

**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
Regional Plan Modification
July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2020**

Planning Region Name:

Link Upstate WIOA Region (formerly Greater Upstate WIOA Region)

Local Areas within the Planning Region:

Greenville County, Upper Savannah, Upstate, and WorkLink

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The regional plan serves as an action plan to develop, align, and integrate service delivery strategies and resources among multiple local areas within a region. Local boards and chief elected officials in each planning region are required to engage in a regional planning process that results in the preparation and submission of a single regional plan. Regional plans must incorporate the local plans for each local area within the planning region. The regional plan must include:

- 1. A description of how each local area 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 chief elected officials and Local Boards were involved in the development of the plan.**

Initially, the four (4) local Workforce Development Board Directors in the Link Upstate Workforce Region held meetings to discuss the regional planning process soon after the passage of WIOA. We developed the groundwork tasks list and timeline at these meetings, in addition to identifying individuals to serve on the planning team.

Through months of coordination, each local area was given the chance to submit responses for the consideration of the group. These responses highlighted the similarities and ongoing partnerships within the region, while also identifying areas of opportunity. The effort, coordinated by the 4 local WIOA administrators, was inclusive and all submissions were evaluated to ensure inclusion of each local area's unique perspective and views. A draft of the plan was then sent to the administrators in order to ensure that chief elected officials were included in the process.

The process for including the chief elected official(s) and local WDBs may vary from local area to local area.

- In the **Greenville County** area, the chief elected official and Greenville County WDB are involved in the development of the plan via:
 - The Chief Elected Official, the County Administrator, and the Greenville County WDB receive the planning guidance and have opportunity to review and provide feedback to the WDB Executive Director during development.
 - The Chief Elected Official, the County Administrator, and the Greenville County WDB receive an executive summary of the draft regional plan. The full draft plan will also be made available so that stakeholders may receive opportunity to review the full plan and to provide feedback to the WDB prior to finalization.
 - The full regional plan is placed as an item for information at a County Council meeting. Any comments received from Council members will be provided by the Clerk to Council and on to the Greenville County WDB. Subsequently, the regional plan will be made available for a 30-day public comment period. Any comments received will be incorporated as attachments to the regional plan and presented to the Greenville County WDB for final approval.

- In the **Upper Savannah** area, board members were invited to take part in the planning, including attending sector strategy meetings. Chief elected officials have been given updates of the process. Upper Savannah staff meet with area economic developers and chamber leaders. Further, there are plans in place to create a newsletter type communication that can be sent to chief elected officials.
- In the **Upstate** area, consisting of Cherokee, Spartanburg and Union Counties, we created five committees for the local plan and in these meetings, we also included the regional plan information for discussion and creation. The workgroups are as follows:
 - Workforce & Economic Analysis
 - Strategic Vision and Goals
 - Local Area Partnerships and Investment Strategies
 - Program Design and Evaluation
 - Operations and Compliance

Each committee was required to have representation from the Upstate Workforce Board, education, WIOA funded youth program, business, SC Works employee/partner and Workforce Board staff. We also required that we have one person from each of our three counties on each committee. The minimum number of people for each committee was five and the maximum was fifteen. Areas of the regional plan were tied to one of the above areas and were included for discussion in each committee. Each County Council member on the three County Councils received a request to choose a committee on which to participate. They received the regional map along with the instruction letter from DEW (15-16). We had one Council member volunteer from Cherokee County Council and he chose the Local Area Partnerships and Investment Strategies Committee. Each Upstate Workforce Board member also received a request to join a committee. The Upstate Workforce Board will send the local and regional plan to each County Council and Workforce Board member at least one week prior to the scheduled County Council and Workforce Board meetings. This will allow them time to ask questions and have input so if changes are needed, we have time before the document goes out for comment. We plan to ask the County Councils to allow non-significant changes be made after their approval if the Workforce Board staff feel they are important. We have secured a time slot on all three of our September County Council meetings and will have a full Workforce Board meeting in September.

This full process was not used for the plan modification. The items revised were provided to our full board for review and approval. Each Chief Elected Official was provided a copy of the changes.

- In the **WorkLink** local area, Chief Elected Officials and the Workforce Development Board were included in the process via regular meeting updates, input via strategic planning and the incorporation of existing board and local policies. The board also reviews and ultimately approves this and all similar planning documents. In addition, local board members from the region are

represented on the Regional Sector Strategies Team, which has been integral to the completion of the initial regional planning process.

Although a written version of the plan is due to SCDEW by November 1, 2016, planning will continue long after the written plan is submitted, based upon the sheer volume of information to be gathered and the follow up meetings to be held in sharing the information. We also think these meetings will initiate changes in the way things are done in an effort to create consistency across the region.

The 4 local Workforce Boards have continually communicated with each other via emails and telephone calls to produce information as it is gathered for the regional plan. The planning process has truly been a collaborative effort.

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 shall include:

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

In-Demand Sectors and Occupations

The majority of the information needed to address this topic was obtained from the Analysis of Upstate Region Industry Clusters, which was given to the Link Upstate Region in the sector strategy planning process.

Using location quotients, a number of industries were identified as in-demand in the Link Upstate Region. Industry clusters with high location quotients and high projected growth include: Business Services; Food Processing; Metal and Metal Fabricating; Lumber and Wood; Chemical, Rubber, and Plastics; and Retail. Additionally, Textiles has a very high location quotient, indicating our region has some advantage compared to the rest of the country. However, Textiles has low projected growth in the future.

A number of other industries have high projected growth, but do not have elevated location quotients. This means that while our Link Upstate Region does not have any particular advantage when compared to other areas of the country, the industries are still expected to grow in the region. Those high growth industries include: Health Care; Energy and Utilities;

Logistics and Transportation; Communications and IT Services; Personal Services; Construction; Wholesale Trade; Financial Services; Education; Biotechnology; Real Estate and Building Services; and Communications and IT Manufacturing.

There are a number of occupations that consistently have openings and are expected to continue to grow between now and 2025. The top 20 openings in occupations are as follows: Team Assemblers; Customer Services Representatives; Registered Nurses; Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers; General and Operations Managers; Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive; First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers; First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers; Postsecondary Teachers; Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education; Maintenance and Repair Workers, General; Accountants and Auditors; Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products; First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers; Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers; Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education; Machinists; Industrial Machinery Mechanics; Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks; and Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses.

Knowledge and Skills

In order to help employers fill job vacancies and help job seekers obtain employment, it is necessary to examine the skills and certifications that employers are looking for. Between April 2018- March 2019 the Link Upstate Regions top 10 advertised hard and soft skills include: oral and written communication, freight+ (software), integrity, owner operator, team oriented/teamwork, detail oriented, marketing, customer service oriented, team-oriented/teamwork, problem solving and Microsoft office. During the same time frame, the top 10 advertised certificates/licensures that employers are seeking include: Class A driver's license, commercial driver's license, driver license, certified registered nurse, HAZMAT, DOT medical care, certification in cardiopulmonary resuscitation, occupational safety and health administration certification, continuing education, and basic life support.

According to the 2015 South Carolina Job Skills Gap Update, there are a number of industries throughout the region that will have more job openings than available skilled job seekers between 2012 and 2022. Those industries include: Architecture and Construction; Business, Management, and Administration; Finance; Hospitality and Tourism; Manufacturing; Marketing; and Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics.

Employment and Unemployment Data

The Link Upstate Region's unemployment rate in 2015 was 5.6%, with a total number of 668,172 people employed and 39,493 unemployed during the year. The Link Upstate Region's unemployment rate in 2018 was 3.4%, with a total number of 699,247 people employed and 24,336 unemployed during the year. The region's unemployment rate has continued to drop annually since 2015.

Labor Market Trends

Labor market trends from the Community Profile for the Link Upstate WIOA Region show that employment in Manufacturing; Health Care and Social Assistance; Retail Trade; Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services; Accommodation and Food Services; and Educational Services have the highest number of individuals employed. The industries with the largest number of new hires in the region area as follows: Administrative Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services; Accommodation and Food Services; Retail Trade; Health Care and Social Assistance; and Manufacturing. The industries with the highest turnover are as follows: Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services; Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting; Accommodation and Food Services; and Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation. In 2016 there were 1,079 new startup firms in the region.

Educational and Skill Levels

Educational Data has examined the highest level of education attained by individuals who are 25 years of age and older. Of those individuals, 30.38% are high school graduates, 17.67% do not have a high school diploma, 19.82% have attended some college, 9% have an associate's degree, 14.96% have a bachelor's degree, and 8.17% have a graduate degree.

Through the Work Ready Communities initiative, the 4 local WDBs in the Link Upstate Region have each obtained certified Work Ready status. As a region, over 61,000 National Career Readiness Certificates (NCRCs) have been earned since 2013. Local areas now offer WIN testing and are no longer pursuing WorkReady Community Status through ACT.

Barriers to Employment

Another important factor to consider is the influence of barriers to employment. In the Link Upstate WIOA Region, there are a total of approximately 1,500,232 people. Of those, approximately 233,178 individuals ages 18-64 have a disability, which equates to about 15.5% of the population. Of those, approximately 216,000 individuals have a disability, which equates to about 15% of the population. These individuals have disabilities which include: hearing difficulties, vision difficulties, cognitive difficulties, ambulatory difficulties, self-care difficulties, and independent living difficulties. These individuals may need additional or specialized assistance when searching for employment.

A second barrier to employment is offender status. In 2015, there were 3,271 individuals released from the Department of Corrections in the Link Upstate Region. In 2018, there were 3,336 individuals released from the Department of Corrections in the Link Upstate Region. These individuals may have been out of the workforce for a substantial amount of time and may need additional assistance with job search and interviewing skills.

A third barrier to employment is homelessness. In the Link Upstate Region, there are nearly 2,000 homeless individuals, which make up approximately 36% of the total state homeless population. This number includes at least 100 homeless veterans. Individuals who are homeless may have difficulty finding and keeping a job, and they may have difficulty attending training to obtain new skills and increase their employability.

A fourth barrier to employment is veteran status. In the Link Upstate Region, there are nearly 97,331 veterans age 19-64. It should be noted that a number of those veterans have retired and are no longer in the workforce. Many veterans return to civilian life and have very productive careers. However, some veterans need specialized assistance in learning how to transfer their military experiences into civilian skills that are needed in the workplace. Some veterans also wish to return to school to obtain a degree or certification to help increase their employability.

A fifth barrier to employment is poverty. In the Link Upstate Region, there are approximately 243,508 people living in poverty. This equates to about 16.2% of people in the region, which means nearly 1 in 6 individuals in the region lives in poverty. Poverty can be a barrier to employment because an individual who cannot afford stable housing, transportation, phone/internet, and many other needs will likely have a harder time finding and keeping a job. Poverty also makes attending school for additional training and education much more difficult.

Workforce Development Activities

Each LWDA in the Link Upstate Region is built upon the same partners as the rest of the state. Wagner Peyser and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity program provide services for the general public. Other partners, including SC Vocational Rehabilitation Department, Adult Education and the Department of Social Services have additional services and support of targeted groups of job seekers. The technical college system is an important partner in our workforce system, as they provide training to many of our participants.

Youth (In-school, Out-of-school) Activities

~~The majority of our workforce development strategies are designed for out-of-school youth. However, several local WDBs within the Link Upstate Region offer JAG programs for in-school youth. JAG has proven to be a model secondary school dropout prevention program and has greatly assisted WIOA youth to successfully complete their high school studies. But the WIOA's work-based expenditure requirement is making it a challenge to maintain supporting the program with local WIOA youth funding.~~

Our out-of-school youth program strategies primarily focus on developing youth participants in the areas of completing secondary school (dropouts), acquiring work maturity skills training, and occupational skills training in the areas of MSSC, forklift certification, and healthcare. Youth service providers are being encouraged to develop classroom training programs that incorporate a hands-on learning component so as to help the local area achieve work-based training expenditure requirements. Finding suitable worksites to sponsor work-based activities has been a challenge. However, by increasing business engagement efforts we are optimistic that more employers will be more willing to offer youth a work-based learning assignment. It should be noted that the WIOA Youth training programs within the region will be aligned with our sector strategies and career pathway models.

Various levels of partnerships exist between the 4 local boards and their SC Commerce Regional Workforce Advisors (RWAs). Many RWAs strategically collaborate with their local boards and youth service providers so as to provide added value relative to bridging gaps between secondary school education and adult workforce development activities, offering technical expertise and advice relative to career counseling and career pathways, and encouraging business involvement within the secondary school learning structure, to the extent possible. Detailed information on RWA partnerships may be contained with a local area's plan but existing relationships between the local boards and the RWAs are in place and should be noted for planning purposes.

Adult/Dislocated Worker Activities

Adult program strategies to mention include NCRC assessments, literacy training and ESL, occupational skills training (aligned via sector strategies), work-based activities, and follow-up services.

Potential strategies to increase the effectiveness of Adult/Dislocate Worker activities include:

- Regional Recruitment of Entry Level Applicants – develop a region-wide strategy that increases the draw of entry level applicants from the four Local Workforce Development Areas so as to be more responsive in meeting employer demand.
- Regional Recruitment of OJT Job Orders – develop a region-wide strategy that increases the draw of qualified entry level OJT applicants and improves the time it takes to fill OJT vacancies. Cooperative agreements may be executed to enable local areas to invest in specific recruitment efforts and in targeted OJT openings.

Dependent upon the geography of the region, other partnerships exists with organizations such as the Upstate Fatherhood Coalition, United Ways, ~~Family Footprints (non-profit)~~, City Community Development Departments, and private employers such as Greenville Health System's Invest Health initiative (grant project). The list of collaborations with other regional entities is not all-inclusive and specific partnerships and related details will be addressed in the local area plans.

Business Services

Regional collaboration between the Upstate and Greenville County WDBs to provide regional business services between Spartanburg, Greenville, Union, and Cherokee counties. Future plans will expand our collaboration to hopefully include the Upper Savannah and WorkLink local areas. Some potential regional initiatives that may improve service delivery and customer satisfaction is collaborating on our ability to supply trainees and/or entry level workers. As businesses draw workers from the entire region and we have workers who are willing to commute within the upstate, the 4 LWDA's will be working on strategies that will allow each area to "invest" resources for a particular business service activity, regardless of the physical location within the region. Cooperative agreements may be established to address the protocols needed in order to provide case management and assignment of costs

for regional business services. Doubling up our resources as a region will greatly increase our responsiveness to business demands.

Strengths of Workforce Development Activities in the Link Upstate Region

The design and delivery of our services are based on customer assessments, labor market demands, and available resources within our system and through our partners (career and technical education, post-secondary institutions). We use assessments to identify skills, knowledge and abilities so that workforce activities are developed, delivered, and used to support effective matches between job seekers and local businesses.

The Link Upstate Region has other strong workforce development initiatives to support its capacity to address the identified education and skill needs of the workforce and the employment needs of employers in the local area:

- ~~● **High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED) Project** – a partnership with HTI Staffing Solutions to temporarily employ high school dropouts as a condition of them participating in a high school equivalency training program. This project addresses one of the biggest barriers to employment, the lack of a high school diploma or GED. Upon successful completion of the HSED program, participants then eligible for a direct hire assignment. This project has been used in three of the four workforce areas in the region (Greenville County, WorkLink, and Upstate), and we will continue to look for ways to expand it.~~
- **Re-entry initiatives** – participate in strategy meetings and re-entry events (i.e., job fairs) in partnership with local chambers of commerce, U. S. Attorney’s Office, Upstate Fatherhood Coalition and other community organizations to address another prominent barrier to employment in the Link Upstate Region. In January 2017, the Link Upstate Region hosted a regional job and resource fair specifically targeted at serving the reentry population. Approximately 200 job seekers attended the event that was held at the SC Works Upstate Spartanburg location. We will continue to look for more opportunities to hold regional re-entry events, including job fairs, poverty/re-entry simulations, etc. WorkLink WDB recently met with the Upstate WDB to learn about their model for serving those exiting the county detention system. As a result, WorkLink will be using Upstate’s best practice model and implementing a similar initiative in Anderson County the Detention Center in 2019.
- **Sector Strategies** – leading sector strategy initiatives as a way to address both the employment needs of employers and the education and skills needs of job seekers across the region. Accomplishments of our Link Upstate Regional Sector Strategies team are as follows:
 - a) Assembled initial regional team that consisted of the region’s local workforce development boards, economic development entities, K-12 education, DEW, the

region's 4 technical/community colleges, DSS, and community-based organizations such as Goodwill Industries and Able SC.

- b) Completed self-assessments and asset mapping exercises.
- c) Held Six Regional Team Meetings, during which we reviewed self-assessment and asset mapping data, reviewed LMI data, selected Diversified Manufacturing as our first sector to target, received tours of different education and training organizations, listened to speakers talk about different partnerships that are currently working in Diversified Manufacturing, divided into five workgroups (Data Workgroup, Career Pathways Workgroup, Sector Training Workgroup, Best Practices Workgroup, and Business and Industry Workgroup), and discussed business engagement for the sector strategy initiative.

Since establishing our workgroups, several have held meetings (Data, Sector Training, Best Practices, Business and Industry). Areas for improvement were identified for the workgroups so that participation increased and in order to memorialize the meeting discussion. The local WDBs will now assume responsibility for leading the workgroup teams and to manage the meeting logistics. Our next steps include planning for the next meeting, in which it will be the first one that included business and industry representatives.

- **Business Services** – engage in additional regional efforts to serve businesses. As discussed below, Greenville County and Upstate are currently jointly funding Business Services Team staff to help serve more businesses across the four counties. We believe this is a strength in serving employers on a regional level. Future opportunities to engage the entire fourteen county region will be assessed. As discussed in more detail in Item 4 below, the administrators in the four [Link](#) Upstate Workforce Development Areas will meet quarterly to discuss topics, including regionally aligning strategies to serve employers.
- **Regional Board Partnerships** – the Greenville County Workforce Development Board and Upstate Workforce Board ~~recently~~ entered into a partnership [in 2016](#) which has enabled the two Boards to align and deliver consistent BST strategies across the Greenville-Spartanburg county regions and the I-85 corridor. Other opportunities to strengthen our regional partnerships with all four Boards will be assessed on a regular basis through quarterly meetings with the four Administrators in the [Link](#) Upstate Region. These may include events coordinated for the entire region, grants we apply for as a region, or strategies we adopt across the four workforce areas.
- **Regional Events: Opportunities to participate regional organizations and events such as the Upstate Chamber Coalition. The Executive Director of the Upstate Workforce Board had the opportunity to attend the National Issues Forum in Washington, DC. During the trip, she joined business leaders from across the Upstate for three days of**

policy work on Capitol Hill. She was able to get up close with top elected officials, staff, and DC personalities as we push the issues that will move the Upstate forward.

Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities in the Link Upstate Region

The Link Upstate Region realizes that the workforce system and services need to continually evolve in response to the changing demands of industry areas, the increased skills and education requirements of today's jobs, and the specific needs of job seekers and employers. WIOA is designed to meet the challenges through its focus on improved coordination and integration across programs, utilization of sector partnerships and career pathways, stronger business engagement efforts and an increase focus on serving individuals with barriers to employment. The Link Upstate Region is well prepared to implement WIOA changes but it will require careful and sustained efforts of the system partners to collaborate.

The Link Upstate Region also faces a unique challenge in regards to transportation. While transit options exist within some of the larger municipalities in the region, a large portion of the area is not serviced by buses or similar alternative transportation. Job seekers without reliable transportation are limited in their ability to access employment and training opportunities. As a result, many low-income individuals must rely upon lower skilled jobs (such as retail or fast food) that are located on the bus line or close to their home. These limitations make it difficult to reach these job seekers and help them see the value in upgrading their skills in pursuit of better career opportunities.

We also acknowledge the challenges in meeting some of the unique employment needs of job seekers and employers alike. There are an increasing number of organizations that have workforce development programs and initiatives. That, paired with a continued drop in unemployment numbers, has left many of us competing to get participants. We are looking for new ways to collaborate with other programs, but it will require information to be shared across partners and from all levels more consistently.

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:

- **Current in-demand industry sectors and occupations within the region;**
- **The status of regional collaboration in support of the sector initiatives;**
- **Current sector-based partnerships within the region;**
- **Data-driven sector priorities within the region;**
- **The extent of business involvement in current initiatives; and**
- **Potential public-private partnerships in the region to support sector strategies.**

In-Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations

As described in response for question 2 above, the Link Upstate Region includes a number of manufacturing related sectors and occupations. Of the industries that have both a high location quotient and a high expected growth, all but one can be included in a broader

manufacturing sector (Business Services; Food Processing; Metal and Metal Fabricating; Lumber and Wood; and Chemical, Rubber, and Plastics). It is important to note that the Business Services industry sector includes all staffing and temporary workers, many of which work on manufacturing sites. Further, a number of the top twenty occupational openings are within the manufacturing sector, including: Team Assemblers; Maintenance and Repair Workers, General; Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products; Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers; Machinists; and Industrial Machinery Mechanics.

Diversified Manufacturing was determined the highest priority area for the 14 county sector partnership region.

Status of Regional Collaboration

The Link Upstate Region has built a strong foundation for sector partnership initiatives. We have been meeting regularly since March of 2016. Our group has completed a number of important activities including the following: discussing our region's strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats; examining regional data on in-demand sectors and occupations; developing an initial sector strategies plan; and dividing into five workgroups (data workgroup, career pathways workgroup, sector training workgroup, best practices workgroup, and business and industry workgroup) in order to create more effective assignments and action items.

Status update April 2019:

The Manufacturing Sector Partnership launched on March 14, 2019. The manufacturers have identified the following priorities:

1. Build a talent pipeline through improved career awareness
2. Address middle skill and technical skill gaps
3. State level policy and regulatory change

The group divided into action teams and has scheduled follow up calls. Each group will report back to the core partnership coordinating team for support. We are currently in the process of preparing a list of all manufacturing career awareness opportunities within the K-12 system in our 14 county area.

Sector Partnerships

The partners that are currently involved in the sector strategies initiative are as follows: Able SC, Adult Education, AMIkids Piedmont, Apprenticeship Carolina, Central SC Alliance, Economic Development Alliance of Pickens County, Economic Development Partnership SC, Goodwill Industries of the Upstate and Midlands, Greenville County School District, Greenville Technical College, Greenville County Workforce Development Board, Greenwood Partnership Alliance, Oconee County Schools, Piedmont Technical College, ReadySC, SC Department of Commerce, SC Department of Employment and Workforce, SC Department of Social Services, SC Vocational Rehabilitation Department, Spartanburg Community College, Ten at the Top,

Tri-County Technical College, Upper Savannah Council of Governments, Upstate SC Alliance, Upstate Workforce Board, and WorkLink Workforce Development Board.

Sector Partnership Update April 2019:

The sector partnership model requires that business remain in the lead. However, a Convener is necessary and support partners are assembled to respond appropriately, if requested. In this partnership the Link Upstate Business Services Lead and SCDOC will serve as the Convener. The convener plays an essential role in keeping a sector partnership on track and moving forward to accomplish the goals of the businesses in the partnership. The convener is the backbone of the sector partnership, providing administrative, project management, and facilitation support to keep the partnership focused and productive. It is essential that the convener is highly action-oriented, but also a collaborative and disciplined team player. A small representation of key support partners have been identified as the Core Coordinating Team, the team responsible for assembling support partners. The Core Coordinating team includes WIOA, LWDBs, Adult Education, SCVR, K-12, Tech Schools and Economic Development. The following individuals represent the team:

Lead Coordinator/Facilitator

Johnnie-Lynn Crosby, SC Works Link Upstate

Coordinator/Facilitator

Matt Wiggins, SC Commerce (K-12)

Subject Matter Experts/Core Members

Billy Morgan, Upper Savannah Council of Governments

Meredith Durham, Worklink Workforce Development Board

Dana Wood, Upstate Workforce Board

Ryan Skinner, South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation

Kim Williams, Greenville Area Development Corporation

Dwayne Hatchett, Spartanburg EFG

Dr. Jermaine Whirl, Community/Tech College System

Tommy Goode, Greenwood County Adult Education

More than 400 individuals represent the key support partner network. Key Support partners receive notification of MFG Sector Partnership updates via email from the Core Coordinating Team Lead Coordinator. Key support partners will be brought to the table, when requested by the manufacturers, to present information regarding existing services available and to respond to specific requests from the Industry Champions.

Sector Priorities

Our regional sector strategies team was provided a report from Maher & Maher and the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce entitled Analysis of Upstate Region Industry Clusters. Using that report, we were able to determine the strong presence of

different manufacturing sectors in our 14-county region. After much discussion with the team, we decided that our initial priority should be Diversified Manufacturing, a sector cluster that includes all the different manufacturing sectors in our region.

Further, our data workgroup is working to collect more data directly from employers in the region. They are asking business services staff and economic developers to gather additional information from manufacturing organizations. Initially answers to three questions will be compiled:

- a. What is the hardest to fill entry-level job?
- b. What skill gaps make it difficult to move entry-level workers in organization to a higher position?
- c. What short-term training could be offered by the workforce system to help your organization find skilled workers?

The survey will be used to augment the statistical data to help the Link Upstate Regional team determine next steps in engaging employers.

Diversified Manufacturing was determined to be the highest priority area, our pilot industry. Once the Manufacturing Sector Partnership is running effectively, we will begin the research to select the next priority industry in need of a partnership. The Coordinating Core Team may be different for each partnership.

Business Involvement

We are currently in the process of engaging business with our sector initiatives. ~~Beginning in September, business and industry representatives will be joining our full group meetings.~~ The business and industry workgroup is responsible for ensuring we have all our information prepared for the representatives to make the best use of their time. We understand their input in this process is invaluable, and we want to ensure our sector strategy initiatives are built through a true partnership with industry.

Potential Public-Private Partnerships

We've had some great initial responses from business to engage with our sector workgroup. At one of our sector meetings, we had a presentations from Michelin North America. The company's Michelin Scholars program is a best practice. Young people are hired out of high school. Michelin pays for their technical education and provides a part-time job. At the completion of the training period, the scholars become eligible for entry-level employment at Michelin.

In the WorkLink area, there have been collaborations between The South Carolina Trucking Association, Tri-County Technical College, and the WorkLink WDB; and a new collaboration around the energy sector, involving Duke Energy, TCTC, and other energy sector partners has begun developing. These initiatives have led to greater understanding of employer needs and training opportunities.

There is a potential future public-private partnerships to be made through collaboration with the local chambers of commerce, to include international chambers, such as the German Chamber and the European chamber. Finally, we expect to continue increasing public-private partnerships to support our sector strategies, and this topic will be a priority of the Business and Industry workgroup.

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:**
- Existing service delivery strategies that will be expanded, streamlined, or eliminated;
 - New service strategies necessary to address regional education and training needs;
 - Strategies to address geographic advantages;
 - Approaches to improve services to individuals with disabilities, veterans, youth, or other hard-to-serve populations;
 - Strategies to connect the unemployed with work-based learning opportunities; and
 - Strategies to integrate existing regional planning efforts among core partners.

Existing Strategies

To date, our four LWDA's have had varying degrees of coordinated service delivery. There are some strategies that are reaching across county borders to be more responsive to meeting the needs of employers. For example, there is a regional agreement between the Upstate Workforce Board and the Greenville County Workforce Development Board. These two LWDA's started sharing a Business Services Lead in 2016 and have expanded their partnership over the last few years. For PY17, the UWB and GCWDB issued a joint Request for Proposals (RFP) for an Operator and Adult/Dislocated Worker Service Provider. As of the start of the PY17, they have had a regional contract with ResCare Workforce Services. There are several regional staff that split their time between the two LWDA's. The UWB and GCWDB have also issued many regional policies to better align services that are provided across their four-county region. We feel this is a best practice and a great way to leverage funding.

Beyond that agreement, coordination is often driven by events. For example, when an employer in Simpsonville closed, outreach materials were developed that had contact information for all four areas in the Link Upstate Region. Representatives from two workforce areas coordinated re-employment activities on site. It is expected that the Link Upstate Region will continue to work together on special projects.

In order to facilitate future collaboration, we plan to establish a regional workgroup to study this topic. Our first steps in developing this workgroup will be determining group members, establishing working parameters, determining the frequency of meetings, and documenting our expected outcomes. One of the first topics that could be discussed is how to coordinate regional recruitment for in-demand training programs, including On-the-Job Training (OJT). A future topic could be pooled procurement of goods and services, as applicable.

New Strategies

The Workforce Development Boards, partners, and Community/Technical Colleges will review open grants available in the region, which could happen via a committee that meets quarterly. A communication plan will be drafted about how information will flow to each region regarding eligibility, life of the grant, and significant happenings within each grant (i.e. job fairs, hiring events, etc.). A process map may be developed to show how to refer to these grants (including WIOA) across the region.

Our sector strategy team is also part of a new strategy for addressing regional education and training needs. We are currently focused on the Diversified Manufacturing sector, but our plan is to expand from there. By having a multitude of different partners involved in the group, we may more fully address existing needs.

Staff from the four LWDAs have discussed the best way to represent our WIOA Region. Through the development of our sector strategy initiatives, we have rebranded ourselves as Link Upstate. We believe this name is a good strategy to distinguish our WIOA Region from other initiatives. Moving forward, we plan to use the name Link Upstate to refer not only to for marketing of our sector strategies, but our region as a whole.

Geographic Advantages

Our region has a number of geographic advantages. The Inland Port and the 1-85 Corridor (including I-385 and I-26) have become very important in terms of transportation, distribution, and material handling. Our areas are already connected to each other through commuting patterns from where people live to where they work. Many individuals live in one county and work in another, which means job seekers and employers already think in terms of the Link Upstate Region.

We have existing public transportation systems in different parts of the four LWDAs, but some counties within our region do not have public transportation. One of our future projects could be to work on reviewing the current public transit system for connections across the counties. Businesses located along the bus systems could be engaged for special populations or career pathway development.

Improving Services to Special Populations

We continue to periodically review updated demographics of special populations and the services currently available in the region to identify outreach strategies to promote awareness of services available. We recently hosted a regional job fair in Greenville that was targeted to the ex-offender population. There were 97 job seekers in attendance from the four LWDAs in the Link Upstate WIOA region, 91 of which were interviewed on site, and 14 were offered jobs on site.

Moving forward, we plan to continue hosting events for special populations. We can also plan events and engage employers who have interest in targeting those special populations. Finally, we will strategize on how to better utilize Special Populations Committees (including Committees on Services to Individuals with Disabilities).

Work-Based Learning

The four Administrators in the Link Upstate Region plan to meet quarterly to discuss innovative ways to serve job seekers and employers in the region. We plan to review current Incumbent Worker Training (IWT), On-the-Job Training (OJT), Apprenticeship, Customized and Work Experience (WX) learning models for consideration. We will discuss the possibility of using a similar model across the entire region to allow for business service team members to pitch each program in a consistent way. As described above, one of our geographic advantages is that we already have a substantial number of commuters crossing our county lines. Because of that, employers may benefit from having a consistent understanding of the programs across the region. Further, we could work on developing regional goals for work-based learning activities.

It was our intention to begin the process of establishing targeted industry sectors specifically for our OJT and IWT training programs during PY17. All was not accomplished as planned and this is a work in progress. To accomplish this task of establishing targeted industry sectors for OJT/IWT, it will require us to identify the occupations that fall within the targeted industry sector(s) and then determine the OJT base wage rate (minimum wage rate allowable) for the Link Upstate WIOA region and consistent with available LMI data. Each local area will participate in discussions in order to determine other ways to increase our regional collaboration on OJT. This process will include comparing our OJT policies and discussing opportunities to better serve those who are able and willing to cross county lines for the right OJT. Ideally, a regional OJT policy is what we desire to create and to use our roadmap for administering OJT programs. Tentatively we are planning to develop a regional OJT policy sometime during PY19. WorkLink recently piloted an increased wage requirement for IWT and found the results to be successful. The wages outlined in the solicitation were prioritized at \$12.32 per hour. The WorkLink Board has chosen not to make this a requirement, to allow for exceptions if needed.

During PY18 or PY19 and after the OJT targeted occupations have been identified, we will work towards aligning the minimum salary requirements for OJT. The minimum OJT salary will be based on local wage rate comparison surveys and/or any other available labor market information specific to the local area. This may be accomplished by issuing a regional policy approved by all four areas. We expect this to be completed no later than 2nd Quarter in PY19. Further we will work towards developing a regional outreach campaign for work-based activities. This will be accomplished by first assessing any existing funding available for outreach materials and then compiling a list of different outreach mechanisms that are available across the Link Upstate Region. We will compare our different options and come up with a regional strategy that can be adopted by all four areas. We are tentatively planning to accomplish this by 4th Quarter in PY19.

No later than 2nd Quarter in PY20, we plan to reassess our work-based activity needs and determine what further actions need to be taken. Sector strategies are designed to make broad changes in the way we develop our talent pipeline. We have been working on our

sector strategy initiative and believe that it may offer new opportunities to collaborate on work-based activities in ways that are not immediately evident.

This facet of workforce development would be a great training opportunity for our case management staff. Our job seekers could benefit from case management and other frontline staff having a better understanding of skills that can be learned in a work-based activity versus what should be gained from a classroom-based training.

Integrating Regional Planning Among Core Partners

Through our sector strategy initiatives, we have brought many of the core partners to the table. We will continue working through that group to develop regional activities and strategies. We will also use our existing One-Stop Delivery System committees to engage core partners on regional activities. Strategies for serving individuals with disabilities, veterans, and ex-offenders are a few groups that may particularly benefit from regional strategies with core partners.

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:**
- **Current or proposed resource leveraging agreements.**
 - **Establishing a process to evaluate cost sharing arrangements.**

In the beginning of our sector strategy initiative, the Regional Planning Team members hosted several meetings at different locations, and the staff of the Local Workforce Development Board in that LWDA spent time coordinating the meeting space, snacks, and other logistics. In June 2017, we received grant funds through the Regional Implementation Grant to assist in our sector strategy initiatives. After two modifications, we ultimately spent the funds on to pay for two major expenses: (1) salary and travel expenses for a staff person specifically assigned to the sector strategies initiative and (2) virtual reality equipment and career/tradeshaw kits to market manufacturing.

Two agreements have been negotiated between the Upstate and Greenville County Workforce Boards, but these were for program related costs. The two Local Boards plan to continue, over the coming years, in sharing of duties and costs which may soon include administrative costs. The agreement to share a SCWOS coordinator was easy to evaluate as we knew the cost of the two staff performing that portion of their jobs. Based on the amount of time it cost the Upstate to pay the staff salary and benefits, a savings was easy to determine, but these were program and not administrative costs. Saving program costs should be as equally important, if not more so, than administrative costs. The second agreement between the Greenville and Upstate Local Boards started on July 1, 2016. Through this agreement and partnership, we have a joint contract with our Operator and Adult/Dislocated Worker Service provider to serve our four counties. This agreement does not currently include any administrative funds, but we will continue to examine that possibility at the beginning of each program year, at a minimum.

As applicable, consolidated procurement of goods and services will be accomplished. This may take some time as each local area's fiscal agent may have different procurement policies and requirements. Further, we may have additional opportunities for joint administrative costs as we apply for other grants as a region.

6. A description of how transportation and other supportive services are coordinated within the region, as appropriate. Regions should consider:

- **How the provision of transportation or other supportive services could be enhanced regionally;**
- **What organizations currently provide or could provide supportive services; and**
- **Establishing a process to promote coordination of the delivery of supportive services.**

Our regional transportation infrastructure makes commuting between LWDAs (as well as counties within LWDAs) a challenge for students and workers. At this point in time, transportation services are lacking in the region to a point that they are not available for affordable purchase. Uber has not branched out into all of the 14 counties in the area. With so many independent drivers, it would be an administrative problem in implementing agreements for transportation with them. Lack of transportation is the number two issue facing workforce development and especially in the rural areas within the counties. Workforce Board staff have served on transportation committees and often attend focus groups. This has been done for many years, but we have not seen an increase in services to the rural areas or in the availability of providers traveling from the city to the county areas where the manufacturing and distribution jobs are located. Utilizing volunteers has not been reliable in the past. When an individual enter into a job or training, he/she must have consistent and reliable transportation. The solution is complicated and extremely expensive. One strategy to address this issue may include targeted industries within a specific proximity of 2 or more WDB boundaries so that each local area may invest within the training/recruitment strategy, but this would be limited.

The other supportive service need for many is childcare and especially for second and third shifts. This is basically non-existent in the region, and it creates a problem for individuals with children because new employees in manufacturing and distribution facilities typically start with a second, third or rotating shift. First shift jobs are often offered to employees based on seniority once an individual has worked a period of time for the company. Most parents want their children in a childcare center close to their work location unless they have close family near a daycare center. When customers cross county lines for training or work, coordination with other workforce board staff to determine quality daycare locations could prove beneficial. This is an opportunity for our funded programs to explore. Childcare is very expensive. The WIOA funded programs utilize DSS to help cover this cost for several of our customers. ~~Another opportunity Greenville County and Upper Savannah are currently using to address the issue of childcare is partnering with a non-profit on a grant to provide advanced manufacturing training to low-income job seekers. The grant will pay for childcare~~

~~for both clients in training and clients who are just starting out in a job. If the grant is successful, we will investigate replicating it.~~

When file and customer transfers are made from one workforce area to another, coordination of supportive services will be a priority so that the customer does not have a gap in services if they are engaged in training and/or other approved activity.

Most free health clinics only serve those within their county or smaller geographic area so we do not see that as a regional opportunity.

The Upstate Workforce Board has a substantial clothes closet thanks to donations from the downtown Rotary, Couture Closet and others. Other workforce area programs are welcomed to use this closet periodically should they have clients with a need for interview or work clothing. The Greenville County LWDA has also gathered donated clothes and made them available to job seekers in need.

- 7. A description of how workforce development services are coordinated with economic development services and providers within the region. Regions should consider:**
- **Current economic development organizations engaged in regional planning; and**
 - **Education and training providers involved with economic development.**

In the Link Upstate Workforce Region, there are four multi-county groups focusing on the regional economy. They are as follows:

1. Upstate SC Alliance (9 Counties and 6 Cities)
Focus areas: Automotive, Advanced Materials, Energy, Biosciences and Aerospace
2. Ten at the Top (10 Counties)
3. Economic Development Partnership (2 counties in our region and a third outside of the Link Upstate Region)
4. Central SC Alliance (2 counties in our region and 7 outside of the Link Upstate Region)
5. Upstate Chamber Coalition (Representing 12 greater upstate chambers)

None of these focus on the entire 14 county region chosen by the SCDEW.

The Upstate SC Alliance is an economic development marketing arm for 9 counties and 6 cities in the Link Upstate Region to prospects. They also represent the region at trade shows and other events in and out of the country. Each year, the Upstate Workforce Board reviews the strategic plan of the Upstate SC Alliance paying special attention to the industry sectors that are targeted for recruitment to the region, which is a strategy we can expand to other Workforce Boards within the region. This information is used to help shape the plan for

training dollars in our area. The Upstate SC Alliance works very closely with the local Chambers and the Economic Development Boards in the region. They also provide periodic updates to the County Council members in their region. The CEO of the Upstate SC Alliance, John Lummus, has been involved with the regional sector strategies initiative.

Ten at the Top focuses on regional activities by fostering trust and partnerships and cooperation that impacts economic vitality and quality of life. Ten at the Top does this work through three primary objectives:

1. Grow trust and partnerships among elected officials, business & community leaders and residents by initiating, convening and facilitating discussions around key regional issues, challenges and opportunities.
2. Identify and promote collaborative efforts that enhance the Upstate's physical and social infrastructure by encouraging quality growth and supporting economic vitality, natural and cultural resources and quality of life in the region.
3. Measure, analyze and report information on the needs and progress of the region on key cross-jurisdictional issues.

While the Upstate Workforce Board staff has had the greatest involvement with the Ten at the Top efforts, all four Workforce Boards in the region have participated in several forums and spoken at many events for Ten at the Top. This partnership will continue, and likely grow, as we continue our regional strategies.

Economic Development Partnership and Central SC Alliance cover far fewer counties in the [Link](#) Upstate Region than Upstate SC Alliance or Ten at the Top, which means our region will not have as much involvement in their efforts. However, they are both focused on growing the economy by working with new and existing businesses in their respective areas. We will continue to use their input in our regional activities, as applicable.

ReadySC is also a workforce development and educational partner with the Workforce Boards in the region. Close coordination occurs when new or expanding economic development projects materialize in the region. The programs funded by the Workforce Boards provide staff support for workforce development for new and expanding projects. The Technical Colleges provide training services specific to the companies. ReadySC serves as the project lead. Locally and regionally, ReadySC partners with the SC Works system to create a unique training and recruitment plan for eligible new and expanding industry, creating a thorough support system for the employer. The model used in South Carolina is viewed as one of the best in the country.

Further, the South Carolina Department of Commerce has engaged Regional Workforce Advisors which act as liaisons between business and K-16 education, advocate for industry needs within the education system and serve as a support system for the emerging workforce.

The [Link](#) Upstate Workforce Region has flourished over the last few years and all of the entities involved have robust relationships. We are a true team of players in economic and

workforce development. There are other agencies that play a critical role in economic and workforce development, but they are usually workforce area specific. Without them, the regional team would not be a success.

8. A description of the region’s plan regarding 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.

Regional coordination of performance will occur as a component of the Upstate Region’s sector strategy initiative. As appropriate, regional performance may be expanded to include other demand occupations that may not necessarily be included our sector strategy priorities. As a region, we may create our own expected performance via the targeted sectors and use those goals as a general guide for making decisions and evaluating progress. If WIOA concentrates its primary training efforts according to demand occupations and the sectors strategies, then eventually the sector strategy performance outcomes will become the WIOA outcomes. In return each local area has the ability to use the regional performance metrics to assist them in negotiating their local WIOA performance, if such a process for negotiating is provided.

Further, we can devote time to discussion of best practices among the four 4 Workforce Board staff in an effort to help each other achieve or exceed the WIOA performance standards. Our focus will be to continue our work on sector strategies and career pathway development.

Challenges and Opportunities for Improvement

- ~~1. Sustaining SC’s JAG program by working out processes to ensure that those programs are contributing to the WIOA youth work-based expenditure requirement.~~
1. Finding ways to meet business needs by pooling the resources of the 4 Workforce Boards. For example, managing projects for out-of-county residents (workers), out-of-county employers, pooled case management and assignment, allocating training-related payments and reimbursements within the region and between the appropriate Workforce Boards, etc.
2. Improving the regional transportation system via a light rail system or other regional public transportation systems. Our region is heavily based on manufacturing jobs and many run shifts around the clock. Transportation is an issue for those who need it for second and third shift jobs.
3. Improve the ability to leverage resources with regional workforce partners who can help pay costs for childcare and other forms of needed supportive services.

Regional Plan Signature – Greenville County

Local Workforce Development Board:

Robyn Knox
Workforce Development Board Chair

Signature

Date

Local Grant Recipient Signatory Official(s):

Joseph Kernell
County Administrator

Signature

Date

Dr. Bob Taylor
County Council Chair

Signature

Date

Regional Plan Signature – Upper Savannah

Local Workforce Development Board:

Upper Savannah Workforce Development Board
Name- Chair

Signature Date

Local Grant Recipient Signatory Official:

Upper Savannah Workforce Development Area
Name- Title

Signature Date

Regional Plan Signature – Upstate

Local Workforce Development Board:

Upstate Workforce Development Board
Name- Chair

Signature Date

Local Grant Recipient Signatory Official:

Upstate Workforce Development Area
Name- Title

Signature Date

Regional Plan Signature – WorkLink

Local Workforce Development Board:

WorkLink Workforce Development Board
Name- Chair

Signature Date

Local Grant Recipient Signatory Official:

WorkLink Workforce Development Area
Name- Title

Signature Date