengthen Partnerships for Comprehensive Workforce Solutions aligns with Pillar III (Integrated Systems) and Pillar V (Flexibility and Innovation).

- **Strategy 4.1:** Schedule and develop targeted outreach efforts that communicate the benefits of engaging with SC Works for employer needs, including access to skilled talent, customized training programs, and partnership opportunities in workforce development initiatives.
 - **Implementation:** Create outreach materials tailored for employers, highlighting the South Coast Region, such as job matching, custom training, and apprenticeship support. Host informational webinars.

The forthcoming information provides support to this shared vision, goals, and strategies, including specific initiatives and collaborative efforts designed to address the workforce needs of the South Coast Region. These details will highlight actionable plans for expanding sector partnerships, enhancing service delivery, and addressing barriers to employment.

Notably, the regional plan serves to unify the efforts of the Lowcountry and Trident Local Plans by providing a cohesive framework for addressing workforce development across the South Coast Region.

However, it does not replace the two local plans. Each local plan retains its own distinct vision, goals, and strategies tailored to the unique needs and priorities of its respective area. The regional plan builds on these local strategies, fostering collaboration and alignment while allowing each workforce development board to address its community's specific challenges and opportunities.

Question 2: An analysis of regional labor market data and economic conditions, to include existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations, and the employment needs of employers in those existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations. The analysis must include the following:

Bullet 1: The knowledge and skills necessary to meet the employment needs of the employers in the region, including those in in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

SOUTH COAST REGION OVERVIEW

The South Coast Workforce Development Region is part of the broader South Carolina workforce development system, which aims to provide training and resources to individuals seeking employment, as well as support to employers looking for skilled workers. **The region encompasses the Lowcountry Workforce Development Area (covering Beaufort, Colleton, Hampton, and Jasper Counties) and Trident Workforce Development Area (covering Berkeley, Charleston, Dorchester Counties).** The region's workforce development initiatives are coordinated through local Workforce Development Boards. The entities responsible for the disbursement of grant funds and management of workforce programs are the Lowcountry Council of Governments (LCOG) for the Lowcountry area and the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments (BCDCOG) for the Trident area.

Demographics

Below is a comprehensive overview of key demographic, economic, housing, and social characteristics of the region, allowing for insights into its population, workforce, educational attainment, housing situation, and social challenges.¹

The region is characterized by moderate population growth, a relatively diverse racial composition, and a well-educated workforce. However, it also faces challenges, including poverty, a significant percentage of disconnected youth, and housing and transportation issues. These factors are important for understanding the region's workforce needs, social service demands, and overall economic health.

Population Diversity

The region has a total population of 1,118,759, with a slightly higher number of females (50.9%) than males (49.1%). The median age is 40.4 years, reflecting a balanced age distribution. The youth population under 18 represents 20.8% of the total population (233,084 individuals), while those in their prime working ages (25-54) make up 38.7% of the population, indicating a strong workforce base. The racial composition is predominantly White (63.9%), with a significant Black or African American population (23.2%), and smaller percentages of people from other races (Asian, Native Hawaiian, and those of two or more races). The region has a 8.7% Hispanic or Latino population, indicating some ethnic diversity.

¹ An analysis based on data retrieved from JobsEQ® and 2022 American Community Survey

Population Growth

The population has been growing at a rate of 1.6% annually, adding approximately 17,867 people each year. The population density is 218.8 people per square mile, suggesting moderate to high urbanization.

Economic Indicators

The labor force participation rate for the civilian population aged 16 and over is 62.3%, indicating a moderate level of employment engagement. The participation rate is particularly high for prime-age workers (25-54) at 84.0%, showing that a large portion of the working-age population is actively employed or seeking work. There is also a notable veteran population, with 7.5% of individuals aged 18-64 being veterans, and a high veteran labor force participation rate of 78.1%.

Economic conditions are reflected in the region's median household income of \$83,161 and per capita income of \$48,043, suggesting a relatively affluent population. Commute times average 27.4 minutes, with only 0.5% using public transportation, indicating a high reliance on personal vehicles.

Educational Attainment

The educational attainment in the region shows that 7.2% of the population aged 25-64 lacks a high school diploma, while 23.3% are high school graduates. A significant portion of the population (25.4%) holds a bachelor's degree, and 14.5% have postgraduate degrees, reflecting a well-educated workforce, though there remains room for improvement, particularly in higher education access and attainment.

Housing

The region has 524,931 housing units, with a median value of \$396,540 for owner-occupied homes. The homeowner vacancy rate is low at 1.0%, while rental vacancies are higher at 11.5%. Renter-occupied housing makes up 29.2% of occupied units, suggesting a significant rental market. Additionally, 5.1% of households do not have a vehicle, highlighting potential mobility challenges for some residents.

Social Indicators

The region faces several social challenges, with a poverty rate of 11.4%, affecting 123,919 individuals. About 7.6% of households rely on food assistance (SNAP), and 1.2% of the total population is enrolled in grade 12. Disconnected youth, defined as individuals aged 16-24 not working or in school, represent 2.6% of the population. Single-parent households make up 34.7% of families with children, indicating a notable social dynamic that may require targeted support.

Health and disability statistics show that 9.2% of the population is uninsured, and 10.6% of people aged 18-64 live with a disability, with nearly half of these individuals actively participating in the workforce. Additionally, the region has a 6.7% foreign-born population, with 3.7% of individuals speaking English less than "very well," pointing to a need for additional language and integration support.

Individuals with Barriers to Employment

Hispanics

According to the 2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates, the Hispanic population in the South Coast Region has been growing steadily, mirroring national trends and accounting for 8.7% of the total population across Berkeley, Beaufort, Charleston, Colleton, Dorchester, Hampton, and Jasper Counties. Hispanic workers are vital to the region's economy, particularly in manual labor, construction, and service industries. However, challenges related to language barriers, educational attainment, and income disparities persist.²

Homeless Individuals

There are a growing number of homeless individuals in the South Coast Region. This includes a number of homeless veterans that need special programs devised to meet their needs. While the Lowcountry Continuum of Care (CoC) (Allendale, Bamberg, Beaufort, Berkeley, Calhoun, Charleston, Colleton, Dorchester, Hampton, Jasper, and Orangeburg Counties) saw the second largest percentage increase (17.8%) in persons experiencing homelessness in their area during the 2024 PIT count, the percent increase across the state of persons experiencing homelessness rose an average of 13.3% over 2023.³

These figures highlight the ongoing challenge of homelessness in the South Coast Region, with a significant portion of the population living in unsheltered conditions. The Continuum of Care continues to work on strategies for reducing homelessness through shelter programs, supportive housing, and outreach services.

Veterans

The total number of veterans aged 18 and older in the South Coast Region based on the 2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates is 87,060. The region has a higher percentage of veterans (9.5%) in comparison to the state and national average.⁴ This is likely due to the area's proximity to military bases, particularly Charleston Airforce Base and Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort.

Veterans in the region generally have moderate education levels, with many holding a high school diploma or some college. Unemployment rates vary by county, veterans who live in rural counties may face higher rates. This highlights the need for targeted workforce development and employment opportunities for both veterans and non-veterans.

Ex-Offenders

As of FY 2024, the total inmate population from the South Coast Region in the South Carolina Department of Corrections (SCDC) is 2,625 individuals. This estimate includes both men and women incarcerated in state facilities and reflects a proportionate share of the state's overall prison population. There were 594 inmates released from SCDC facilities. Approximately 68% of the incarcerated population are Black or

² U.S. Census Bureau. Demographic and Housing Estimates. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2022, Table DP05

³ South Carolina Interagency Council on Homelessness. SC State of Homelessness Report 2024 retrieved from <https://www.schomeless.org/media/1239/2024-sc-state-of-homelessness-final.pdf>

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau. Veteran Status. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2022, Table S2101

African American, White (28.8%), and Hispanic and Other Races (3.6% combined). Educational attainment among inmates is generally low, with 30-40% of inmates having a high school diploma or GED.⁵

The region faces challenges related to the inmate population, with many individuals serving long sentences, having low educational attainment, and facing significant barriers to employment after release. While efforts are underway to improve reentry support and rehabilitation, overcoming criminal records, lack of job skills, and educational deficiencies remain a persistent issue for individuals returning to communities.

Juvenile Offenders

During FY 2021, there were 1,5763 juvenile offenders involved in the juvenile justice system from the South Coast Region, including arrests, detentions, and commitments to South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice (SCDJJ) facilities. Juvenile offenders reflect the racial disparities, with Black or African American accounting for 60-70% of the juvenile offender population, White (30-40%), and Hispanic/Other (5%).

Many juvenile offenders struggle with low educational attainment, with a significant portion having been chronically absent from school or involved in special education programs. Family background, poverty, and mental health issues are common risk factors, as many youth come from households experiencing economic instability or lack of supportive resources.⁶

Migrant/Seasonal Workers

The South Coast region faces significant seasonal employment fluctuations, especially in agriculture, tourism, and construction. Although specific data is limited, the impact on the economy is clear. Workforce development initiatives aim to help seasonal workers transition to year-round jobs, but challenges like limited affordable housing and transportation hinder long-term job security. Seasonal wages in agriculture and tourism are generally lower, and unemployment tends to rise during the off-season.

Limited English Proficiency

The South Coast Region has a 6.7% foreign-born population, with 3.7% of individuals speaking English less than "very well," pointing to a need for additional language and integration support. The Limited English Proficiency (LEP) population faces barriers in employment, education, and access to services, with many working in low-skill jobs and relying on community support for language assistance. As the Hispanic population continues to grow, particularly in industries such as construction and hospitality, addressing the needs of LEP individuals will be critical for economic development and social integration in the region.

Foster Care

According to South Carolina Department of Social Services FY 2024, there were 545 children in the South Coast Region spending over 15 months in foster care on average. However, this can vary by county and

⁵ South Carolina Department of Corrections (SCDC). Statistical Reports (Inmate Population at Fiscal Year-End, Annual Inmate Admission to SCDC, and Annual Inmate Releases from SCDC) retrieved from <https://www.doc.sc.gov/about-scdc#research>

⁶ South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice. Data Resource Guide FY 2020-2021 retrieved from <https://djj.sc.gov/sites/djj/files/Documents/PbS%20PDFs/Resource%20Guide%20FY%202020-2021%20FINAL.pdf>

the complexity of each child's case.⁷ Youth aging out of foster care often face challenges like lack of education, skills, and support, which hinder their ability to secure stable employment.

Additionally, foster parents may struggle to balance caregiving with work, and there is a demand for social services workers to support the system. To improve workforce outcomes, targeted support for foster children, foster families, and social services professionals is essential, ensuring that children in care have the resources they need in workforce.

Low Income Individuals and Families

Poverty is a significant issue in the South Coast Region, particularly in rural areas, where poverty rates are higher than in urban areas. The region has a poverty rate of 12.1%, affecting 127,374 individuals, with about 9% of families living in poverty. Children are especially affected, with 18.7% living in poverty, a rate much higher than the overall family poverty rate. High poverty limits access to education, healthcare, and workforce training, creating barriers to economic mobility and hindering the development of a skilled labor force. This, in turn, restricts workforce participation and economic growth in the region.

During 2023, the average number of residents in the state receiving Temporary Assistance Needy Families (TANF) benefits per month was 15,697. Child recipients accounted for 9,095, or 58% percent, of the total. While the number of TANF recipients consistently dropped since pre-pandemic, a late 2024 data analysis has shown a slight increase in the number of TANF recipients in South Carolina. In the South Coast Region, the total number of TANF recipients decreased from 2,218 in FY 2022 to 1,980 in FY 2023.⁸ This suggests a decrease in the number of individuals or families receiving cash assistance. Despite the decrease in recipients, the total amount of cash assistance provided increased from \$2,804,562 in FY 2022 to \$3,132,794 in FY 2023. This could indicate that the average amount of cash assistance per recipient has risen, or that fewer recipients received larger amounts of assistance. In addition, approximately 7.5% of households rely on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Individuals receiving TANF benefits may have difficulty obtaining a family-sustaining wage, and even when they have jobs, the pay is often low. Training and employment support should be provided as this group may often lack the education and skills needed to secure a higher paying job.

Individuals with Disabilities

Approximately, 10.6% of people aged 18-64 live with a disability, with nearly half employed. Ambulatory difficulties are the most common disability for both employed and non-employed individuals, while cognitive difficulties are most common among the unemployed. This group faces significant employment barriers, including accessibility, transportation, and limited access to education or training. The range of disabilities includes both visible (e.g., mobility impairments) and invisible (e.g., mental illness) conditions. Workforce development should focus on inclusivity, job training access, and accommodations to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

⁷ South Carolina Department of Social Services. Foster Care Dashboard retrieved from <https://reports.dss.sc.gov/ReportServer/Pages/ReportViewer.aspx?/Foster+Care>

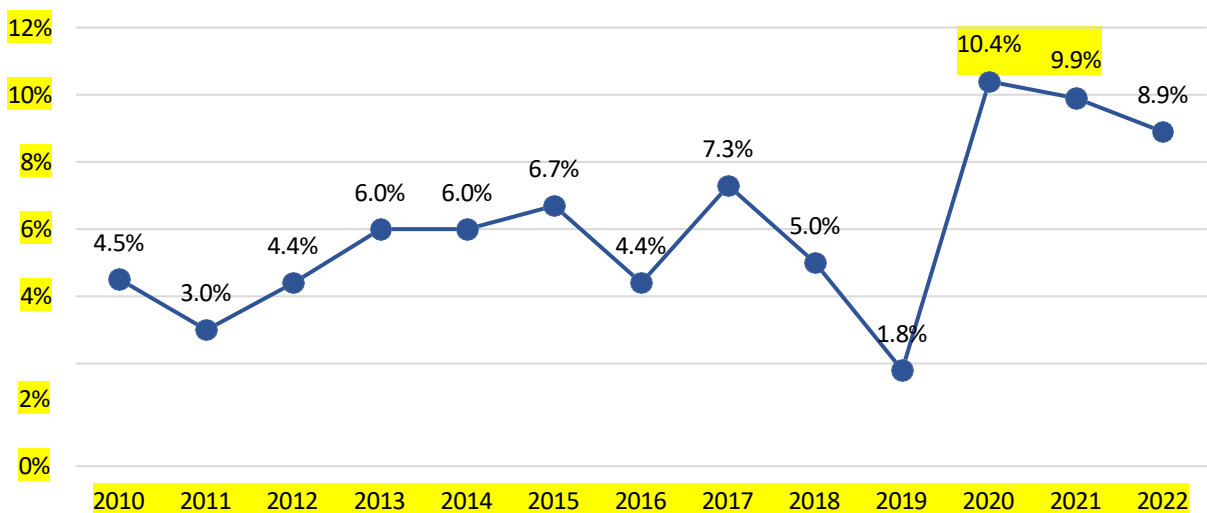
⁸ South Carolina Department of Social Services: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Retrieved from <https://dss.sc.gov/about/data-and-resources/family-assistance-data/temporary-assistance-for-needy-families-tanf/>

IN-DEMAND SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS

Gross Domestic Products

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the total value of goods and services produced by a region. In 2024, nominal GDP in the South Coast WIOA expanded 6.9%. This follows growth of 10.1% in 2023 (Figure 1). As of 2024, total GDP in the South Coast Region was \$85,235,547,000. Of the sectors in the South Coast WIOA, Real Estate and Rental and Leasing contributed the largest portion of GDP in 2024, \$19,202,617,000. The next-largest contributions came from Health Care and Social Assistance (\$7,575,083,000); Manufacturing (\$7,470,170,000); and Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (\$6,345,398,000) (Figure 2).

Figure 1: 1-Year Percent Change in GDP for All Industries



Source: JobsEQ®

Figure 2: GDP in Millions by Industry 2024



Source: JobsEQ®

Based on the South Coast Region's GDP and the Lowcountry and Trident Workforce Development Local Plans, existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations for the South Coast Region are categorized as the following. Existing Sectors emphasize filling current vacancies and maintaining employment levels in established roles like healthcare workers, hospitality staff, and logistics professionals. Emerging Sectors highlight growth areas requiring new skills, such as IT, green energy, and advanced manufacturing techniques.

Existing In-Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations⁹

The following industries have consistently contributed to the region's economic base and continue to offer substantial employment opportunities.

- **Health Care and Social Assistance:** Existing demand for registered nurses, medical assistants, and healthcare administrators is driven by an aging population and expanded healthcare infrastructure.
- **Manufacturing and Skilled Trades:** Ongoing need for industrial maintenance technicians, CNC machinists, and welders, fueled by local aerospace and automotive industries like Boeing and Volvo.
- **Construction and Real Estate:** Stable demand for construction managers, electricians, and plumbers due to residential and commercial development.
- **Hospitality and Tourism:** High employment in roles like hotel managers, chefs, and event planners, driven by the region's status as a premier tourist destination.
- **Transportation, Logistics, and Distribution:** Continued demand for truck drivers, logistics coordinators, and warehouse workers supported by the Ports of Charleston and Jasper.

Emerging In-Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations

The following industries and roles reflect growth due to technological advancements, demographic trends, and environmental priorities:

- **Information Technology and Cybersecurity:** Emerging roles such as cybersecurity specialists, software developers, and data analysts as businesses increasingly digitize and prioritize data security.
- **Renewable Energy and Environmental Services:** New demand for solar panel technicians, environmental engineers, and sustainability consultants driven by green energy initiatives and environmental preservation.
- **Education and Training:** Emerging focus on STEM education and vocational training to meet future workforce needs.
- **Advanced Manufacturing:** Roles requiring automation skills, robotics expertise, and engineering knowledge are growing due to the rise of smart manufacturing technologies.

⁹ An analysis based on data retrieved from JobsEQ® and 2022 American Community Survey

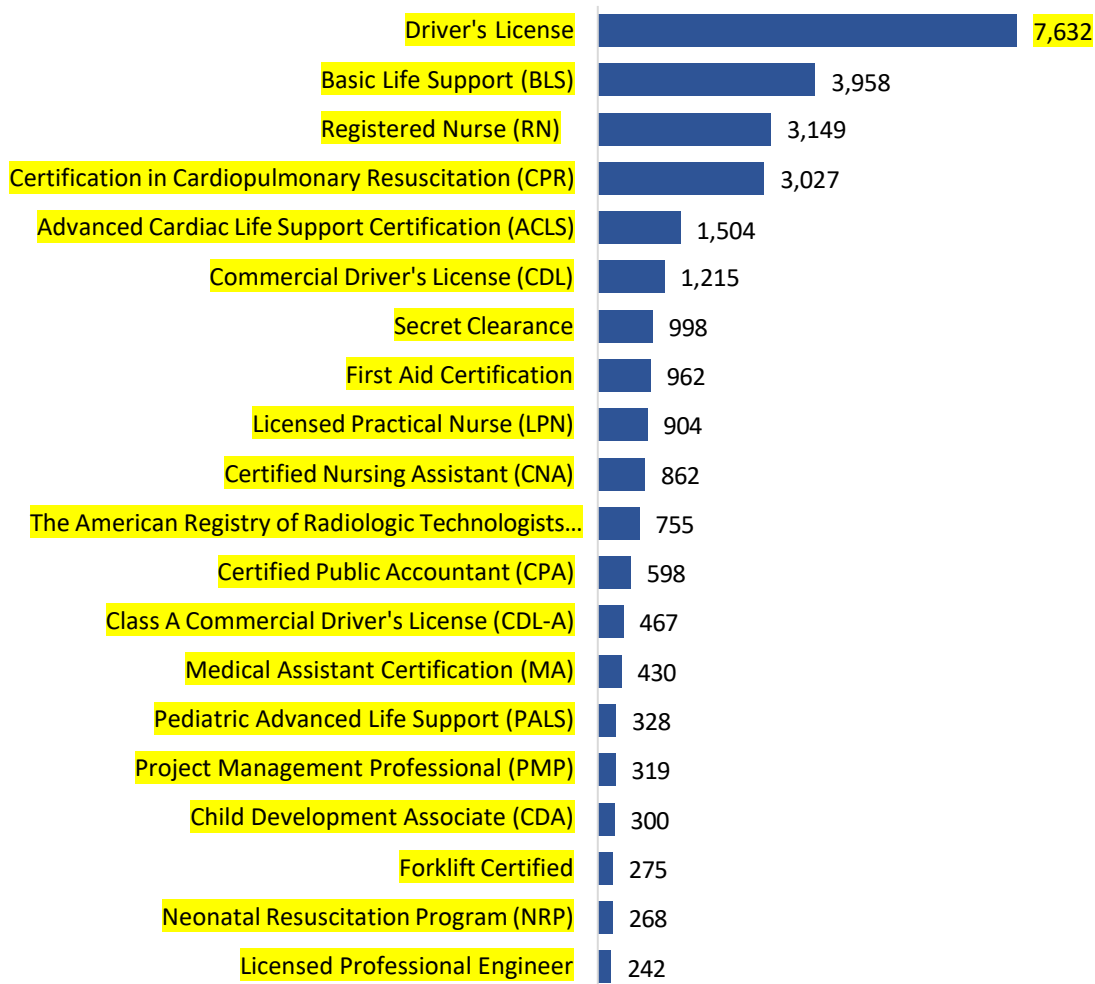
- **Financial Services:** Increasing need for financial advisors and analysts as the region’s economy diversifies and individuals seek wealth management.

EMPLOYER’S NEEDS

Job Openings

Figure 3 reveals high demand for certifications in the healthcare and transportation sectors. Basic Life Support (BLS), Driver’s License, and Registered Nurse (RN) have the most active job ads, highlighting ongoing needs in healthcare and logistics. Other notable certifications include Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN), and Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) for healthcare, and Secret Clearance for roles requiring security clearance. The data also reflects demand in specialized areas like Project Management Professional (PMP) and Certified Public Accountant (CPA).

Figure 3: Top 20 Active Job Advertisement by Certification November 2024 – November 2025

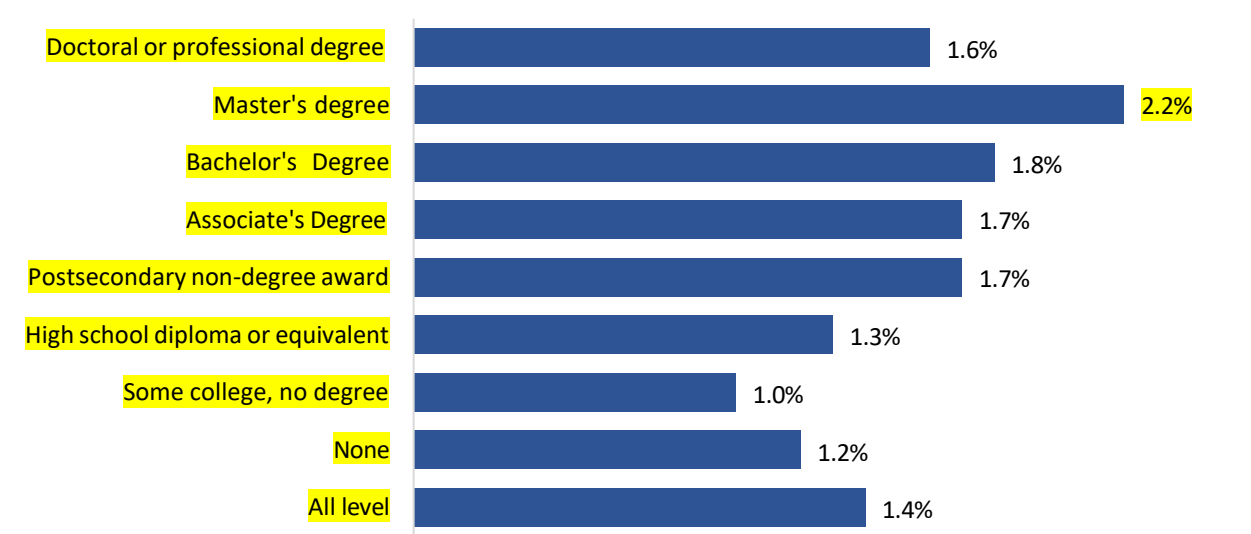


Source: JobsEQ®. Data reflects online job postings that were active from 11/21/2024 to 11/21/2025

Educational Level

As illustrated in Figure 4, expected growth rates for occupations vary by the education and training required. While all employment in the South Coast Region is projected to grow 1.2% over the next ten years, occupations typically requiring a postgraduate degree are expected to grow 1.3% per year, those requiring a bachelor’s degree are forecast to grow 1.4% per year, and occupations typically needing a 2-year degree or certificate are expected to grow 1.3% per year.

Figure 4: Annual Average Projected Job Growth by Education Level 2026 Q1



Source: JobsEQ®

Knowledge and Skills

Based on the Lowcountry and Trident Workforce Development Local Plans, workforce initiatives emphasize aligning skills with the demands of key industry sectors to meet the employment needs of employers in the South Coast Region.

Key In-Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations

- **Health Care and Social Assistance**
 - **Knowledge:** Geriatric care, chronic disease management, healthcare technology, and administrative systems like electronic health records (EHR).
 - **Skills:** Patient care, medical technology operation, and home healthcare services.
 - **Roles:** Registered nurses, home health aides, medical assistants, healthcare managers.
 - **Growth Drivers:** Aging population, healthcare infrastructure expansion, and increased demand for medical and support services.

- **Manufacturing and Skilled Trades**
 - **Knowledge:** Advanced manufacturing, automation, aerospace and automotive systems, and industrial maintenance.
 - **Skills:** CNC machining, welding, equipment repair, and quality control.
 - **Roles:** Industrial maintenance technicians, aerospace technicians, and welders.
 - **Growth Drivers:** Regional investment in aerospace (e.g., Boeing in Charleston) and automotive industries.
- **Information Technology and Cybersecurity**
 - **Knowledge:** IT infrastructure, software development, cybersecurity protocols, and data analytics.
 - **Skills:** Network administration, software engineering, cybersecurity threat response, and IT support.
 - **Roles:** Cybersecurity specialists, software developers, data analysts.
 - **Growth Drivers:** Increasing digitization and the need for data security across industries.
- **Construction and Real Estate**
 - **Knowledge:** Green building practices, project management, and sustainable design.
 - **Skills:** Carpentry, electrical and plumbing expertise, solar technology installation, and site management.
 - **Roles:** Construction managers, electricians, solar installation technicians.
 - **Growth Drivers:** Population growth, housing demands, and infrastructure projects.
- **Hospitality, Tourism, and Culinary Arts**
 - **Knowledge:** Event coordination, customer service, and local tourism trends.
 - **Skills:** Culinary arts, facility management, and service excellence.
 - **Roles:** Chefs, hotel managers, event planners.
 - **Growth Drivers:** Region's popularity as a tourist destination and hospitality sector expansion.
- **Transportation, Logistics, and Distribution**
 - **Knowledge:** Port operations, supply chain logistics, and transportation safety regulations.
 - **Skills:** Forklift operations, logistics coordination, and warehousing.
 - **Roles:** Truck drivers, logistics analysts, warehouse operators.
 - **Growth Drivers:** Proximity to the Port of Charleston and the Port of Savannah.
- **Renewable Energy and Environmental Services**
 - **Knowledge:** Solar and renewable energy systems, environmental preservation, and waste management.
 - **Skills:** Solar panel installation, energy auditing, and regulatory compliance.
 - **Roles:** Environmental engineers, solar installers, sustainability consultants.
 - **Growth Drivers:** Increased focus on renewable energy and sustainability.

- **Education and Training**
 - **Knowledge:** STEM education strategies, vocational skills development, and instructional methodologies.
 - **Skills:** Teaching, curriculum development, and career counseling.
 - **Roles:** Teachers, vocational instructors, instructional coordinators.
 - **Growth Drivers:** Workforce skills alignment with industry needs and education demand.
- **Financial Services**
 - **Knowledge:** Wealth management, financial planning, and risk analysis.
 - **Skills:** Customer advisory, data analytics, and financial modeling.
 - **Roles:** Financial advisors, loan officers, insurance agents.
 - **Growth Drivers:** Rising economic activity requiring financial expertise.

Core Skills Across Sectors

- **Technical Proficiency:** Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), welding certifications, HVAC licenses, CAD for manufacturing, logistics software, and medical technologies.
- **Digital Literacy:** Proficiency in using industry-standard software, AI technologies, and cloud-based tools.
- **Soft Skills:** Effective communication, adaptability, teamwork, and problem-solving.
- **Workplace Readiness:** Time management, safety compliance, and organizational skills.

Barriers and Addressed Needs

Efforts in the South Coast Region also focus on overcoming barriers to employment such as transportation, childcare, and education gaps. Importantly, workforce development initiatives target underserved populations including veterans, individuals with disabilities, and those in rural areas. Training programs emphasize accessibility and cater to individuals with limited skills or experience to improve workforce inclusivity and meet labor demands.

Approaches for Workforce Development

To meet employer needs effectively, the South Coast Region must expand access to targeted training programs that align with industry demands (e.g., healthcare certifications, IT bootcamps), foster public-private partnerships to drive industry-led training initiatives, address barriers through improved access to resources such as childcare and transportation services and enhance digital literacy and soft skills training as part of workforce readiness programs. By integrating these strategies, the South Coast Region will strengthen its workforce alignment with employer needs across its diverse economy.

Question 2: An analysis of regional labor market data and economic conditions, to include existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations, and the employment needs of employers in those existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations. The analysis must include the following:

Bullet 2: An analysis of the current workforce in the region, including employment and unemployment data, labor market trends, and the educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment.

EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

According to the South Coast Community Profile (Table 1), the data indicates a resilient and improving labor market over the past decade, with consistent employment growth, a declining number of unemployed individuals, and a progressively lower unemployment rate, despite the pandemic's temporary economic shock. The data provide employment and unemployment trends from 2020 to 2030.

- **Trends in Employment**

- Total employment has steadily increased from 437,653 in Q1 2016 to 533,628 in Q1 2026, showing consistent growth over the decade.
- There was a dip in employment in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with employment at 471,195, but a recovery is evident in the following years.

- **Trends in Unemployment**

- The number of unemployed individuals has decreased significantly from 25,256 in 2014 to 20,450 in 2024, showing improved labor market conditions over time.
- The unemployment count peaked in 2020 at 28,462, coinciding with the pandemic, but declined rapidly as the economy recovered.

- **Unemployment Rate Analysis**

- The unemployment rate started at 4.6% in June 2016 and fell to 3.8% in June 2026, highlighting strong economic and job market growth.
- The highest unemployment rate during this period was in 2020 at 5.7%, reflecting the pandemic's impact.

Table 1: Employment and Unemployment Trends 2014-2024

Year	Employment	Unemployment	Rate
2024	546,386	20,450	3.6%
2023	529,307	14,066	2.6%
2022	506,002	15,155	2.9%
2021	489,855	18,066	3.6%
2020	471,195	28,462	5.7%
2019	489,953	12,100	2.4%
2018	472,947	14,307	2.9%
2017	460,949	17,742	3.7%
2016	459,105	20,906	4.4%
2015	447,826	24,822	5.3%
2014	434,037	25,256	5.5%

Source: South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce. South Coast WIOA Region Community Profile. Retrieved from <https://lmi.dew.sc.gov/lmi%20site/Documents/CommunityProfiles/56000004.pdf>.

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

As displayed in Figure 5, the South Coast Region’s employment landscape is dominated by service industries (healthcare, food services, retail) and supported by significant contributions from manufacturing, education, and professional services. Smaller industries like agriculture and utilities play niche roles, while mining has minimal impact. This mix reflects a diverse and service-oriented economy with opportunities for growth in mid-sized sectors.

- **Top Industries**

- **Health Care and Social Assistance:** 72,498 employees, the largest sector, reflecting a strong demand for healthcare services.
- **Accommodation and Food Services:** 64,240 employees, significant in hospitality and tourism.
- **Retail Trade:** 61,904 employees, a major driver in the regional economy.

- **Moderately Sized Industries**

- **Educational Services:** 40,405 employees, important for training and education.
- **Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services:** 39,371 employees, reflecting a robust professional sector.
- **Construction:** 37,553 employees, indicative of ongoing infrastructure and development.
- **Manufacturing:** 36,498 employees, a key contributor to goods production.
- **Administrative and Support and Waste Management:** 33,117 employees, supporting business operations.
- **Public Administration:** 28,578 employees, government-driven employment.

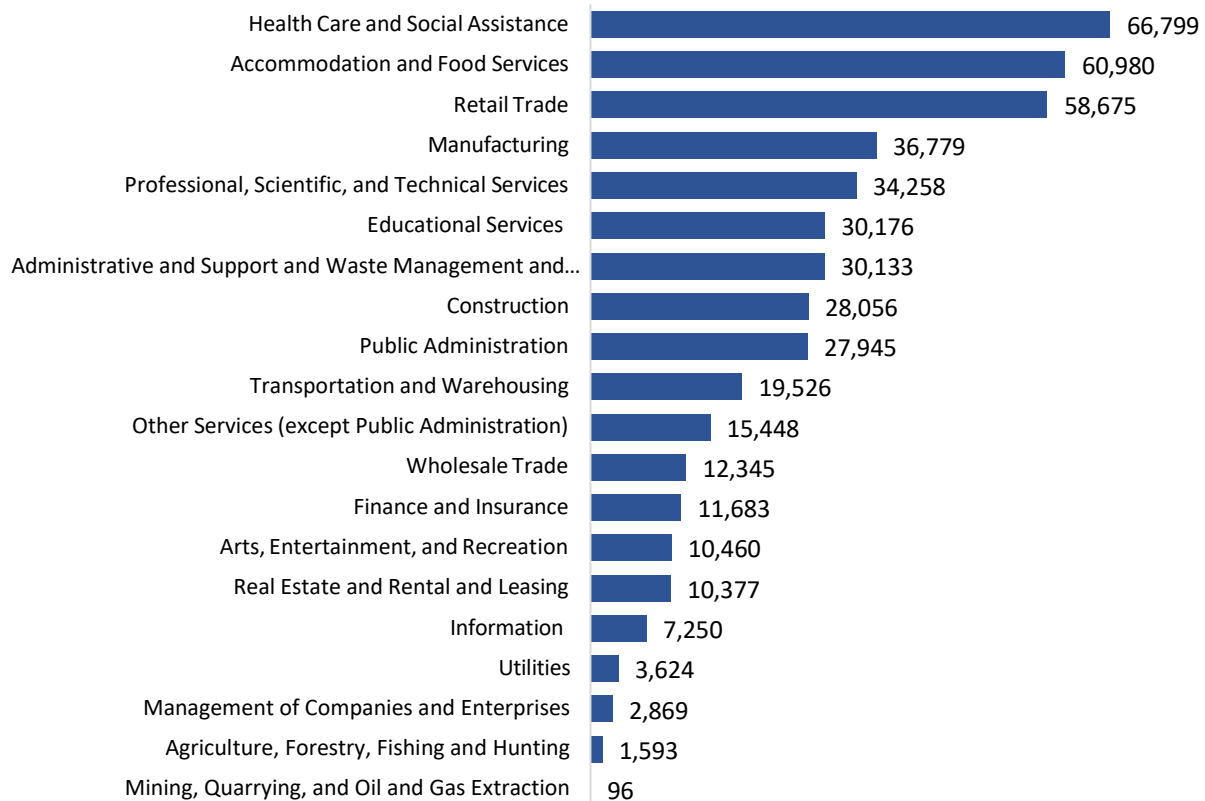
- **Smaller Industries**

- **Other Services (except Public Administration):** 25,235 employees, including various service-based jobs.
- **Transportation and Warehousing:** 22,416 employees, supporting logistics and distribution.
- **Wholesale Trade:** 13,483 employees, essential for supply chain operations.
- **Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation:** 13,474 employees, focusing on cultural and recreational activities.
- **Finance and Insurance:** 13,435 employees, critical for economic stability.
- **Real Estate and Rental and Leasing:** 13,296 employees, supporting housing and commercial property.

- **Niche and Small Sectors**

- **Utilities:** 3,701 employees – provides essential services like energy.
- **Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting:** 2,428 employees – a limited but specialized sector.
- **Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction:** 244 employees – a minimal presence.

Figure 5: Employment by Industry 2026 Q1



SC Department of Employment and Workforce. South Coast WIOA Region Community Profile. Retrieved from <https://lmi.dew.sc.gov/lmi%20site/Documents/CommunityProfiles/56000004.pdf>.

LABOR MARKET TREND

Labor Market Projection

The South Coast Region is projected to experience robust employment growth from 2022 to 2032, driven by high growth in hospitality, administrative services, and government sectors. While most industries are expanding, slower growth is anticipated in healthcare and utilities, and agriculture is the only industry expected to contract. Below highlights changes in employment, percentage growth, and annualized growth rates.¹⁰

Overall, total employment across all industries is projected to grow by 62,563 jobs, a 12.1% increase, with an annualized growth rate of 1.2%.

- **Top-Growing Industries (by Total Job Growth)**

- Accommodation and Food Services: Expected to add 9,443 jobs (15.6% growth, 1.5% annual).
- Administrative and Support and Waste Management: Adding 3,950 jobs (11.7% growth, 1.1% annual).
- Government: Projected to grow by 2,400 jobs (12.4% growth, 1.2% annual).

- **Industries with Moderate Growth**

- Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services: 5,063 jobs (13.8% growth, 1.3% annual).
- Educational Services: 2,821 jobs (8.2% growth, 0.8% annual).
- Retail Trade: 6,532 jobs (11.4% growth, 1.1% annual).

- **Slower Growth**

- Health Care and Social Assistance: Smallest gain of 10,628 jobs (18.2% growth, 1.7% annual).
- Utilities (61 jobs) and Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting (3 jobs) both show minimal growth over the decade, with job percent changes of 3.6% and 0.2% respectively.

- **Fastest-Growing Industries (by Percentage)**

- Health Care and Social Assistance: 36.6% growth.
- Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services: 27.6% growth.
- Accommodation and Food Services: 24.2% growth.

- **Declining Industry**

- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting industry is the only industry expected to decline, shrinking by 2.82% (-0.29% annual).

¹⁰ SC Department of Employment and Workforce. South Coast WIOA Region Community Profile. Retrieved from <https://lmi.dew.sc.gov/lmi%20site/Documents/CommunityProfiles/56000004.pdf>.

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF WORKFORCE

Educational Attainment

Educational attainment is a key indicator of the workforce's skills, qualifications, and potential to meet the demands of different industries. Overall, the data shows a mix of high school graduates and individuals with some college education, with a significant portion holding bachelor's and advanced degrees.¹¹

- **No High School Diploma:** 7.2% of the population have not completed high school. This indicates a smaller proportion compared to other education levels.
- **High School Graduate:** This is almost equal in size to bachelor's degree, with 23.3% of the population having completed high school, underscoring that high school graduation is a widespread educational milestone.
- **Some College No Degree:** 20.4% of individuals have attended college but have not completed a degree. This group represents a significant portion of the population who may have gained some postsecondary education but did not earn a formal credential.
- **Associate's Degree:** 9.3% of individuals have obtained an Associate's Degree. While smaller in comparison to other groups, this reflects the importance of associate's degrees, often serving as a steppingstone to higher educational attainment or employment opportunities.
- **Bachelor's Degree:** This group is almost equal in size to high school graduates, with 25.4% having earned a bachelor's degree. This is a notable figure, reinforcing the significant portion of the population who have pursued and completed undergraduate education.
- **Postgraduate Degree:** 14.5% of the population holds a postgraduate degree (master's, doctoral, or professional degree). This is a moderate proportion of individuals, suggesting that a smaller but important subset of the population has pursued advanced education beyond a bachelor's degree.

INSIGHTS REGARDING INDIVIDUALS WITH BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

The analysis of employment trends in the South Coast Region, along with educational attainment data, reveals important insights regarding individuals with barriers to employment. The region has experienced overall positive employment growth, with significant recovery post-pandemic, but disparities persist, particularly for individuals facing barriers to workforce participation.

Key Employment Trends

- **Steady Employment Growth:** The South Coast Region has shown consistent growth in total employment, increasing from 437,653 in Q1 2016 to 533,628 in Q1 2026. While this growth is promising, individuals with educational and skill barriers are at risk of not fully benefiting from these opportunities.
- **Key Industries:** Employment is dominated by service sectors like healthcare, retail, and food services, which offer entry-level jobs but also have growing demands for specialized skills.

¹¹ JobsEQ®

Industries such as healthcare, retail, and accommodation are projected to experience substantial growth, but many of these roles may be lower-paying or require specific skills that individuals with barriers may lack. For example, healthcare and social assistance and accommodation and food services are expected to add the most jobs, but individuals without higher education or specialized training may struggle to access these opportunities.

- **Employment by Industry:** While the region is showing robust growth in sectors like accommodation, food services, and administrative support, some industries (e.g., healthcare, agriculture) are expected to experience slower growth or even decline. The stagnation or decline in sectors like agriculture may affect individuals in rural or low-skill areas, where employment options are limited.
- **Workforce Development Needs:** Many of the fastest-growing industries (like administrative services, hospitality, and transportation) require specific skills or training. People without a high school diploma or with only partial college education are often excluded from these opportunities without targeted interventions like vocational training or skill development programs.

Unemployment Trends

The South Coast Region's unemployment rate has significantly decreased, from 4.6% in June 2016 to 3.8% in June 2026. However, individuals with lower educational attainment, such as those without a high school diploma or with some college education, are still more likely to face unemployment. These individuals are at risk of being excluded from the broader labor market improvements unless targeted workforce development programs are implemented.

Educational Attainment and Barriers

- **No High School Diploma:** Individuals without a high school diploma face significant barriers to employment, as most modern jobs require at least a high school education. They are often confined to low-wage, low-skill jobs in industries like agriculture and manufacturing, which may offer fewer opportunities for growth. Programs focused on basic literacy, GED preparation, and skills training are essential for these individuals to access higher-paying jobs.
- **High School Graduates:** High school graduates make up a large portion of the workforce but may face barriers such as limited skills or work experience, especially in industries like healthcare and retail, which increasingly require specialized training. These individuals would benefit from additional certification programs to transition into higher-wage sectors or to overcome underemployment.
- **Some College, No Degree:** This group has partial educational attainment but faces challenges like student debt and competition with degree holders. As this group is a significant portion of the population, targeted programs to help them complete degrees or obtain certifications could unlock opportunities in growing sectors like healthcare, IT, and administrative services.
- **Associate's and Bachelor's Degree Holders:** While individuals with associate's or bachelor's degrees face fewer barriers, they still encounter issues like underemployment or regional job market limitations. Bachelor's degree holders, in particular, may face student debt challenges or find themselves in jobs that don't require a degree. Programs that focus on career advancement and professional development could help them secure higher-paying positions.

- **Postgraduate Degree Holders:** While this group faces fewer barriers, challenges like overqualification or geographic restrictions on high-paying jobs still exist. This subset is crucial for industries requiring advanced skills, and supporting them through research, leadership training, and access to specialized sectors can foster economic growth.

Question 2: An analysis of regional labor market data and economic conditions, to include existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations, and the employment needs of employers in those existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations. The analysis must include the following:

Bullet 3: An analysis of workforce development activities in the region, including available education and training opportunities. This analysis must indicate the strengths and weaknesses of workforce development activities necessary to address the education and skill needs of job seekers, including individuals with barriers to employment, and the employment needs of employers in the region.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

The workforce development activities in the South Coast region include various initiatives, programs, and resources provided by workforce boards, educational institutions, training providers, and community-based organizations. These activities aim to address the needs of job seekers (including those with barriers to employment) and employers. Below is the result of an analysis based on the Lowcountry and Trident Local Plans, including available education and training opportunities, and an assessment of strengths and weaknesses.

Available Education and Training Opportunities

- **Industry-Aligned Programs**
 - Training programs align with in-demand industry sectors like manufacturing, healthcare, logistics, IT, and construction.
 - Focus on certifications and apprenticeships in technical fields, such as plumbing, electrical work, and CNC machining.
 - Partnerships with local technical colleges (e.g., Trident Technical College and Technical College of the Lowcountry) offer specialized training programs.
- **Support for Barriers to Employment**
 - Programs for individuals with barriers, including ex-offenders, individuals with disabilities, and veterans, focus on employability skills.
 - On-the-Job Training (OJT) and Work-Based Learning (WBL) provide hands-on skill-building.

- **Youth Programs**
 - Youth apprenticeship initiatives target high school students, integrating academic learning with occupational training.
 - Support for career exploration and soft skills development for young adults entering the workforce.
- **Collaborative Workforce Initiatives**
 - Workforce Development Boards collaborate with employers and community organizations to design targeted programs.
 - Public-private partnerships address skills gaps, ensuring that training programs meet employer demands.

EDUCATION AND SKILL NEEDS OF JOBS SEEKERS

Educational and Licensing Requirements for Job Seekers

Based on the priority occupations required a high school education and a post-secondary credentials in the Lowcountry and Trident Local Plans, opportunities exist across diverse industries for workers with varied educational levels, from entry-level to highly skilled trades. Many roles do not require licenses, making them accessible to job seekers with limited resources. Licensing requirements for specific trades and professions can limit access for individuals with barriers to employment. Employers also face difficulties in finding skilled workers for high-demand industries.

Below is a summary of the educational and licensing requirements for job seekers, including those with barriers to employment, as well as the employment needs of employers in the South Coast Region:

- **Licensing Requirements:** Many occupations require a state license (e.g., electricians, plumbers, real estate brokers, and pharmacy technicians). Some roles specify that a license may be required by employers rather than mandated by law, offering some flexibility. Several positions, particularly in manufacturing, logistics, and arts-related fields, do not require licenses, reducing entry barriers.
- **Training/Education Levels:** Skilled trades (e.g., carpenters, electricians, and plumbers) require technical training or apprenticeships alongside licensing. High-growth industries such as healthcare (e.g., pharmacy technicians) often demand formal training and certifications. Administrative, business, and logistics roles (e.g., supervisors, managers, and freight agents) typically require experience or vocational training but do not always mandate licenses. For roles in transportation, manufacturing, and hospitality, on-the-job training is often sufficient, lowering educational barriers.
- **Occupations with Minimal Barriers:** Roles in logistics, maintenance, hospitality, and some manufacturing positions (e.g., lodging managers, industrial mechanics, heavy equipment operators) generally do not require formal licensing or extensive education.
- **Complex Licensing Areas:** Jobs in fields such as architecture & construction, health sciences, and real estate require state-mandated licenses, which can be a barrier for individuals with limited resources.

Job Seeker Groups with Barriers to Employment

- **Individuals with Limited Education or Skills:** Entry-level jobs like construction laborers, painters, and maintenance workers are accessible, as they typically do not require advanced training or licenses. For higher-paying skilled trades (e.g., carpenters, plumbers, and electricians), educational or certification requirements could pose a barrier.
- **Workers Reentering the Workforce:** Roles without stringent licensing requirements, such as many positions in transportation, logistics, and hospitality, are suitable for individuals reentering the workforce, including justice-involved individuals.
- **Disadvantaged Populations:** Individuals from rural or underserved areas face challenges accessing formal training and certifications for roles requiring licenses. Addressing these barriers will require accessible training programs and assistance with licensing fees.

Employment Needs for Employers

High-Demand Occupations

- **Architecture and Construction:** Employers need licensed workers in key trades such as plumbing, electrical work, and roofing. Supervisory roles often do not require licenses but demand significant on-the-job experience.
- **Healthcare and Social Services:** Pharmacy technicians and opticians require formal training and state licenses. There is demand for social and human service assistants, which do not require licensing, making it easier to enter these fields.
- **Logistics and Transportation:** Roles such as heavy truck drivers, industrial operators, and freight agents remain in demand and often do not require licenses or formal education.
- **Hospitality and Tourism:** Managerial roles in lodging and food services are accessible with minimal educational requirements, making them attractive for individuals without advanced degrees.
- **Manufacturing:** Skilled trades such as machinists, industrial mechanics, and equipment repairers are in demand and often require vocational training but no licenses.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Strengths

- **Alignment with Employer Needs:** Strong collaboration between local employers and workforce boards ensures that training programs align with in-demand occupations and emerging industries, such as advanced manufacturing and green technologies.
- **Diverse Funding Sources:** Federal programs like the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provide financial support for job training, allowing services to remain accessible.
- **Customized Training:** Short-term and targeted training initiatives enable job seekers to acquire specific skills for immediate employment.

- **Focus on High-Growth Sectors:** Programs prioritize industries with high growth potential, such as healthcare, IT, and transportation/logistics.
- **Accessibility for Barriers to Employment:** Support services, including childcare, transportation assistance, and digital literacy programs, address barriers faced by underserved populations.

Weaknesses

- **Gaps in Awareness and Outreach:** Many job seekers, especially in rural areas, lack awareness of available workforce programs. Communication barriers hinder effective participation among non-English-speaking populations.
- **Limited Access in Rural Areas:** Training programs and services are often concentrated in urban centers, creating access challenges for job seekers in outlying regions.
- **Underutilization of Technology:** Limited use of digital platforms for training delivery makes it harder to scale programs and reach broader audiences, especially in a post-pandemic environment.
- **Resource Constraints:** Workforce development programs boards are often operated with limited funding, restricting the scale of services and the number of participants who can be accommodated.
- **Barriers to Completing Training:** Challenges like inadequate transportation, lack of childcare, and financial instability can prevent participants from completing their training programs.
- **Emerging Industry Needs Outpacing Training:** While efforts exist to align training with industry needs, some emerging fields (e.g., renewable energy and advanced robotics) lack comprehensive regional programs.

The workforce development activities in the South Coast Region are robust, with a focus on aligning training with employer needs and supporting individuals with barriers. However, improvements are needed in outreach, accessibility, and program scalability to fully meet the demands of the local economy. These include:

- **Enhanced Outreach and Awareness:** Strengthen outreach efforts, particularly in rural areas, through community partnerships and digital campaigns.
- **Expanding Digital Access:** Invest in online and hybrid training programs to increase accessibility for remote job seekers.
- **Address Barriers Holistically:** Expand support services like affordable childcare and transportation to help individuals complete training programs.
- **Emerging Industry Focus:** Develop specialized training programs in green energy, robotics, and AI to address growing demand.
- **Continuous Employer Engagement:** Maintain active partnerships with employers to ensure workforce initiatives evolve alongside industry trends.

By addressing these areas, the South Coast Region can better prepare its workforce for both current and emerging opportunities, ensuring a stronger alignment between the needs of employers and the skills of the local workforce.

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

Bullet 1: Current in-demand industry sectors and occupations within the region.

CURRENT IN-DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS

The South Coast Region's labor market analysis highlights several key industries driving demand for skilled workers and how to address them.

- **Healthcare and Social Assistance:** The healthcare sector is experiencing significant growth, driven by the increasing demand for skilled professionals. Occupations in demand include pharmacy technicians, opticians, and social and human service assistants.

To address these needs, the region is expanding healthcare training programs in partnership with community colleges and healthcare providers. Initiatives include supporting certification programs and apprenticeships for pharmacy technicians and opticians, ensuring a steady pipeline of qualified workers to fill critical roles.

- **Manufacturing:** Manufacturing remains a cornerstone of the region's economy, with increasing demand for skilled workers in advanced manufacturing processes. Occupations in demand include industrial machinery mechanics, machinists, maintenance workers, and supervisors of production and operating workers.

To support this sector, the region is promoting advanced manufacturing skills through partnerships with technical colleges and employers. Key initiatives include training programs focused on mechatronics and industrial equipment and expanding on-the-job training to bridge skill gaps in the manufacturing workforce.

- **Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics (TDL):** The TDL sector is critical to the region's economic success, particularly given the proximity to the Port of Charleston. Occupations in demand include heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers, diesel mechanics, industrial truck operators, and freight agents.

Regional sector initiatives emphasize the development of short-term certification programs for CDL licensing, diesel engine repair, and warehouse management. To ensure equitable access, these programs will prioritize rural areas and underserved populations, addressing regional disparities in workforce development.

- **Construction and Skilled Trades:** As infrastructure projects and housing developments increase, the construction industry is experiencing growing labor demands. Occupations in demand include electricians, plumbers, carpenters, construction laborers, and supervisors.

To meet these needs, the region is expanding apprenticeship programs in construction trades. Initiatives also include pre-apprenticeship opportunities for underrepresented groups, such as women and individuals facing barriers to employment, ensuring a diverse and skilled construction workforce.

- **Hospitality and Tourism:** Hospitality and tourism remain vital economic drivers for the region, particularly in the Lowcountry. Occupations in demand include lodging managers, food service managers, and chefs.

To support this sector, hospitality training programs are being developed to enhance customer service and management skills, creating opportunities for career advancement. Partnerships with local employers are focused on providing work-based learning opportunities, ensuring a workforce capable of supporting the region's thriving tourism economy.

- **Business and Administrative Services:** The business and administrative services sectors are essential for supporting industries across the region. Occupations in demand include supervisors of administrative workers, transportation managers, and property managers.

Initiatives in this sector focus on leadership development, financial management, and soft skills training to prepare workers for mid- and upper-level administrative roles. These programs aim to build a workforce equipped to meet the growing demands of administrative and management positions.

Strategies for Implementation and Expansion

The South Coast Region's sector initiatives are designed to address current and emerging workforce needs in healthcare, manufacturing, transportation/distribution/logistics, construction and skilled trades, and hospitality & tourism services. By prioritizing collaboration and accessibility, these initiatives aim to align workforce training with employer demands, ensuring the region remains competitive while expanding economic opportunities for all residents.

- **Regional Collaboration:** The South Coast Region will leverage partnerships between the Lowcountry and Trident workforce development boards to align strategies across the region. Collaboration with technical colleges, economic development organizations, and private employers will be essential to create industry-specific training pipelines.
- **Industry Partnerships:** Sector partnerships are being developed to directly engage employers in curriculum design, ensuring training programs align with current workforce needs. Advisory groups for healthcare, manufacturing, and construction are being established to provide continuous feedback on skill requirements and market trends.
- **Targeted Workforce Training:** The region expands short-term certification programs in high-demand fields, particularly in healthcare, TDL, and manufacturing. Also the region promotes dual enrollment programs for high school students in technical career pathways to develop talent pipelines.

- **Focus on Accessibility:** Sector initiatives prioritize populations with barriers to employment, including rural residents, justice-involved individuals, and veterans. Programs will provide wraparound services, such as transportation, childcare, and financial support for certification/licensing costs.
- **Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeships:** These include an expansion of registered apprenticeships in construction, manufacturing, and healthcare. Also, the region supports employer-led internships, on-the-job training, and mentorship programs to provide practical experience and career readiness.

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

Bullet 2: The status of regional collaboration in support of the sector initiatives.

The South Coast Region acknowledges the significance of collaborating with partner agencies to support individuals and businesses in achieving their workforce objectives. Additionally, the region is dedicated to working closely with its core, mandated, and other community partners to ensure optimal outcomes for both individuals and businesses. Effective collaboration and communication among partners are facilitated through regular meetings, emails, and virtual conferences. The regional partners include, but are not limited to:

- Wagner-Peyser Employment Services Program
- Adult Education and Family Literacy
- SC Vocational Rehabilitation and Commission for the Blind
- WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs
- Technical Colleges (Trident Technical College and The Technical College of the Lowcountry)
- Job Corps Program
- Veterans Employment and Training Activities
- SC Department of Social Services: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers: Telamon
- Goodwill with the Senior Community Service Employment Programs (SCSEP)
- Trade Adjustment Assistance Programs
- Unemployment Compensation Programs
- Youth Build Programs
- Second Chance Programs

The region has made significant progress in fostering regional collaboration to support sector initiatives. Both workforce development boards are working together to align strategies, pool resources, and address the shared needs of employers and job seekers across the region. Below is an overview of the current status of regional collaboration.

COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

- **Shared Sector Prioritization:** Both the Lowcountry and Trident Workforce Development Boards have identified overlapping in-demand industries, including healthcare, manufacturing, construction, transportation and logistics (TDL), and hospitality. Efforts are underway to synchronize employer engagement strategies and training programs to ensure consistency and responsiveness across the region.
- **Joint Workforce Initiatives:** The region has established frameworks for joint planning and program development, leveraging data and employer insights collected through sector partnership meetings. Collaborative strategies include expanding registered apprenticeships in manufacturing, healthcare, and construction; and joint investments in workforce infrastructure, such as developing mobile training units for rural areas and shared training facilities.
- **Employer Engagement and Partnerships:** The region has begun organizing regional employer roundtables to align workforce strategies with employer needs in key sectors. For example, both Lowcountry and Trident are working with major manufacturers and healthcare providers to standardize skill certifications and training pipelines, such as certified production technicians (CPT) programs in manufacturing and credentialing for healthcare workers.
- **Alignment of Training Programs:** Efforts are focused on avoiding duplication and ensuring that training programs offered in the Lowcountry and Trident areas are complementary. These include expanding dual-enrollment programs for high school students across the region and standardizing curricula for in-demand industries, such as logistics certifications and construction trades apprenticeships.

KEY REGIONAL COLLABORATION SUCCESSES

- **Healthcare Sector Initiatives:** Collaborative programs in healthcare training focus on addressing labor shortages for pharmacy technicians, certified nursing assistants (CNAs), and other technical roles. Both Workforce Development Boards are partnering with hospitals and technical colleges to expand access to certifications and clinical placements.
- **Manufacturing Sector Partnerships:** A unified focus on advanced manufacturing has led to increased collaboration with employers such as Boeing and Volvo in the Trident area and smaller manufacturers in the Lowcountry. Workforce boards are working to develop a seamless pipeline for industrial machinery mechanics, machinists, and maintenance workers.
- **Support for Underserved Populations:** The region has prioritized populations with barriers to employment, including veterans, justice-involved individuals, and residents in rural areas. Wraparound services, such as transportation assistance and childcare support, are being offered to ensure equitable access to training opportunities.

- **Data Sharing and Analysis:** Both workforce areas are actively sharing labor market data and insights to inform the development of regional programs. This ensures a data-driven approach to sector initiatives and supports consistency across local programs.

CHALLENGES AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- While progress has been made, the alignment of funding between the two workforce areas remains a challenge. The region is working to integrate state and federal funding streams more effectively to support shared sector initiatives.
- While large employers are actively engaged, smaller businesses in the Lowcountry face challenges participating in workforce initiatives due to resource constraints. Efforts are underway to improve outreach and support for smaller employers.
- Geographic disparities, particularly in rural areas, present challenges in ensuring equitable access to training programs. The region is exploring mobile training units and virtual learning options to address these gaps.

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

Bullet 3: Current sector-based partnerships within the region.

CURRENT SECTOR-BASED PARTNERSHIPS

The South Coast Region has developed multiple sector-based partnerships to align workforce efforts with industry needs. These include:

- **Healthcare Partnerships:** The South Coast Region launched a healthcare industry-led sector partnership in July 2019 to expand training programs for CNAs, pharmacy technicians, and other roles. Partnership with technical colleges to increase capacity for clinical placements and healthcare credentialing. This partnership uses the combined Next Generation-TPM model, based on successful models from across the U.S. The healthcare sector partnership continues to evolve, with ongoing efforts to relaunch it and align training services with industry needs.
- **Manufacturing Partnerships:** Partnerships with major manufacturers like Boeing and Volvo in order to provide certifications for production workers and technicians. Development of apprenticeship programs in advanced manufacturing and maintenance roles. The manufacturing sector partnership was launched in September 2020 but was placed on hold due to the pandemic. The South Coast Region is in preparation for relaunching the manufacturing partnership as well.

- **Construction and TDL Partnerships:** Collaboration with construction firms to train workers in licensed and non-licensed trades (e.g., electricians, plumbers). Engagement with logistics companies to promote certifications for CDL drivers and diesel mechanics.
- **Hospitality and Tourism Partnerships:** Partnerships with tourism boards and hospitality organizations to train and certify workers in culinary arts and hotel management.

The South Coast (Lowcountry and Trident Workforce Areas) Region launched a Healthcare Industry-led sector partnership in July 2019 and a Manufacturing Partnership in 2020. The South Coast Region recently relaunched the Healthcare and Manufacturing Sector Strategy partnership with the kick-off meeting held on June 20, 2026. The Riley Center for Livable Communities under the College of Charleston was selected as the consultant to help facilitate the relaunch of the sector strategy partnerships.

JOINT BUSINESS SERVICE STRATEGY

The South Coast Region has developed a joint business service strategy, with the formation of a Regional Integrated Business Services Team (RIBST). This team will consist of representatives from core partner agencies, working together to provide coordinated business services across local areas. Their focus is to ensure efficient delivery of strategies, foster relationships, and align with state plans. Key Responsibilities of RIBST include:

- **Quarterly Meetings:** RIBST will meet quarterly to develop strategies, ensure coordination, and align with the state plan.
- **Employer Engagement:** The team will organize employer contacts, job fairs, and hiring events.
- **Relationship Building:** Staff will build relationships with employers, trade associations, and community organizations to better understand employer needs and provide awareness of available services and resources.

The RIBST strategy emphasizes collaboration, engagement, and customized services to meet the needs of businesses in the South Coast Region. Through strategic partnerships, regular coordination, and targeted services like talent acquisition and retention, RIBST aims to create a responsive and effective business service system. Strategic priorities include:

- **Business Services Engagement:** The goal is to create alliances and strategic partnerships with the business community. The approach is to establish a visible presence with business leaders by engaging in Chambers of Commerce, Trade organizations, and Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) meetings. RIBST will meet regularly to develop strategies for engaging businesses effectively.
- **Business Services and Retention:** The goal is to provide comprehensive support to businesses for talent acquisition and retention. Key services include Talent Acquisition, Talent Retention, Customized Training, Assistive Technology Services, ADA Consultation, and Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP) (resources to maximize TAP's use in connecting qualified candidates to businesses in the region).

- **Coordination with WIOA Partner Business Services:** The goal is to build a customer-centered delivery system for businesses through collaboration with WIOA partners. The approach includes regular coordination meetings, sharing information and contacts, and integrating efforts like Talent Pipeline Project, Job Driven, Sector Strategies, and Talent Pool Development to meet business needs.
- **Customized Training Partnerships:** The goal is to foster partnerships with technical and community colleges to develop customized training initiatives. RIBST and WIOA partners will reach out to South Carolina’s technical and community colleges to explore training opportunities. This focuses on creating industry-responsive training that is accessible to individuals with disabilities.

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

Bullet 4: Data-driven sector priorities within the region.

The South Coast Regional priorities are informed by labor market intelligence and employer feedback. Labor market studies indicate healthcare and manufacturing as top-growing sectors, with steady growth in TDL and construction. Employers report shortages in critical skills, such as advanced machinery operation, healthcare credentialing, and CDL driving. Workforce programs target populations with barriers to employment, including rural residents, veterans, and individuals with limited access to training facilities. Key industries include:

- **Healthcare:** With high demand for pharmacy technicians, CNAs, and opticians, plans include expanding certifications, clinical training, and apprenticeships in partnership with healthcare providers and colleges.
- **Manufacturing:** To meet demand for machinists, maintenance workers, and industrial mechanics, initiatives focus on advanced training in automation and robotics, expanded apprenticeships, and pathways from high school to mid-level roles.
- **Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics (TDL):** To address shortages in CDL drivers, diesel mechanics, and logistics managers, the region plans to develop short-term certifications, expand rural outreach, and increase hybrid learning opportunities.
- **Construction and Skilled Trades:** Apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships are being expanded to include electricians, plumbers, and carpenters, with a focus on underrepresented groups and streamlining licensing processes.
- **Hospitality and Tourism:** Programs will enhance management and customer service skills through work-based learning and partnerships with tourism boards and employers to reduce turnover in roles like lodging managers and chefs.

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

Bullet 5: The extent of business involvement in current initiatives.

The South Coast Region’s plans for sector initiatives emphasize strong business involvement to address workforce needs in in-demand industries. Employers across key sectors—healthcare, manufacturing, construction, logistics, and hospitality—are actively engaged in workforce development through:

1. **Curriculum Development:** Businesses collaborate with technical colleges to design training programs aligned with industry standards, particularly for advanced manufacturing, healthcare certifications, and logistics operations.
2. **Apprenticeships and On-the-Job Training (OJT):** Employers, including large companies like Boeing and Volvo, provide apprenticeships and OJT opportunities, offering hands-on experience for roles like machinists, electricians, and industrial mechanics.
3. **Sector Advisory Councils:** Business leaders serve on advisory councils to guide workforce boards in identifying emerging trends, skill requirements, and hiring needs.
4. **Work-Based Learning Programs:** Employers in hospitality and healthcare partners with workforce boards to offer internships and job shadowing, enhancing career readiness for roles such as lodging managers and CNAs.

These efforts reflect a commitment to aligning sector initiatives with real-world demands, ensuring a strong talent pipeline for regional economic growth.

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

Bullet 6: Potential public-private partnerships in the region to support sector strategies.

The South Coast Region aims to leverage public-private partnerships to expand sector initiatives for in-demand industries such as healthcare, manufacturing, construction, logistics, and hospitality. These partnerships are vital to aligning training programs with industry needs and addressing workforce gaps.

- **Education and Industry Collaborations:** Partnerships with technical colleges and K-12 schools will focus on dual-enrollment programs, apprenticeships, and industry-specific certifications in manufacturing, healthcare, and logistics.
- **Employer Partnerships:** Large employers like Boeing, Volvo, and regional healthcare providers will support work-based learning, internships, and on-the-job training programs, ensuring skill alignment for roles like machinists, technicians, and healthcare workers.
- **Community-Based Partnerships:** Nonprofits and local organizations will provide wraparound services such as childcare, transportation, and financial assistance, enabling greater access to training for underserved populations.
- **Technology Partnerships:** Collaborations with tech companies will focus on expanding online training platforms and virtual resources to improve accessibility, particularly for rural communities.

Question 4: A description of regional service strategies that may be established as a result of the regionally coordinated delivery of services, including the use of cooperative service delivery agreements, when appropriate. Regions should consider the following:

Bullet 1: Existing service delivery strategies that will be expanded, streamlined, or eliminated.

The South Coast Region has developed robust plans to deliver coordinated workforce development services. These strategies focus on leveraging resources, enhancing partnerships, and streamlining service delivery to address the diverse needs of employers and job seekers. These include:

- **Leveraging Collaborative Resources:** The South Coast Region plans to pool resources across workforce boards to reduce duplication and create collaborative initiatives, particularly in partnership with industry-specific associations. This includes launching regional business services teams to identify shared employer needs and coordinate strategies to meet those needs across both areas.
- **Stakeholder Engagement and Communication:** By convening stakeholders in local communities, the region aims to strengthen collaboration and improve communication about workforce services for priority and unemployed job seekers. Regular convenings will ensure alignment of services and provide a seamless experience for both employers and job seekers.
- **Unified Service Delivery:** A consistent service model across all workforce centers and regional partners will streamline processes and enhance the continuum of services for customers, especially those with barriers to employment. Cross training for staff and partners will ensure uniform messaging and coordinated support throughout the region.
- **Targeting Priority Populations:** Workforce programs will focus on individuals with barriers to employment, including those receiving public assistance, low-income individuals, and those with basic skills deficiencies. Services for K-12 students, youth, dislocated workers, and veterans will include career assessments, work experience opportunities, and career pathway development.

- **Work-Based Learning as a Priority:** The region emphasizes expanding opportunities for On-the-Job Training (OJT), apprenticeships, and school-to-work programs to prepare job seekers with real-world skills for high-demand industries. Additional worksites for youth work experiences and summer employment programs will be added annually through partnerships with employers and agencies.
- **Transportation Solutions:** Recognizing the importance of transportation, the region plans to address gaps by utilizing existing programs such as Palmetto Breeze and the BCDCOG Van Pool while exploring new options to improve accessibility for job seekers, particularly in rural areas.

Question 4: A description of regional service strategies that may be established as a result of the regionally coordinated delivery of services, including the use of cooperative service delivery agreements, when appropriate. Regions should consider the following:

Bullet 2: New service strategies necessary to address regional education and training needs.

To address the region’s evolving education and training needs, the South Coast Region will implement new, regionally coordinated service strategies. These initiatives are supported by existing and new cooperative service delivery agreements and reflect shared priorities across workforce development partners.

Adult and Dislocated Worker Services

- **Increase access for hard-to-serve populations:**
 - Expand outreach and services to individuals facing barriers to employment.
 - Use cooperative agreements with community-based organizations and training providers to reach underserved populations.
- **Career readiness and reentry support:**
 - Provide career assessments to support job matching and placement.
 - Increase the number and availability of skill-building workshops to help adults reenter the workforce with job-ready skills.

Youth Services

- **Expand youth work experiences and summer employment opportunities:**
 - Add new worksites annually by partnering with both existing and new employer and agency partners.
 - Align opportunities with regional labor market trends and emerging industry needs.
- **Focus on real-world exposure and skills development:**
 - Emphasize hands-on learning experiences and mentorship.
 - Prepare youth to be competitive in a rapidly changing workplace.

Business and Employer Engagement

- **Enhance regional coordination of Business Services teams:**
 - Align employer workforce needs with training investments across the region.
 - Promote the use of On-the-Job Training (OJT) and similar work-based learning strategies.
- **Focus on high-demand sectors:**
 - Prioritize training and placement in sectors with strong regional demand.
 - Help job seekers build skills that meet employer expectations and lead to sustainable employment.

Through these regionally coordinated strategies and cooperative service delivery agreements, the South Coast Region will ensure more responsive, efficient, and impactful workforce services for job seekers and employers alike.

Question 4: A description of regional service strategies that may be established as a result of the regionally coordinated delivery of services, including the use of cooperative service delivery agreements, when appropriate. Regions should consider the following:

Bullet 3: Strategies to address geographic advantages.

The South Coast Region enjoys significant geographic and economic advantages that contribute to its strong labor market and business climate. These advantages include major port access, robust transportation infrastructure, a thriving hospitality industry, and ongoing growth in manufacturing and logistics. Through regionally coordinated service delivery and sector-based planning, the South Coast Region will strategically leverage these assets to expand workforce development efforts and improve employment outcomes.

Geographic and Economic Strengths

- **Established Partner Infrastructure and Outreach:** Lowcountry and Trident Workforce Development Areas within the region maintain existing outreach efforts. By collaborating regionally, the South Coast Region can unify and enhance outreach to ensure comprehensive service coverage across all seven counties.
- **Port Presence and Economic Expansion:** The region benefits from the economic impact of port facilities, which serve as major drivers for logistics, trade, and business relocation. These assets support the growth of supply chain and warehousing sectors and attract new businesses.
- **Hospitality and Tourism Industry:** With destinations such as Hilton Head Island and Charleston, the region's tourism economy generates thousands of jobs annually. Seasonal employment and career ladder opportunities are abundant in this sector.
- **Growing Manufacturing Sector:** Rapid expansion in advanced manufacturing across the region is generating demand for skilled labor. The presence of major employers has created new pathways for middle-skill and high-wage jobs.

- **Transportation Infrastructure:**
 - The Trident area features one of the state’s largest and most connected transportation systems, which enhances access to employment.
 - In the Lowcountry, the Palmetto Breeze public transportation network serves hundreds of daily riders, connecting individuals to hospitality employment, SC Works centers, and training providers.
 - Proximity to I-26 and I-526 offers efficient logistics routes for employers and facilitates commuter access throughout the region.
- **Business-Friendly Climate:** The region’s “Lowcountry” identity is synonymous with pro-growth policies, favorable business conditions, and an attractive quality of life, making it a hub for employers seeking long-term investment opportunities.

Regional Strategy to Leverage Geographic Advantages

To align workforce development efforts with these regional strengths, the South Coast Region will implement a coordinated strategy rooted in sector-based partnerships and integrated business services:

- **Regional Industry Sector Strategy Implementation:**
 - Sector partnerships will be launched for each in-demand industry, including manufacturing, healthcare, logistics, and hospitality.
 - Each partnership will bring together employers, workforce agencies, and education providers to identify shared needs, such as talent shortages, training gaps, and hiring challenges.
 - Public partners will respond to sector feedback by developing targeted solutions, training programs, and support services.
- **Coordinated Regional Business Services:** Business Services teams from Lowcountry and Trident will operate collaboratively to identify workforce needs across industries, develop and implement joint recruitment and outreach strategies, share labor market data and employer intelligence, and provide unified responses to regional employers.
- **Cross-Training and Professional Development:** Ongoing staff cross-training across the region ensures a consistent, high-quality experience for both job seekers and employers. It also fosters a shared understanding of industry demands and service delivery models.
- **Addressing Transportation Gaps:** The region will continue to assess and address transportation barriers that affect job access, especially for residents in rural areas or those seeking training and support services.

Question 4: A description of regional service strategies that may be established as a result of the regionally coordinated delivery of services, including the use of cooperative service delivery agreements, when appropriate. Regions should consider the following:

Bullet 4: Approaches to improve services to individuals with disabilities, veterans, youth in or aged out of the foster care system, offenders, or other hard-to-serve populations.

Through regionally coordinated planning and service delivery, the South Coast Region is working to improve outcomes for individuals with barriers to employment—including individuals with disabilities, veterans, youth in or aged out of foster care, justice-involved individuals, and other hard-to-serve populations. By implementing the following strategies, the South Coast Region will ensure individuals with barriers to employment receive the customized, coordinated support they need to access training, employment, and long-term economic stability.

- **Unified Staff Training and Service Delivery Alignment:** Lowcountry and Trident Workforce Development Areas will provide coordinated staff and partner training at the regional level to ensure a shared understanding of service protocols and eligibility for target populations. A regional service delivery plan will be established and supported by cooperative agreements to clarify roles and responsibilities across partners.
- **Services for Individuals with Disabilities (through SCVRD):** The South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department (SCVRD) provides individualized services through a statewide network that includes:
 - Four regional area offices and job readiness training centers in Beaufort, Charleston, Moncks Corner, and Walterboro.
 - Specialized services such as occupational and physical therapy, rehabilitation engineering, IT training, and substance abuse recovery programs.

SCVRD collaborates with SC Works centers, local schools, and mental health agencies to reach customers in community-based settings. Staff provide job readiness, retention, and placement services aligned with individual strengths and employer needs. SCVRD also works directly with employers to provide job retention services and support for employees experiencing challenges due to physical, emotional, or substance-related conditions.

- **Services for Other Hard-to-Serve Populations:**
 - **Veterans:** The region and partner agencies collaborate with local veterans' employment representatives to offer priority of service, career counseling, and job matching for veterans.
 - **Foster Youth and Former Foster Youth:** The region will expand partnerships with SC Department of Social Services (DSS), local nonprofits, and foster care transition programs to provide work-based learning, mentoring, and career exploration.
 - **Justice-Involved Individuals:** Regional partners will coordinate with reentry programs and correctional institutions to support pre-release and post-release employment planning, training, and support services.

- **Regional Coordination and Cooperative Agreements:** Lowcountry and Trident Workforce Development Areas will formalize partnerships through Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) to support information sharing, cross-referrals, and aligned service delivery for hard-to-serve populations. Shared performance data and regular regional meetings will ensure continuous improvement and equitable service delivery.
- **Bi-Annual Career Events**
 - **Disability Career Expo:** The Trident Workforce Development Area hosts bi-annual Disability Career Expos in collaboration with Southcoast partners.
 - **Reentry Career Fairs:** The Southcoast Region also holds bi-annual Reentry Career Fairs to support individuals transitioning back into the workforce.

Question 4: A description of regional service strategies that may be established as a result of the regionally coordinated delivery of services, including the use of cooperative service delivery agreements, when appropriate. Regions should consider the following:

Bullet 5: Strategies to connect the unemployed with work-based learning opportunities.

The South Coast Region has prioritized the expansion and coordination of work-based learning (WBL) opportunities—including On-the-Job Training (OJT), work experience, registered apprenticeships, and school-to-work transitions—for unemployed individuals across all core populations. Through regionally coordinated service delivery and cooperative agreements among workforce partners, the region aims to ensure greater access, awareness, and alignment of these opportunities with employer needs.

Key strategies include:

- **Regional Business Services Coordination:** The Business Services Team—working collaboratively across Lowcountry and Trident Workforce Development Areas—has been tasked with ensuring that all customer populations, including adults, dislocated workers, and youth receive timely and accurate information about WBL programs. This includes sharing best practices, employer leads, and training incentives across the region.
- **Youth Engagement in Career Pathways:** For youth, coordinated services include career assessments, subsidized work experiences, and OJT placements that are intentionally linked to career pathway exploration and development. These activities are designed to connect educational outcomes with future employment goals.
- **Integrated Outreach and Referral Systems:** The region is enhancing cross-program referral processes through cooperative agreements with core partners and community-based organizations. This ensures that unemployed individuals are connected to WBL opportunities early in their engagement with the workforce system.
- **Employer Engagement for WBL Expansion:** Workforce partners across the South Coast Region jointly identify and engage employers willing to host WBL participants. This includes leveraging regional labor market data to prioritize high-demand industries and expand opportunities in emerging sectors.

Question 4: A description of regional service strategies that may be established as a result of the regionally coordinated delivery of services, including the use of cooperative service delivery agreements, when appropriate. Regions should consider the following:

Bullet 6: Strategies to integrate existing regional planning efforts among core partners.

Integrated Regional Planning Strategies

The South Coast Region is committed to strengthening alignment among core partners—Title I (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth), Title II (Adult Education), Title III (Wagner-Peyser), and Title IV (Vocational Rehabilitation)—through the development of integrated regional planning strategies. These efforts are designed to improve service delivery, avoid duplication, and ensure more effective outcomes for job seekers and employers. To support this commitment, the region will pursue the following coordinated strategies:

- **Establish a Regional Planning and Coordination Committee**
 - Form a standing regional committee made up of representatives from each core partner, including local workforce boards, adult education providers, SCDEW, and SCVRD.
 - Meet regularly to coordinate shared goals, evaluate progress, and align planning cycles and funding priorities.
 - Continue to build Sector Strategy Partnerships in the in-demand industries in the Southcoast Region
- **Develop Joint Service Delivery Models**
 - Create and expand cooperative service delivery agreements that allow for co-enrollment, shared case management, and cross-referrals among partners.
 - Pilot region-wide strategies for integrated intake, assessment, and service planning that streamline the customer experience.
- **Align Labor Market Intelligence and Performance Goals**
 - Share labor market data, demand occupations, and employer feedback across core partners to inform programming and training investments.
 - Use common performance indicators and outcomes to measure progress and improve data-driven decision-making across the region.
- **Coordinate Employer Engagement and Business Services**
 - Develop a regional business services team composed of staff from core partner programs to conduct joint employer outreach and respond to industry needs more effectively.
 - Coordinate training and placement activities that draw on the strengths of each partner, such as OJT, customized training, and incumbent worker training.

- **Implement Integrated Professional Development**
 - Provide cross-training for front-line staff across core programs to build a shared understanding of each partner’s services, eligibility, and processes.
 - Promote a unified service culture across the region through shared professional development and regional workforce convenings.
- **Leverage Technology for Seamless Coordination**
 - Utilize shared platforms and communication tools to support real-time collaboration among partners.
 - Explore integrated case management systems or data-sharing agreements that ensure continuity of service and follow-up across agencies.

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

Bullet 1: Current or proposed resource leveraging agreements.

Bullet 2: The establishment of a process to evaluate cost-sharing arrangements.

The South Coast Region will not pursue administrative cost agreements. Currently, each workforce development area has its unique budget structure and cost allocation plan that does not permit a regional administrative cost arrangement at this time.

Question 6: A description of how transportation, access to childcare, or other supportive services are coordinated within the region, as appropriate. Regions should address the following:

Bullet 1: How the provision of transportation or other supportive services could be enhanced regionally.

Bullet 2: What organizations currently provide or could provide supportive services.

Bullet 3: Establishing a process to promote coordination of the delivery of supportive services.

The South Coast Region’s strategy for coordinating transportation, childcare, and other supportive services is rooted in collaboration, negotiation, and leveraging collective resources. By focusing on partnerships with established service providers, coordinating through workforce development boards, and addressing the most critical local needs, the region hopes to improve access to essential services for its residents. This approach is particularly important for ensuring that underserved populations—such as

offenders and low-income families—can successfully access the transportation and childcare options they need to thrive in the workforce. Processes for Coordinating Supportive Services include:

- **Partnerships with Service Providers:** The region emphasizes building partnerships with established service providers. For childcare, the region plans to collaborate with agencies such as ABC Vouchers through the Department of Social Services (DSS). These collaborations ensure that low-income families have access to affordable childcare, enabling parents to work or participate in training programs. Similarly, for transportation, the region will work with private and public entities, such as vanpool operators in Trident area and Palmetto Breeze in the Lowcountry area, to provide transportation options for workers.
- **Regional Collaboration and Negotiation:** The South Coast Region intends to leverage its collective voice to advocate for better access to services. Through this strategy, local workforce development boards will work together to identify the specific needs of each area within the region, including transportation and childcare. By uniting their efforts, these boards can negotiate better rates and services with agencies, potentially leading to improved affordability and accessibility. Regular informal meetings and formal regional planning sessions will be essential for identifying the most pressing needs and determining how to coordinate resources effectively.
- **Transportation Coordination:** Transportation remains a significant challenge in the region, particularly in rural areas with limited infrastructure. The region's strategy aims to expand transportation options, especially for individuals working non-traditional hours, such as night shifts. Acknowledging the limitations of existing public transportation systems, including limited coverage and operating hours, particularly in larger cities like Charleston and Beaufort, the region is considering vanpool services to address transportation gaps. Palmetto Breeze, which has served the Lowcountry Region for four decades, is planning to expand services and address future vehicle and operational needs. Additionally, efforts are underway to increase the availability of medical transportation to ensure access to hospitals and mental health treatment centers.
- **Support for Workers and Offenders:** Addressing the needs of workers, especially those in industries such as hospitality, is a key component of the region's strategy. For example, providing reliable transportation for workers, particularly in rural areas, is critical. Additionally, the region is considering transportation services that will help individuals transition from incarceration back into society. These individuals often lack access to their own transportation and rely heavily on public transportation options to search for work or access other necessary services. The region's effort to develop a more cohesive and accessible transportation network can play a significant role in improving the employment prospects of offenders.
- **Comprehensive Regional Planning:** The workforce development boards will be central to the planning and coordination of these services. By holding both informal and formal meetings, the boards will foster better understanding and collaboration across the different areas of the South Coast Region. This will allow local areas to share resources, develop regional strategies, and prioritize actions based on the most pressing needs of the population. For instance, areas with higher concentrations of low-income families may prioritize childcare access, while more urban areas like Charleston may focus on expanding public transit options or addressing the shortage of CDL drivers.

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

Bullet 1: Current economic development organizations engaged in regional planning.

Bullet 2: Education and training providers involved with economic development.

In the South Coast Region, various economic development organizations play an active role in regional planning and workforce development. Key economic development entities involved include:

- **South Carolina Department of Commerce:** This state agency supports regional economic development efforts by attracting and retaining businesses, as well as fostering partnerships between local and state entities.
- **ReadySC™:** A division of the South Carolina Technical College System, ReadySC™ focuses on workforce development for new and expanding businesses, helping companies recruit, train, and build their workforce.
- **Charleston Regional Development Alliance (CRDA):** The CRDA works across the Trident Area, supporting the region's economic growth by providing valuable data, particularly related to growth and commuting patterns between counties. The CRDA has been instrumental in the development of the regional workforce plan, aligning it with the region's economic development goals.
- **County and Regional Economic Alliances:** Local economic development directors from each workforce area collaborate on regional workforce planning. These partnerships ensure that economic development strategies are tailored to local needs and opportunities, while also contributing to broader regional objectives.
- **Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce:** This organization has provided crucial data regarding workforce demand, including occupational skills needs within the region. The Chamber also works closely with other economic and workforce development partners to support talent development and employer needs.

These organizations contribute to a regional planning process that aligns workforce development services with economic growth strategies. They collaborate with workforce development boards and educational institutions to identify emerging industry needs and ensure a skilled workforce is available to meet those needs.

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

Bullet 2: Education and training providers involved with economic development.

Education and training providers are critical partners in the South Coast Region's economic development efforts, ensuring that the region's workforce is equipped with the skills needed by local industries. Key education and training entities include:

- **South Carolina Technical College System:** This system is central to workforce development, providing technical education and training to meet the demands of various sectors. The system includes 16 local technical colleges, which offer a range of degrees, diplomas, and certificates aligned with industry needs. Colleges such as Technical College of the Lowcountry and Trident Technical College, also work closely with workforce development boards and economic development organizations to ensure their training programs match the skills required by businesses in the region. ReadySC™ and Apprenticeship Carolina™ are integral components of the South Carolina Technical College System. ReadySC™ helps to recruit and train new workers for businesses, while Apprenticeship Carolina™ focuses on increasing the use of Registered Apprenticeships, which are vital for industries that require specialized, hands-on training.
- **Career and Technology Education (CATE) Programs:** High schools in the region offer CATE programs, providing students with exposure to high-growth industries such as healthcare, STEM fields, information technology, and skilled trades. These programs are designed to prepare students for high-demand, high-paying jobs, and they align with workforce needs as identified by the South Coast's Talent Demand Study. Through CATE, students gain industry credentials and are better prepared for entry-level positions upon graduation.
- **Trident Technical College:** As a key regional institution, Trident Technical College works closely with local school districts, the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce, and other partners to develop training programs based on workforce demand. For example, Trident has been involved in initiatives to fill workforce gaps in critical sectors such as healthcare and manufacturing. The college also collaborates with the workforce development boards to align its programs with economic development goals.
- **Technical College of the Lowcountry (TCL):** TCL's programs align with regional labor market demands. It partners with local industries such as healthcare, construction, information technology, and hospitality ensuring that graduates are job ready. They also provide continuing education and customized workforce training for employers. TCL regularly partners with local economic development organizations, such as the Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation, Colleton County Economic Alliance, and local chambers of commerce and business alliances, to address workforce needs.

- **Public School Districts:** Local school districts collaborate with workforce and economic development entities to develop programs that meet regional talent demands. Data from local chambers of commerce and business leaders are used to guide the development of curriculum and training initiatives that address the current and future needs of employers in the area.

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

Each local area will continue to negotiate its own performance measures independently. However, regional coordination of performance metrics will be integrated into the South Coast Sector Strategy partnership. As a unified region, we will establish collective goals that may differ from individual local goals, such as expanding the Business Service Team and exploring the potential for shared staff across areas. Additionally, we may develop performance targets focused on training expectations and outcomes, particularly in sectors where training has been identified as a priority, such as in the two sector partnerships currently underway (Healthcare and Manufacturing Sectors). The South Coast Regional Team will also work to create performance goals that address broader regional challenges, such as improving transportation options for the workforce, which impact businesses across both areas.

