

**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act  
Regional Plan Modification  
July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2023**

**Planning Region Name:**

Link Upstate WIOA Region

**Local Areas within the Planning Region:**

Greenville County, Upper Savannah, Upstate, and WorkLink

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## Attachment A: Regional Plan Modification Requirements

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 following guiding principles should be considered priorities and included in responses throughout the document:

- Partnership and collaboration
- Increased access to resources and services through the use of technology
- The impact of COVID-19 on the state's workforce and strategies to facilitate rapid reemployment

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.**

Each of the four Workforce Development Directors appointed a staff member to coordinate responses for the 2020-2023 Regional Plan on behalf of their respective workforce areas. This group developed the groundwork, tasks list, and timeline for completing the regional plan. 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 four local areas, 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 10-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. To provide more insight, each local area can select a board member from each local area to attend the Sector Partnership meetings. Chief elected officials continue to get updates of the process. Upper Savannah staff meet with area resource organizations consisting of economic developers, county/city managers, and chamber leaders. Upper Savannah shares minutes of these meetings with these leaders so they can encourage more participation from industry partners.

In the **Upstate** area, consisting of Cherokee, Spartanburg and Union Counties, we created four committees for the local plan and in these meetings, we also included the regional plan instructions 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

Each workgroup invited had representation from the Upstate Workforce Board, education, WIOA funded program, business, partner and Workforce Board staff. We also required that we invited one person from each of our three counties on each Zoom meeting. Each County Council member on the three County Councils received an invitation to join a committee on which to participate. Each Upstate Workforce Board member also received a request to join a committee. The Upstate Workforce Board will send the final local and regional plan to each County Council and Workforce Board member. We plan to ask the County Councils to allow non-significant changes be made after their adoption of the plan if the Workforce Board staff feel they are important. We have asked for a letter from each County Administrator stating that their Council has adopted/approved the plan.

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 regional collaboration begun under the 2016 Regional Plan.

Regional planning and collaboration began during the 2016 Regional Planning process and will continue through the life of the 2020-2023 Regional Plan. These meetings have initiated collaborative efforts not previously implemented and will continue to promote positive changes in the way things are done across the region.

**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.**



### **INTRODUCTION TO THE LINK UPSTATE REGION**

Link Upstate, the Upstate WIOA region, consists of the Greenville, Upper Savannah, Upstate, and WorkLink Workforce Development Areas, and covers fifteen counties in the northwestern most corner of South Carolina: Abbeville, Anderson, Cherokee, Edgefield, Greenville, Greenwood, Laurens, McCormick, Newberry, Oconee, Pickens, Saluda, Spartanburg, and Union.

The region is chiefly defined by its access to the I-85 corridor that connects Atlanta, Georgia with Charlotte, North Carolina, and serves as an economic driver for the region. A recently established SC Inland Port, located in Greer, has provided additional access to the port in Charleston, SC, roughly 200 miles away, and has bolstered transportation and logistics for companies located in the Upstate.

### **REGIONAL INDUSTRY OVERVIEW**

SC Department of Employment and Workforce reported 35,906 employers in the Link Upstate region for the last quarter of 2019. Small Business, defined as having less than 49 employees, makes up 93% of the employer community whereas medium business (50 to 499 employees) makes up 6.6% and

large business (500+ employees) makes up 0.4%. However, medium businesses employ the most individuals at 41.6% followed by small business at 34.7% and large business at 23.7%.

<b>Business Description</b>	<b>Employers</b>	<b>% Employers</b>	<b>Employees</b>	<b>% Employees</b>
Small Business (0-49)	33,399	93.0%	238,175	34.7%
Medium Business (50-500)	2,364	6.6%	285,803	41.6%
Large Business (501+)	143	0.4%	162,964	23.7%
<b>Total Business</b>	<b>35,906</b>		<b>686,942</b>	

*Source: SC Department of Employment and Workforce, Community Profile, July 20, 2020*

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The top five employing industries as of Quarter Three of 2019 are Manufacturing (18.6% of those employed work in this industry); Healthcare and Social Assistance (13.4%); Retail Trade (11.1%); Accommodation and Food Services (9.6%); and Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation (9.0%).

The following five industries experience the list amount of turnover: Utilities (2.5%), Educational Services (2.8%), Mining (3.0%), Manufacturing (5.0%), and Public Administration (5.0%). Those industries that experience the most are as follows: Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation (19.8%), Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting (16.6%), Accommodation and Food Services (16.1%), Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (14.0%), and Retail Trade (11.2%). Staffing services are included in the Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation industry including those employed at manufacturing facilities as temporary employees who may also be hired into permanent manufacturing positions.

<b>Industry</b>	<b>Number of Employees</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Turnover</b>	<b>Average Annual Wage</b>
Accommodation and Food Services	62467	9.6%	16.1%	16,927
<b>Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation</b>	<b>59110</b>	<b>9.0%</b>	<b>19.8%</b>	<b>31,295</b>
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	2460	0.4%	16.6%	35,609
<b>Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation</b>	<b>9986</b>	<b>1.5%</b>	<b>14.0%</b>	<b>17,306</b>
Construction	29794	4.6%	9.6%	56,234
<b>Educational Services</b>	<b>45634</b>	<b>7.0%</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>46,499</b>
Finance and Insurance	17984	2.8%	7.5%	64,047
<b>Health Care and Social Assistance</b>	<b>87595</b>	<b>13.4%</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>49,911</b>
Information	8159	1.2%	7.6%	57,044
<b>Management of Companies and Enterprises</b>	<b>7320</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>6.5%</b>	<b>86,202</b>
Manufacturing	121214	18.6%	5.0%	56,785
<b>Mining</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>3.0%</b>	<b>95,368</b>
Other Services (except Government)	14992	2.3%	10.6%	33,236
<b>Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services</b>	<b>27467</b>	<b>4.2%</b>	<b>8.8%</b>	<b>66,164</b>
Public Administration	23702	3.6%	5.0%	42,232
<b>Real Estate and Rental and Leasing</b>	<b>7199</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>11.2%</b>	<b>43,225</b>
Retail Trade	72534	11.1%	11.2%	28,038
<b>Transportation and Warehousing</b>	<b>26427</b>	<b>4.0%</b>	<b>7.7%</b>	<b>45,456</b>
Utilities	3125	0.5%	2.5%	66,730
<b>Wholesale Trade</b>	<b>25772</b>	<b>3.9%</b>	<b>6.6%</b>	<b>62,066</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>653272</b>			

*Source: SC Department of Employment and Workforce, Community Profile (July 20, 2020)*

The five industries that pay the highest annual wages are as follows: Mining (\$95,368); Management of Companies and Enterprises (\$86,202); Utilities (\$66,730); Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (\$66,164); and Finance and Insurance (\$64,047). Those that pay the least in annual wages are: Accommodation and Food Services (\$16,927); Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (\$17,306); Retail Trade (\$28,038); Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation (\$31,295); and Other Services (except Government) (\$33,236).

### *Existing and Emerging Industries*

Manufacturing is the leading industry for the area. This industry has several specialty types that are significant to the Link Upstate Region: Automotive, Advance Materials, Biosciences, and Aerospace. Other major existing and emerging industries include Healthcare and Distribution & Logistics.

### **AUTOMOTIVE**

The automotive industry is one of the largest in the Link Upstate Region. BMW, a tier-1 automotive company, has located their only North American facility along the I-85 corridor bringing with it an estimated economic output of \$16.6 billion (direct, indirect and induced impacts). According to a 2014 study, “BMW’s Impact in South Carolina: Two Decades of Economic Development,” provided by the University of South Carolina’s Darla Moore School of Business, indicates that a cluster of automotive industry suppliers has formed over the years in the Upstate region, 40 of which specifically provide products to BMW. Also, contributing heavily to the automotive industry’s presence, Michelin North America, Inc., a manufacturer of tires and employer of 7800 South Carolinians, established its headquarters in Greenville, SC in the early 70s, and has expanded with seven other facilities across the Upstate; ZF Transmissions Greenville LLC, listed as one of the top 25 employers in the Link Upstate region, employs 1001+ individuals, and produces 8 speed and 9 speed transmissions for automotive companies across the United States; DAA Draexlmaier Automotive of America employs 1001+ individuals to make interior car parts, such as E-box, handbrake/gear covers, and main harnesses; Magna International, employs 1001+ individuals to manufacture automotive body panels, car seating, and front and rear exterior components; and Robert Bosch, located in Anderson, SC since 1985, is a leader in supplying automotive technology and employs roughly 1,200 individuals. An article featured in Greenville Business Magazine, called “25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary: The BMW effect,” estimates that 22,000 people are employed in automotive business across 223 companies in the Upstate, and further states that there are 60,000 employed in the State of South Carolina with more than 400 automotive businesses.

### **ADVANCED MATERIALS**

Expanding beyond the automotive industry, advanced manufacturing plays a critical role in the upstate economy in fiber-related technology, ceramic technology, coatings and film. SC Department of Employment and Workforce’s Community Profile (July 20, 2020) lists employment by industry figures for the Manufacturing sector to be 121,214 individuals in Link Upstate; of these 30,000 are specifically

employed in the advanced materials and composite industry (SC Department of Commerce). Among those counted in the advanced manufacturing sector includes employers specializing in Plastics and Rubber products, such as Cryovac Sealed Air, one of the largest employers in the Link Upstate Region; Chemicals; Fabricated Metal Products; Computer and Electronics; and Aerospace and other transportation equipment. Milliken employs 2501+ individuals in the manufacture of textiles, flooring coverings, performance materials, and specialty chemicals. Other major employers include: 3M, Fujifilm, Toray, Diversified Coatings, Solvay Advanced Polymers LLC, and Kemet Electronics Corporation. In a report provided by the Upstate Alliance “2019 Workforce Availability,” they state that the location quotient for Upstate, SC is 2.05 in manufacturing, higher than Charleston, SC at 0.92, Charlotte, NC at 1.09, Atlanta, GA at 0.76, New York at 0.44, and Los Angeles at 0.94.

## **BIOSCIENCES**

Biosciences has found a niche in the manufacturing industry in Link Upstate, and was poised to grow by 8.3% in 2018 (NAM). Among top pharmaceutical and medical device manufacturing companies, Nutra Manufacturing, St. Jude Medical, Ortec Inc., Arthrex, and Bausch & Lomb have established a presence in the Upstate along with smaller companies IRIX Manufacturing, Inc. and Pharmaceutical Associates.

*Key Career Pathways for the Automotive, Advanced Manufacturing and Biosciences include:* Production, Maintenance, Installation, and Repair, Quality Assurance, Logistics & Inventory, and Health, Safety & Environmental Assurance

*Key occupations within this industry include:* Assembler, Automated Manufacturing Technician, Biomedical Equipment Technician, Electrical Installer and Repairer, Hand Packer and Packager, Machine Operator, Welder, Electrical and Electronic Technician and Technologist, Industrial Engineer, Manufacturing Engineer, Manufacturing Technician, Precision Inspector, Production Manager, Computer Maintenance Technician, Electrical Equipment Installer/ Repairer, Facility Electrician, Industrial Electronic Installer/ Repairer/Manager, Industrial Machinery Mechanic, Industrial Maintenance Electrician, Industrial Maintenance Technician/ Mechanic, Maintenance Repairer, Inspector, Process Control Technician, Quality Control Technician, Quality Engineer, Safety Team Leader, and Safety Technician.

*Key Skills and Abilities include:* Communication (both written and oral), problem solving and critical thinking, how to use information and technology applications, understanding team member role, understanding health, safety and environmental procedures, leadership and teamwork abilities, ethics and legal responsibilities, and technical skills.

## **AEROSPACE**

With a strong presence of aviation in place already with major companies like Lockheed Martin, a manufacturer for F16 Block 70; Honeywell, manufacturing Aircraft and Helicopter Engines; GE Aviation, manufacturing Jet Engine High Pressure Turbine Blades; Michelin Aircraft Tires; and Solvay Cytec

Carbon Fibers, providing carbon fiber/aircraft components, the Upstate is poised to further embrace the Aerospace industry. The National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) predicted that the aerospace industry would increase by 8.9% in 2018 and would lead growth across South Carolina. Although located in Charleston, SC, the newly established Boeing plant could potentially have the same effect as BMW, causing an industry of suppliers to form to meet Boeing's needs. Some of those impacts could be felt as far away as Link Upstate, especially as the region surrounds a critical juncture between Charlotte and Atlanta, where I-85 and I-385 meet.

*Key Career Pathways for the Aerospace Industry include:* Product and Parts Manufacturing, Engineering Services, Testing Laboratories, Space Research and Technology, National Defense, Customer Service/Support, and Technical Support/Field Service.

*Key occupations within this industry include:* Assembler, Automated Manufacturing Technician, Electrical Installer and Repairer, Hand Packer and Packager, Machine Operator, Welder, Electrical and Electronic Technician and Technologist, Industrial Engineer, Manufacturing Engineer, Manufacturing Technician, Precision Inspector, Production Manager, Computer Maintenance Technician, Electrical Equipment Installer/ Repairer, Facility Electrician, Industrial Electronic Installer/ Repairer/Manager, Industrial Machinery Mechanic, Industrial Maintenance Electrician, Industrial Maintenance Technician/ Mechanic, Maintenance Repairer, Inspector, Lab Technician, Process Control Technician, Quality Control Technician, Quality Engineer, Safety Team Leader, and Safety Technician.

*Key Skills and Abilities include:* Interpersonal skills, integrity, professionalism, initiative, dependability and reliability, lifelong learning, teamwork, planning & organizing, innovation & invention, problem solving & decision making, working with tools & technology, checking, examining & recording, and business fundamentals.

## **HEALTHCARE**

The Link Upstate Region is home to several large healthcare systems, making Healthcare another key industry in our economy. Prisma Health, serving more than 1.2 million patients per year and employing 32,000 employees according to their website, has a large presence in the Link Upstate Region, offering hospitals and a network of medical offices to meet the medical needs of local residents. Other major hospital systems in the area include AnMed Health, Bon Secours St. Francis Health System, Self-Regional Hospital, and Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System.

*Key Career Pathways for the Healthcare Industry include:* Therapeutic Services, Diagnostic Services, Support Services, Health Informatics, and Biotechnology Research and Development.

*Key occupations within this industry include:* Surgical Technologists, Diagnostic Medical Sonographers, Magnetic Resonance Imaging Technologists, Nuclear Medicine Technologists, Radiation Therapists, Dental Hygienists, Ophthalmic Medical Technicians, Physical Therapist Aides, Dental Assistants,



Phlebotomists, Physical Therapist Assistants, Medical Assistants, Occupational Therapy Aides, Radiologic Technologists, Home Health Aides, Respiratory Therapists, Medical Secretaries, Occupational Therapy Assistants, Health Technologists and Technicians, Nursing Assistants, Nurse Practitioners, and Personal Care Aides.

*Key Skills and Abilities include:* Interpersonal skills, integrity, professionalism, initiative, dependability and reliability, adaptability & flexibility, lifelong learning, teamwork, customer focus, planning & organizing, creative thinking, problem solving & decision making, working with tools & technology, scheduling & coordinating, checking, examining & recording, sustainable practices, and health & safety.

## **DISTRIBUTION & LOGISTICS**

With Link Upstate's unique position to I-85 and I-385, distribution and logistics has become a significant industry for the area. The Inland Port of Greer, access to several airports, including Greenville Spartanburg Airport, and railroad access through Norfolk-Southern and CSX Transportation has further made Link Upstate an attractive location for distribution and logistics companies. Employers specializing in distribution include Atlas Cold Food Storage, Colgate/Palmolive, Diversified Distribution Systems, Greenco Beverage Company, Pet Dairy, Scansource, Sunland Logistics Solutions, Synnex, and WW Grainger, among others. Walgreens, a pharmaceutical distribution company based in Anderson County, actively recruits those with disabilities to work in their distribution center. Those specializing in logistics include: AAA Cooper Transportation, Am-Can Transport, DMX Transportation, Greenwood Motor Lines, SAIA Motor Freight Lines, Estes Express Lines, Quickway Carriers, and Southeastern Freight Lines.

*Key Career Pathways for the Distribution & Logistics Industry include:* Facility and mobile equipment maintenance, Health, safety and environmental management, Logistics planning and management services, Sales and services, Transportation operations, Transportation systems and infrastructure, and Planning, management and regulation.

*Key occupations within this industry include:* Communications, Transportation and Utilities Manager, Dispatcher, Freight, Stock, and Material Mover, Industrial Truck and Tractor Operator, Logistical Engineer, Logistician, Materials Associate, Materials Handler, Materials Mover, Process Improvement Technician, Quality Control Technician, Traffic, Shipping, and Receiving Clerk, and Warehousing and distribution center operations.

*Key Skills and Abilities include:* Interpersonal skills, integrity, professionalism, initiative, dependability and reliability, adaptability & flexibility, lifelong learning, teamwork, customer focus, planning/organizing, problem solving & decision making, working with tools & technology, checking, examining & recording, and business fundamentals.

**REGIONAL WORKFORCE OVERVIEW**

*Population*

Link Upstate is home to 1,579,880 individuals (Community Profile, July 20, 2020, SC Department of Employment and Workforce). Projected population totals for 2030 are expected to reach 1,740,720.

*Demographics*

According to the American Community Survey, approximately 26% (386,020) of those living in the Link Upstate region are young adults, those of working age 20-74 makes up approximately 68% (992,191), and seniors aged 75+ equals roughly 6% (90,613) of the population.

Looking at population by race, the Link Upstate region consists of 75.8% white (1,112,646), 19.3% black (282,774), 0.2% American India/Alaskan Native (3,183), 1.4% Asian (20,789), 0.1% Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander (716), 3.5% two or more races (51,448), and 1.6% Other (22,992). Roughly 51.3% (753,093) of the population is female and 48.7% (715,731) is male.

*Labor Force: Employed & Unemployed*

The total civilian labor force (not seasonally adjusted) for Link Upstate in June 2020 was 773,594; of which, 705,476 were employed and 68,118 were unemployed. The unemployment rate was 8.8%.

Area	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
<a href="#">Greenville</a>	265,940	243,716	22,224	8.4%
<a href="#">Upper Savannah</a>	116,973	107,063	9,910	8.5%
<a href="#">Upstate</a>	200,055	179,524	20,531	10.3%
<a href="#">Worklink</a>	190,626	175,173	15,453	8.1%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, SC Dept of Employment & Workforce

*Commuting Patterns*

Approximately 91.3% (582,441) of the Link Upstate population lives and works in the Link Upstate region. In-Commuters (defined as those living outside the region, but reporting to work in the region) makes up 3.7% (23,357), and Out-Commuters (defined as those living inside the community, but reporting to work outside the region) makes up 5.0%.

There are an estimated 19,842 individuals that commute to work outside of the Link Upstate region. Top destinations are Lexington, SC (includes the capital city of South Carolina), Aiken, SC, and Richland, SC. Additionally, 6,633 individuals live in South Carolina, but report to either North Carolina (the Charlotte Metro area is close to the South Carolina border) and Georgia for their employment.

Commuting Patterns					
Commuting To			Commuting From		
Ranking	County	Workers	Ranking	County	Workers
1	Lexington, SC	4,749	1	Polk, NC	2,172
2	Aiken, SC	3,978	2	Aiken, SC	1,921
3	Richland, SC	3,838	3	Cleveland, SC	1,819
4	Richmond, GA	2,233	4	Lexington, SC	1,676
5	Mecklenburg, NC	1,349	5	Rutherford, NC	1,256
6	Cleveland, NC	914	6	Richland, SC	1,228
7	Polk, NC	805	7	York, SC	737
8	Henderson, NC	690	8	Henderson, SC	695
9	York, SC	644	9	Mecklenburg, NC	541
10	Columbia, GA	642	10	Hart, GA	502
		19,842			12,547

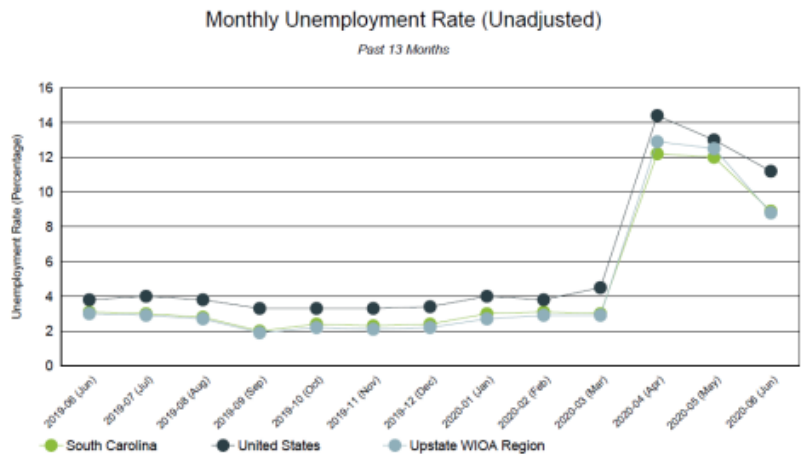
*Source: SC Department of Employment and Workforce, Community Profile (July 20, 2020)*

There are approximately 12,547 individuals that live outside of the region, but commuting to work in one of the 14 counties in Link Upstate. The largest number of commuters from outside the region originates from Polk County, NC, Aiken County, SC, and Cleveland County, SC.

*Recent Impacts for COVID-19 Pandemic*

March 15, 2020 was a turning point for all of South Carolina in regards to the economic growth our State has experienced over the last ten years. In the months leading up to the pandemic, unemployment rates were historically low for the Upstate Link region, hovering between 1.9% (September 2019) and 3.0% (June 2019).

Link Upstate began to see direct impacts from the World Health Organization’s announcement of a worldwide COVID-19 pandemic when Governor McMaster’s declared a State of Emergency and closed schools across South Carolina. A domino effect began shortly thereafter. The Governor mandated the shutdown of dine-in service in restaurants and bars, state tax deadlines were postponed, and groups of more than 50 in public settings were banned. This subsequently led to schools being closed for the remainder of the year, public gatherings of more than three were considered a misdemeanor violation, beaches and State parks were closed, lodging and travel restrictions were put into place, and non-essential businesses were closed. On April 7, the Governor ordered a Home or Work order. As a result, the Link Upstate unemployment rate took a dramatic turn topping out at 12.9% (April 2020).



The Link Upstate economy was in excellent condition prior to the pandemic. With easing of shutdowns, the Governor’s AccelerateSC taskforce recommendations for re-opening, additional CDC guidance on social distancing, and additional production and availability of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) resources to help control the spread, the unemployment rate has come down significantly. As of June 2020, Link Upstate’s unemployment rate was at 8.8% compared to the State’s 8.9% and the nation’s 11.2%. The full effects of the coronavirus on the Link Upstate region will not be known until the pandemic has ended.

**Labor Market Trends**

*Estimated and Projected Employment (Growth/Decline by Industry)*

The Link Upstate Community Profile (July 20, 2020), indicates that the largest industries by number employed are as follows: Manufacturing (113,963), Healthcare and Social Assistance (77,587), Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation (61,100), Retail Trade (73,433), and Public Administration (79,379).

The industries that will be experiencing significant growth from 2020 to 2026 differ slightly. Transportation and Warehousing will be adding 5,622 new jobs (+26.56%), Health Care and Social Assistance adding 15,354 new jobs (+19.79%), Accommodation and Food Service adding 11,085 new jobs (+19.49%), Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation adding 11,411 new jobs (+18.68%), and Real Estate and Rental and Leasing adding 1,083 jobs (+16.07%). It is important to note that Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation includes workers who are hired through temporary or staffing agencies, regardless of the industry in which those individuals are working. This category likely includes individuals working in many other industries including (but not limited to) Manufacturing, Transportation and Warehousing, and Wholesale Trade.

Upstate WIOA Region Industry	2016 Estimated Employment	2026 Projected Employment	Change	Percent Change	Annual Percent
Total All Industries	706,568	785,279	78,711	11.14	1.06
Health Care and Social Assistance	77,587	92,941	15,354	19.79	1.82
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediat	61,100	72,511	11,411	18.68	1.73
Accommodation and Food Services	56,881	67,966	11,085	19.49	1.80
Manufacturing	113,963	120,697	6,734	5.91	0.58
Transportation and Warehousing	21,167	26,789	5,622	26.56	2.38
Retail Trade	73,433	78,522	5,089	6.93	0.67
Educational Services	52,218	56,919	4,701	9.00	0.87
Construction	28,849	32,743	3,894	13.50	1.27
Wholesale Trade	29,553	33,265	3,712	12.56	1.19
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	26,157	29,629	3,472	13.27	1.25
Finance and Insurance	17,572	18,867	1,295	7.37	0.71
Other Services (except Government)	29,253	30,519	1,266	4.33	0.42
Management of Companies and Enterprises	7,548	8,642	1,094	14.49	1.36
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	6,738	7,821	1,083	16.07	1.50
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	7,375	7,916	541	7.34	0.71
Information	8,836	9,282	446	5.05	0.49
Utilities	2,799	2,817	18	0.64	0.06
Mining	283	276	-7	-2.47	-0.25
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	5,877	5,097	-780	-13.27	-1.41
Public Administration	79,379	82,060	2,681	3.38	0.32

Source: SC Department of Employment & Workforce - Industry Projections

Those industries with the fewest number of employees, includes Mining (283); Utilities (2799); Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting (5877); Real Estate and Leasing (6738); and Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (7375). Two of these industries are expected to shrink by 2026: Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting will lose 780 positions (-13.27%) and Mining will lose 7 positions (-2.47%). Other industries are predicted to remain close to level or see no more than 5% growth over the next 10 years. Among those, Utilities will add only 18 positions (+.06), Public Administration will add 2,681 positions (+3.38%), and Other Services (except Government) will add 1,266 positions (+4.33%).

*Occupational Growth*

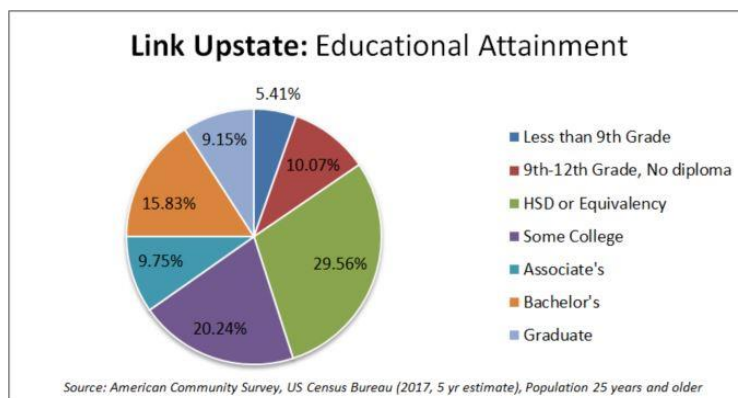
Several occupations are expected to grow significantly between 2016 and 2026 in the Link Upstate Region. Among those expected to lead growth: Home Health Aides (48%), Physician Assistants (42%), Nurse Practitioners (42%), Personal Care Aides (38%), and Physical Therapists Aids (38%). Occupations growing outside the Healthcare industry include: Operations Research Analysts (35%), Information Security Analysts (35%), Appraisers and Assessors of Real Estate (34%), Helpers – Production Workers (33%), Software Developers, Applications (33%), and Industrial Engineers (29%).

*Occupational Decline*

There are some occupations that are expected to decline between 2016 and 2026. The top declining occupations include: Coin, Vending, and Amusement Machine Servicers and Repairers (-27%, -96 positions); Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers (-18%, -1,361 positions); Data Entry Keyers (-17%, -446 positions); Prepress Technicians and Workers (-17%, -38 positions); and Legal Secretaries (-17%, -314 positions).

**Skills and Knowledge**

The American Community Survey estimates educational attainment (of those 25 years or older) for the Upstate Link workforce to be as follows: 15.48% (159,020) have less than a High School Diploma (HSD) or equivalency; 59.55% (611,847) have a HSD or Equivalency, some college or an Associate’s Degree; and 24.99% (256,649) have a Bachelor’s Degree or higher.



## **Barriers to Employment**

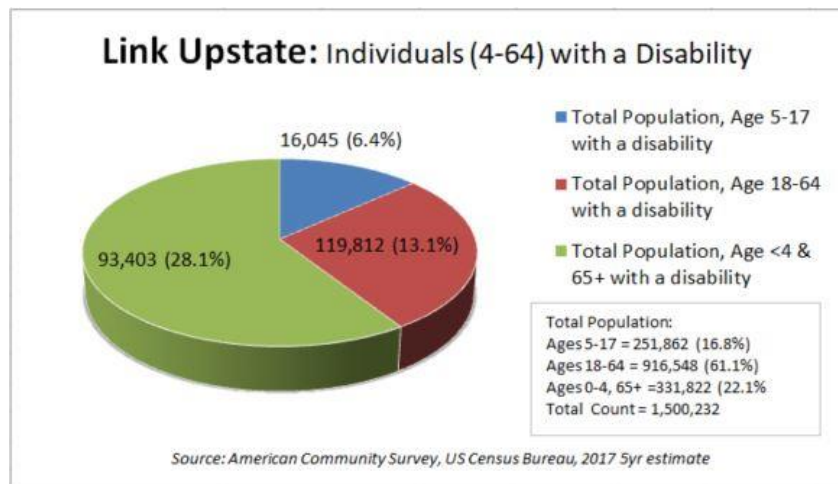
The Link Upstate region is home to a growing and diverse population. The groups of individuals provided here have been identified as having specific needs or challenges that may cause barriers to becoming employed. These groups also align with the State Workforce Development Board’s identified priority populations.

### a. **INDIVIDUALS WITH A DISABILITY**

According to the American Community Survey (2017 5-year estimate), there are 916,548 individuals ages 18-64 (61.1% of the total population) living in the Link Upstate region. Approximately 119,812 have been identified as having a disability, which equates to about 13.1% of those aged 18-64.

#### *Youth with a Disability*

According to the American Community Survey (2017 5-year estimate), there are 251,862 individuals ages 5-17 (16.8% of the total population) living in the Link Upstate region. Approximately 16,045 have been identified as having a disability, which equates to about 6.4% of those aged 5-17.



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.

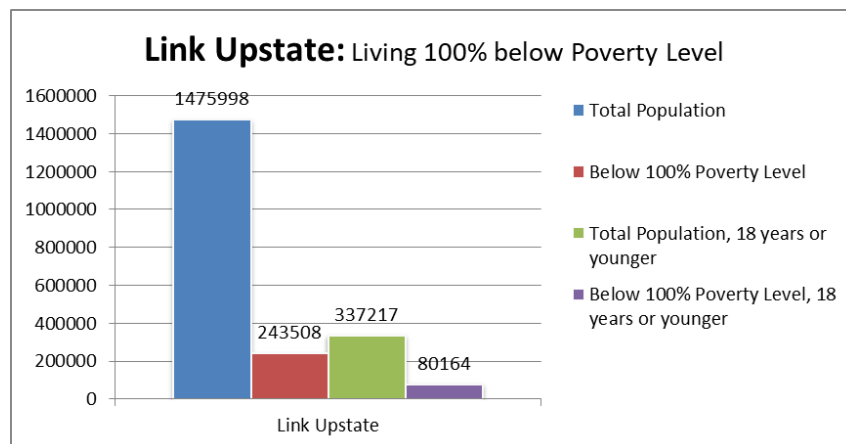
### b. **VETERANS**

Of the total Link Upstate population, approximately 8.4% are veterans. There are nearly 49,184 veterans (age 18-64) living in the Link Upstate Region, which is approximately 50% of the total number (99,271) of Veterans living in the region. 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.

c. POVERTY/LONG TERM UNEMPLOYED

There are approximately 243,508 people living in poverty in the Link Upstate region. This equates to about 16.5% 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.



d. YOUTH WITH BARRIERS

- *Low-Income*

Link Upstate has a population of youth aged 18 or younger equaling 337,217, which is 22.8% of the total population. There are approximately 80,164 youth 18 or younger living in poverty. This equates to about 23.8% of all youth living in poverty in the region, which means nearly 1 in 4 youth in the Link Upstate region experience poverty. Poverty for youth 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.

- *Dropouts*

In the 2019 school year, SC Department of Education reports that 65,166 students were enrolled in the K-12 system. Twenty-seven school districts serve the Link Upstate region. Approximately 1,442 students dropped out before graduating, equaling a dropout rate

of 2.2% for the year. This reflects an upward trend year to year of students completing high school. Potential challenges dropout face: dealing with social stigma, fewer job opportunities, lower salaries, and higher probability of involvement with the criminal justice system.

Grades 9-12	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
<b>Enrollments</b>	65289	64885	65166
<b>Dropouts</b>	1593	1583	1442
<b>Dropout Rate</b>	2.4%	2.4%	2.2%

Source: SC Department of Education

- *Not in school*

Link Upstate’s Youth (ages 16-19) that are not enrolled in school equals 12,538. Of those 12,538 youth approximately 4,355 do not have a high school diploma or equivalency. This is approximately 5.3% of the youth aged 16-19 population. (*American Community Survey, 2017 5year estimate*) Potential challenges and barriers to employment that this group of youth face: poverty, bad health, welfare, and engage in crime.

- *Crime*

SC Department of Juvenile Justice released data for juvenile cases for the 2016-2017 fiscal year. In the Link Upstate Region, there were a total of 3563 Juvenile cases representing 26.2% of the State’s total number of Juvenile offenders. Year over year, the total of number of juvenile cases has dropped.

Juvenile Cases FY 2016-2017	Total	State
<b>Total # of Juvenile Cases</b>	3563	13591
<b>% Increase/Decrease from Previous Year</b>	-4.8%	-11.9%
<b>Number of Juvenile Cases Classified as Violent or Serious</b>	367	1397
<b>% Increase/Decrease from Previous Year</b>	40.0%	-14.8%
<b>Number of Status Offense Cases</b>	271	1259
<b>% Increase/Decrease from Previous Year</b>	71.8%	-15.0%
<b>Number of Detention Center Cases</b>	1112	3320
<b>% Increase/Decrease from Previous Year</b>	7.2%	1.80%

Source: SC DJJ; Juvenile Cases for 2016-2017

However, those classified as “Violent or Serious,” “Status of Offense Cases,” and “Detention Center Cases” continues to climb. Challenges faced by youth that have been detained by the justice system include: lack of education, lack of housing, mental health and substance abuse, and reconnecting with families can all present barriers to employment. (*Re-Entry: Key issues, Juvenile Justice Information Exchange*)



- **Foster Care**

According to the SC Department of Social Services, in SFY 2018-2019, 2,489 youth were served through foster care in the Link Upstate area. This equates to 29.0% of the 8,581 foster care youth served by the state of South Carolina.

<b>SC Foster Care SFY 2017-2018</b>	<b>0-6 YO</b>	<b>7-12 YO</b>	<b>13-17 YO</b>	<b>18 YO and over</b>	<b>Total</b>
STATE TOTAL	3520	2429	2276	356	8581
<b>Link Upstate Total</b>	<b>1262</b>	<b>711</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>2489</b>
% of State Total	35.9%	29.3%	21.7%	6.2%	29.0%

Source: SC Department of Social Services, Total Children Served in Foster Care by Office of Case Management During SFY 2018-2019

According to “Young Adults Formerly in Foster Care: Challenges and Solutions,” a Foster Care Youth Brief published by youth.gov, individuals in or aging out of foster care face these possible challenges: unstable housing or homelessness, lack of adequate elementary and secondary education, lack of employment and job training, problems with physical health, behavioral health, and general well-being, lack of access to health care, justice system involvement, lack of social connections. These can be barriers to finding and keeping sustainable employment.

- **Teen parent**

Fact Forward tracks teen pregnancy statistics and released the following data for 2018:

	Rank	Ages 15-19		Ages 15-17		Ages 18-19	
		Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
Laurens	3	87	42.5%	25	20.4%	62	75.8%
Saluda	7	19	36.3%	6	19.1%	13	61.9%
Cherokee	8	67	35.2%	12	10.5%	55	72.1%
Newberry	10	43	33.7%	13	17.0%	30	58.7%
McCormick	11	5	33.3%	0		5	84.7%
Edgefield	17	20	29.0%	7	16.9%	13	46.9%
Union	18	22	28.9%	9	19.7%	13	42.8%
Greenwood	20	68	27.6%	13	8.8%	55	55.7%
Oconee	22	56	27.5%	18	10.7%	43	52.8%
Anderson	27	169	26.6%	46	12.1%	123	48.4%
Abbeville	30	19	23.3%	4	8.2%	15	46.2%
Spartanburg	35	225	21.5%	45	7.2%	180	43.1%
Greenville	39	301	18.8%	76	7.9%	225	35.1%
Pickens	42	89	17.2%	24	7.7%	65	31.4%
<b>Link Upstate Total</b>		<b>1190</b>	<b>28.7%</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>12.8%</b>	<b>897</b>	<b>54.0%</b>

Source: FactForward.org, Teen Birth Rates

Note: Counties are ranked from worst to best teen birth rate for 15-19 year olds. Rate is calculated per 1,000 females. Rates calculated with small numbers

The State’s teen pregnancy rate for those 15-19 years old was 28.7% or 1,190 pregnancies. Of those ages 15-17, the rate was averaged 12.8% or 298 pregnancies.

Potential challenges that pregnant and parenting youth face include: poverty, homelessness, malnutrition, complications of pregnancy, emotional problems such as depression or drug and alcohol use, lack of a support system, lack of childcare, and lack of education.

e. EX-OFFENDERS

In FY2018, there were 3,379 individuals released from the Department of Corrections in the Link Upstate Region. In FY2019, there were 2,922 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.

f. HOMELESS

According to 2019 SC Homelessness Report provided by the SC Interagency Council on Homelessness, there are 1,401 homeless individuals in the Link Upstate region, which make up approximately 37.3% of the estimated total state homeless population. This number includes at 110 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.

			Chronically		
Homeless	Unsheltered	Sheltered	Homeless Veterans	Homeless	
Abbeville	0	4	4	0	0
Anderson	57	57	114	15	31
Cherokee	20	39	59	5	12
Edgefield	1	0	1	0	1
Greenville	242	511	753	57	193
Greenwood	35	89	124	7	16
Laurens	5	10	15	2	3
McCormick*	0	0	0	0	0
Newberry*	0	0	0	0	0
Oconee	35	35	70	2	16
Pickens	14	9	23	0	5
Saluda	9	0	9	0	5
Spartanburg	88	141	229	22	39
Union*	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Link Upstate</b>	<b>506</b>	<b>895</b>	<b>1401</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>321</b>
Statewide			3752	462	942
<i>Source: 2019 SC Homelessness Report, SC Interagency Council on Homelessness</i>					
<i>* Data not reported</i>					

**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES & ANALYSIS**

Developing a workforce to meet the demands of business is vitally important to the Link Upstate economy. 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. Although not comprehensive, below are key workforce development activities and programs offered in the Link Upstate region.

## **CLASSROOM BASED EDUCATION & TRAINING ACTIVITIES**

### **K-12 SYSTEM**

#### *Career and Technology Centers*

Career and Technical Education Centers for the K-12 system are offered throughout the State of South Carolina. Link Upstate K-12 students have access to eighteen Career and Technical Education Centers and a variety of programs of study. Career pathways are clearly identified for students to be able to identify the skills and knowledge they will need to pursue to be able to succeed on the job, in the military, or in post-secondary education in their career field of choice.

#### *Dual Enrollment*

High School Juniors and Seniors can enroll in post-secondary classes while completing their high school education. They will receive college credit towards an Associate's Degree or Bachelor's Degree for successfully completing college courses. These courses may include English, Computer Technology, History, Mathematics, Psychology, Allied Health Sciences, Welding, Automotive Technology, Engineering Graphics Technology, Building Construction Technology, among others. Many of the local colleges (including private, public, two-year and four-year) in the Link Upstate region offer dual enrollment opportunities for students, including the four Technical Colleges that serve the Link Upstate region: Greenville Technical College, Piedmont Technical College, Spartanburg Community College, and Tri-County Technical College.

#### *Career Readiness Assessments*

The State of South Carolina offers the Ready to Work (R2W) career assessment to eleventh graders as an exit exam. The Ready to Work assessment determines the student's skill level in Applied Mathematics, Locating Information (or Graphic Literacy), and Reading for Information. Depending on the score level of the students, the Ready to Work assessment offers a certificate that students will be able to share with employers demonstrating the level of skills they have mastered.

The career assessment also offers Essential Soft Skills (ESS) components to demonstrate the mastery of skills the student has learned in regards to Cooperation with Others, Resolving Conflicts and Negotiation, Solving Problems and Making Decisions, Observing Critically, and Taking Responsibility for Learning.

## SOFT SKILLS

### *Soft Skills: WIN Learning Software*

In addition to students having access to the Ready to Work career assessments, Link Upstate promotes the three core assessments to adults in the region. As a result, the WIN Learning software is available to help individuals prepare for the career readiness assessments through a variety of partners, such as SC Works, Adult Education, the Technical Colleges, and SC Vocational Rehabilitation.

### *Soft Skills: SC JobReadyU Software*

SC JobReadyU Soft Skills Training Curriculum (SCJRU) is another resource that individuals can use to learn and brush up on soft skills that businesses desire. The JobReadyU was developed by Clemson University and is offered at no cost to the individual. The web-based platform offers self-paced modules in basic education, communication, time management, and problem-solving skills.

## ADULT EDUCATION

### *Integrated English and Literacy*

A variety of partners offer Literacy and English as a Second Language instruction in the Link Upstate region. Each program seeks to improve the skills of the students they serve in writing, reading comprehension and, in the case of those with Limited English Proficiency, in understanding the spoken word. Both have integrated components of workforce preparation, workforce training, and concurrent and contextualized learning, meaning that students will read passages relevant to the world of work and be introduced to words and phrases that are common in the workplace. In the Link Upstate Region, the primary provider of English as a Second Language and Literacy is Adult Education, a division of the Department of Education; however, other public or private partners may also be providers, such as Greenville Literacy.

### *Integrated Education and Training*

Adult Education, a division of the SC Department of Education, is the primary provider of education for those that have dropped out of traditional K-12 learning and wish to pursue a High School Diploma or its equivalent. Each Adult Education Center offers instruction to students to allow them to finish their High School Diploma requirements or prepare them to take the High School equivalency exam. Instruction includes workforce preparation, workforce training, and concurrent and contextualized learning.

## COLLEGES, UNIVERSITIES AND PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS

In total, the Link Upstate region offers 32 providers of training. Among those include three 4-year public universities: Clemson University, University of South Carolina (Upstate and Union), and Lander University. Other training providers include: six private 4-year universities and ten colleges, four technical colleges, and nine training providers that offer programs of study leading to credentials, but do not result in associate's or higher-level degree.

### *Technical College System*

There are four technical colleges that serve the Link Upstate Region: Greenville Technical College, Piedmont Technical College, Spartanburg Community College, and Tri-County Technical College. The overarching mission of the Technical Colleges is to prepare students for the workplace. Each college offers programs of study relevant to businesses in the region, including credit courses that lead to an Associate's Degree or higher and continuing education courses for short-term training opportunities that lead to a credential such as an occupational license, certification, or credential.

### *Research Universities*

Among the Universities and Colleges in South Carolina, two that are found in the Link Upstate region have been designated as research universities: Clemson University and University of South Carolina. Clemson University's research is based on the following innovation clusters: Advanced Materials; Cyber Infrastructure and Big Data Science; Energy, Transportation, and Advanced Manufacturing; Health Innovation; Human Resilience; and Sustainable Environment. As a result of the BMW relocation and Clemson's focus on research, CU-ICAR developed in partnership with automotive manufacturers to research innovative manufacturing solutions, but also to develop the workforce to meet the demands of business by engaging students in the process.

The University of South Carolina has two satellite campuses in the region, Union and Upstate. The hub of the University is in the Midlands area, and therefore does not have the research presence that Clemson University does. However, students can participate in research through the University of South Carolina through one of their four focus areas: Health Sciences, Advanced Materials, Energy, and Environment and Sustainability.

## **WORK-BASED LEARNING AND TRAINING PROGRAMS**

### *On-the-Job Training (OJT)*

Offered by WIOA programs and SC Department of Social Services, On-the-Job Training offsets a portion of a new worker's wages that an employer will pay while the employee learns the skills required to perform necessary job duties. Seen as a monetary benefit to the employer to compensate for lost production while the individual is in the process of learning the skills needed to be proficient, the employee also benefits by earning while they learn.

### *Incumbent Worker Training (IWT)*

Incumbent Worker Training is offered by Workforce Development Boards (or their contracted service providers) to employers that wish to upskill their workforce. Employees participant in classroom training to learn new skills, allowing them to retain their jobs and providing them skills necessary for advancement. Employers can be reimbursed for a portion of the classroom training cost, offsetting company losses caused by taking employees away from their job duties.

*readySC™*

A program offered by the Technical college system, readySC™ provides business solutions to companies relocating to Link Upstate . A project manager is assigned to work with the company to identify needed solutions. Solutions may include assisting with recruitment, training the potential workforce to meet their needs, locating instructors to provide relevant training, and arranging for training to be conducted in offsite facilities. Employers that readySC™ has served in recent years include Michelin, First Quality, Borg Warner, Prodigy Cabinetry, Lockheed Martin, and ZF Transmissions.

*Apprenticeship Carolina™*

A division of the Technical College system, Apprenticeship Carolina™ stands as a key resource for employers to create and maintain registered apprenticeships within their businesses. Individuals learn while employed, both on-the-job and in a classroom setting. At appropriate training benchmarks, such as attainment of a credential, apprentices may receive wage increases. Apprenticeships are available to all age groups; however, employers may have dedicated apprenticeships specifically for youth. Some successful Apprenticeships in the Link Upstate region include positions at Greenfield Industries, King Asphalt, Renewable Water Resources, and ATS Logistics.

**TAX CREDITS**

*E-Zone*

The Enterprise Zone Retraining Program (E-Zone) offers a tax incentive through the Technical College system to employers that retrain their workforce on new equipment or technology in an effort to remain competitive. The business can claim the tax credit for retraining for up to \$1,000 per person per year. According to the Legislative Annual Report for Enterprise Zone Retraining Program, during calendar year 2018, six Upstate Link businesses were approved for the Job Retraining Tax Credit, and were projected to retrain a total of 908 employees.

**PROGRAM AND SERVICES FOR PRIORITY POPULATIONS**

INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

SC Vocational Rehabilitation is the primary provider of employment and training services to those with Disabilities. SCVRD provides counselling and rehabilitation to individuals with cognitive, mental, or physical disabilities. A division of SCVRD, the SC Commission for the Blind serves those with low vision or blind.

*Job Readiness Training Centers*

SC Department of Vocational Rehabilitation has established training centers to prepare their consumers for employment. Offering a dual benefit to the consumer and the employer, consumers work for an established period of time, learning how to perform job duties in a manufacturing environment and essential soft skills. The employer can benefit by entering into a job readiness

contract with SCVRD. The contracts provide work opportunities to consumers within the Job Readiness Training Centers, and provides in return to the employer opportunities to hire individuals that have experience with assembling their products as well as the finished product itself.

### *Job Try Outs/Work Experiences*

Similar to an On-the-Job Training opportunity, SC Department of Vocational Rehabilitation offers job try outs to their consumers. The individual earns a stipend while learning skills necessary to perform a particular job at an employer host site. WIOA programs offer similar opportunities called Work Experiences, particularly utilized within the Youth Programs.

### OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH

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.

### *Regional Workforce Advisors*

Various levels of partnerships exist between the four 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.

### VETERANS

SC Department of Employment and Workforce offers Veteran Representatives to work with those that have been discharged from the military. Veteran Representatives identify employment opportunities and assist in placing Veterans in new employment opportunities. The DVOP works with those with service-connected disabilities to provide support and resources on how to transition into civilian employment.

### LOW INCOME

SC Department of Social Services provides several services that assist families with financial stability. Those that qualify for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) may be eligible for cash assistance, employment and training services; those that qualify for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) can receive food stamps, employment and training services; those that qualify for Food and Nutrition Programs receive emergency food assistance, programs for seniors, healthy eating activities; and those that qualify for SC Voucher Program can gain access to child care assistance.

### EX-OFFENDERS

The Upstate Workforce Development Board has been operating a successful Re-Entry program for those being released from prison for several years. Engaging pre-release inmates in activities surrounding employment and training has insured that these individuals have a network of resources to turn to in the event of hardship upon release. Piloting similar programs funded by the State Workforce Development Board, Upper Savannah began their project in 2019 and WorkLink will begin theirs in 2020. Although the program designs may be different, the overall goal will be to reduce the rate of recidivism.

### **STRATEGIES AND ANALYSIS OF WIOA ADULT/DISLOCATED WORKER ACTIVITIES**

Adult program strategies that the Link Upstate region shares include NCRC assessments, literacy training and ESL, occupational skills training (aligned via sector strategies), work-based activities, and follow-up services.

Strategies the region continues in an effort to increase the effectiveness of Adult/Dislocated 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 exist with organizations such as the Upstate Fatherhood Coalition, United Ways, 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**

A regional collaboration between the Upstate and Greenville County WDBs began in 2016 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 four 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 Link Upstate Region has 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.

### **PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION**

Link Upstate's greatest strength lies in its network of professionals that serve our community. Through ongoing collaboration at all levels, our region has made strides in serving our hardest to reach customers and in building lasting relationships with our employers and our partner organizations.

### **DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF SERVICES**

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 centers and 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. By being responsive to the feedback of employers and reviewing the labor market information available to us, we provide practical and realistic guidance to our job seekers and implement positive solutions for our employers.

### **TARGETED INITIATIVES**

#### *Re-Entry Initiative*

The Link Upstate region participates 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 employment barriers for those with a background in the Link Upstate Region.

### *Job Fair/Resource Fair*

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.

### *Pilot Programs*

Several years ago, the Upstate Workforce Development Board began an initiative to serve those that were approximately six months from release from prison. Interested in implementing this best practice, WorkLink WDB met with the Upstate WDB in the fall of 2018 to learn more about their model and best practices they discovered in serving this population. Shortly after the meeting between Upstate WDB and WorkLink WDB, the State Workforce Development Board released two re-entry initiative grant opportunities for local areas to implement a program to serve those that had been involved in the justice system. In the first round of grant awards, Upper Savannah WDB implemented one of these re-entry grants in 2019. In the second round, WorkLink WDB was similarly awarded a grant that will be implemented in the summer of 2020. Although each service delivery model differs slightly to accommodate local area needs, the three areas are participating in collaborative re-entry groups to better coordinate and learn from one another on how to better serve those that have been involved in the justice system.

### *Effects of COVID-19*

The COVID-19 Pandemic has affected the service delivery models. In general, the SC Works Centers were closed to the public for a period of time, limiting interactions with customers to telephone and virtual services. The Centers are now open to walk-in traffic, although with limited capacity to ensure social distancing and to slow the spread of the virus. The Detention Centers themselves are still closed to the public, making early interactions with pre-release inmates difficult. WorkLink WDB is working with the counties in their region to determine how to serve those that are pre-release via telephone and conference calling. This is still in the planning stages.

The effects of the pandemic on our region are still ongoing, and therefore we do not know what the full effects on our economy will be for some months to come. The SC Works Centers are anticipating higher levels of unemployment, causing those leaving the prison system or those with backgrounds to have a more difficult time finding employment. It will be more important than ever to investigate best practices and collaborate on how to serve these customers.

### SECTOR STRATEGIES

Link Upstate has lead 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.

Sector Strategy accomplishments in the Link Upstate Region include:

- 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 four 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 the initial launch meeting in March 2019, three action areas were recognized: Build a Workforce Pipeline into Manufacturing, Address Gaps in Middle-Skill Technical Jobs, and Infrastructure & Regulations. The regional team's role is to join and educate other partners in understanding the needs of the business community and help implement shared solutions effectively. The Greater Upstate Sector Partnership group has hosted virtual meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic to allow manufacturers to discuss and find solutions to uncharted workplace barriers as a result of the pandemic.

### BUSINESS SERVICES

Link Upstate engages 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

Each of the four regions are active participants in the Workforce Development Administrator's group. This group meets monthly to learn about State initiatives and to collaborate with peers from across the State.

### *Grant Opportunities*

The COVID-19 pandemic has opened up grant opportunities that would be mutually beneficial for all of our customers. The four workforce development boards met with the Upstate Alliance to discuss the grant opportunity available for economic development entities, and will be collaborating on whether

or not this opportunity will be pursued. Regardless of whether or not the grant opportunity is suited to our area, the region has come together to collaborate and will be looking for grant opportunities to partner on in the future.

### *Greenville WDB/Upstate WDB Partnership*

The Greenville County Workforce Development Board and Upstate Workforce Board 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

Link Upstate has pursued opportunities to participate in 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**

The Link Upstate Region includes a number of manufacturing related sectors and occupations. Of the industries that have a high expected growth, all but one can be included in a broader manufacturing sector (Advance Materials, Aerospace, Automotive, Distribution and Logistics, and Biosciences). 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.

The Manufacturing Sector Partnership launched on March 14, 2019. Since the launch, 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 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 continue to engage business with our sector initiatives. 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.

*Link Upstate Manufacturing Sector Partnership (July 2020)*

In March 2018, a group of upstate manufacturers were convened to discuss mutual industries challenges and opportunities. The group took off, generating a life of its own. It has named itself “the Diversified Manufacturing Partnership.” They continue to meet regularly to address industry needs in the region. They partnership pulled together during the COVID-19 shutdowns to offer best practices among peers. The following businesses are involved:

BMW, Century Printing, Contec, Cooper Standard, Customer Performance Engineering, Dantherm Air Handling, EPC, GE, IVC Inc., Michelin, Milliken, Minileit, Inc., Siemen, Teijin Carbon Fibers, ABB, AWL Automation, Bosch, Mogul, Norbord, Nutra, Standard Motor Products, T&S, TransTech of SC/Wabtec and ZF Transmission.

In March 2019, the partnership met, realigned to focus on all industry needs, not limited to workforce. The partnership is now referenced as the Greater Upstate Manufacturing Sector Partnership and is completely controlled by industry, and supported by key partners. The partnership Leadership Team is as follows:

Steering Committee		
Company	Name	Title
AWL Automation	Per Blohm	Managing Director
BMW	Herman Adams	Technical Development Specialist
Century Printing	Ben Waldrop	President / Owner
Michelin	Robin Blackburn	Technical Wage Recruiter
Norbord	John Ryan	HR Manager
ZF Transmissions	Michael Morris	HR Manager

The Business Services Lead from SC Works serves as the Lead Convener for the group and is responsible for pulling in partner resources, as needed. A core partner team was assembled and is as follows:

Company	Contact	Title
SC Works	Johnnie-Lynn Crosby	Lead Convener/Facilitator
SCDOC	Matt Wiggins	Co-Convener/Facilitator
SCVR	Ryan Skinner	Co-Convener/Facilitator
UWB	Dana Wood	Backup Facilitator
SCDEW	Shauna Davis	Core Team member
SCDEW	Jackie Taylor	Core Team member
Greenville Tech	Dr. Whirl	Core Team member
Piedmont Tech	Rusty Denning	Core Team member
Adult Ed	Tommy Goode	Core Team member
Upper Savannah Board	Billy Morgan	Core Team member
WorkLink	Meredith Durham	Core Team member
SCMEP	Tony Moore	Core Team member
GADC		Core Team member
EFG	Dwayne Hatchett	Core Team member
CATE	Hollie Harrell	Core Team member

At the launch meeting in March 2019, the group identified two initial priorities to tackle as a through focused and industry led action teams:

- 1. Talent Team:** Build a talent pipeline through improved career awareness. The talent team has secured TALLO for a pilot marketing campaign targeting college non-completers. This campaign was planned to run under the SC Future Makers brand in an effort to not duplicate efforts. Prior to Covid, the group was also working with TALLO to target college non-completers to manufacturing careers, as a solution to the talent shortage. Since Covid, the group has pivoted to re-evaluate the talent shortage.
- 2. Middle Skills Team:** Address technical skill gaps of entry level Maintenance Technicians. The middle skills team has unveiled the maintenance technician skills matrix, identified core competencies for curriculum and is working on the development of an exit assessment. The team will work with the technical colleges to implement a shared curriculum.



## **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 presentation 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.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Greater Upstate Sector Partnership's core team has hosted virtual sessions with area manufacturers to provide a platform for them to combine and create best practices in dealing with a pandemic in the workplace. These sessions have led to a better understanding in supporting employer needs during this time.

There are 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 in or aged out of the foster care system, offenders, or other hard-to-serve populations;
- Strategies to connect the unemployed with work-based learning opportunities; and
- Strategies to integrate existing regional planning efforts among core partners.

## **EXISTING STRATEGIES**

To date, our four LWDAs 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 LWDAs 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 Equus Workforce Solutions (previously named ResCare Workforce Services). There are several regional staff that split their time between the two LWDAs. 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.

Greenville and Upper Savannah have combined resources to serve a number of employers in the Fountain Inn Area as it borders both workforce regions. We have worked together to assist in Rapid Responses for employers, sharing staff and resources to provide workshops, information sessions, resume preparation, job fairs, etc. We have also worked with the same employer to provide WIOA participants with OJT Opportunities; the most recent being with Grainger.

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 each of the four local workforce development areas 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.

Link Upstate is currently working with the City of Fountain Inn to have an open-air job fair at their Farmer's Market. The event is planned for October 2020 and will include employers who have ties to the four LWDA's that we represent.

### **GEOGRAPHIC ADVANTAGES**

Our region has a number of geographic advantages. The Inland Port and the I-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 LWDA's, 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 LWDA's in the Link Upstate WIOA region, 91 of which were interviewed on site, and 14 were offered jobs on site.

Upper Savannah recently started a Solid Ground program. They work with released inmates from the Young Offender Act (YOA) program and introduce them to the SC Works system utilizing resources from the Navigator grant and other partners including the WIOA program to provide a solid support system, which will enable participants to rebuild their lives and start careers, lowering the risk of incarceration. In addition, the Navigator offers consultations regarding expungements and pardons to those referred by SCDEW and WIOA case management.

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 PY2020. 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.

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. 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 have begun the process of reassessing our work-based activity needs and will 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. However, it is crucial the LWDBs do not rush the sector strategy process in order to deliver

immediate solutions, so we have let businesses take the lead. We stand ready to adjust our regional strategies of service delivery when the business community needs us to do so.

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; and**
- **The establishment of 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/tradeshows 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, access to childcare or 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.**

**TRANSPORTATION**

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.

There are a variety of ride share, for-profit companies that serve various parts of the upstate. Uber has not branched out into all of the fourteen counties in the area. With so many independent drivers, it would be an administrative problem in implementing agreements for transportation with them. One promising practice that is occurring through a faith-based organization in Oconee County includes a ride-share program in partnership with Uber and a local bank. For a reduced rate (approximately \$5/week), the worker pays a small fee in advance to have a guaranteed ride to work each day. However, COVID-19 has changed our culture for the foreseeable future and may impact how we share rides.

The City of Spartanburg and the City of Greenville both have bicycle rental programs for their downtown areas, but does not appear to be offered in many of the other cities in the Link Upstate region. Bicycle rental is ideal for city commuting or for travelling short distances, but would not be ideal in the rural parts of our region.

The Bus transportation systems, including Electric City Transit, CATBus, GreenLink, and Sparta, serve the Link Upstate region. Some coordination is being done through a small workgroup under the Ten at the Top organization. Discussions are occurring around how to coordinate and expand service across the region. WorkLink was recently able to provide a demonstration grant to Electric City that expanded the current bus routes to the Belton-Honea Path area, and also to Masters Boulevard in downtown

Anderson, where several large manufacturers are located. However, many bus systems do not run 24 hours per day, and would not be able to accommodate riders that need to work second or third shift. This would require numerous resources, chief among them funding.

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 enters 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 two or more WDB boundaries so that each local area may invest within the training/recruitment strategy, but this would be limited.

### **CHILDCARE**

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.

### **OTHER SUPPORTIVE SERVICES**

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.**

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS**

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.

### **EDUCATION AND TRAINING PARTNERS**

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 Link 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. 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

**Regional Plan Signature – Upper Savannah**

***Local Workforce Development Board:***

Ann Blanton

Workforce Development Board Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

***Local Grant Recipient Signatory Official:***

Upper Savannah Workforce Development Area

Name-Patricia Hartung

Title- Executive Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Regional Plan Signature – Upstate**

***Local Workforce Development Board:***

Upstate Workforce Development Board  
Name- Wade Ballard, Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

***Local Grant Recipient Signatory Official:***

Upstate Workforce Development Area  
Name- B. Cole Alverson      Title – Spartanburg County Administrator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Regional Plan Signature – WorkLink**

***Local Workforce Development Board:***

Danny Brothers  
Workforce Development Board Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature                              \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

***Local Grant Recipient Signatory Official(s):***

Steven R. Pelissier  
County Administrator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature                              \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Regional Plan Comments: Link Upstate Regional Plan PY2020-2023**

<b>Comment 1</b>	
<b>Originating Entity:</b>	
<b>Comment:</b>	
<b>Comment 2</b>	
<b>Originating Entity:</b>	
<b>Comment:</b>	
<b>Comment 3</b>	
<b>Originating Entity:</b>	
<b>Comment:</b>	
<b>Comment 4</b>	
<b>Originating Entity:</b>	
<b>Comment:</b>	