

REGIONAL PLAN

Local Elected Officials and Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDB) within each Regional Workforce Development Area must participate in a planning process to address the following:

1. Describe the region's economic conditions, including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations and also the employment needs of employers in these sectors and occupations. Attach a copy of an analysis addressing these factors. It is acceptable and recommended to use the [regional analysis](#) and other information if desired that is available from DEED's Labor Market Information Division.

The Region 3 Leadership & Planning Board (R3LPB), comprised of local elected officials and LWDB members, participated in the development of the Regional Plan in Region 3, using the following vision, mission, values, and regional analysis outlined below.

VISION

The Region 3 Leadership & Planning Board is committed to the establishment of regional strategies that are progressive, innovative, collaborative, and responsive to the needs of its communities within the 13-county region.

MISSION

To improve the economic prosperity of business and jobseekers in Region 3 by collaborating with key stakeholders to provide successful solutions to workforce, education, and economic development needs.

STATEMENT OF VALUES

The Region 3 Leadership & Planning Board:

- Values trust, fairness, and integrity in all interactions.
- Promotes opportunities for jobseekers to find gainful employment and for employers to find skilled labor.
- Embraces diverse and immigrant populations and promotes hiring within the communities.
- Establishes itself as the regional convener of workforce, education, and economic development.
- Encourages stakeholder participation in finding responsive solutions to workforce needs through analysis of regional labor market data and the cooperative development of regional service strategies. (Attachment A)

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

Central Minnesota is home to over 700,000 people and almost 18,000 businesses. The demographics of the region continue to change, but the region continues to grow and was the second fastest growing region of the state.

Region 3 includes the following counties in Central Minnesota: Benton, Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Kandiyohi, Meeker, McLeod, Mille Lacs, Renville, Pine, Sherburne, Stearns, and Wright. It includes three Economic Development Regions (EDR); 6E, 7E, and 7W.

Based on data from the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) labor market data, Central Minnesota's economy had the second fastest growth in the state (Twin Cities was fastest), growing +6.8% from 2013-2018; however, in the most recent year it was at +0.5%—half as fast as the state overall.

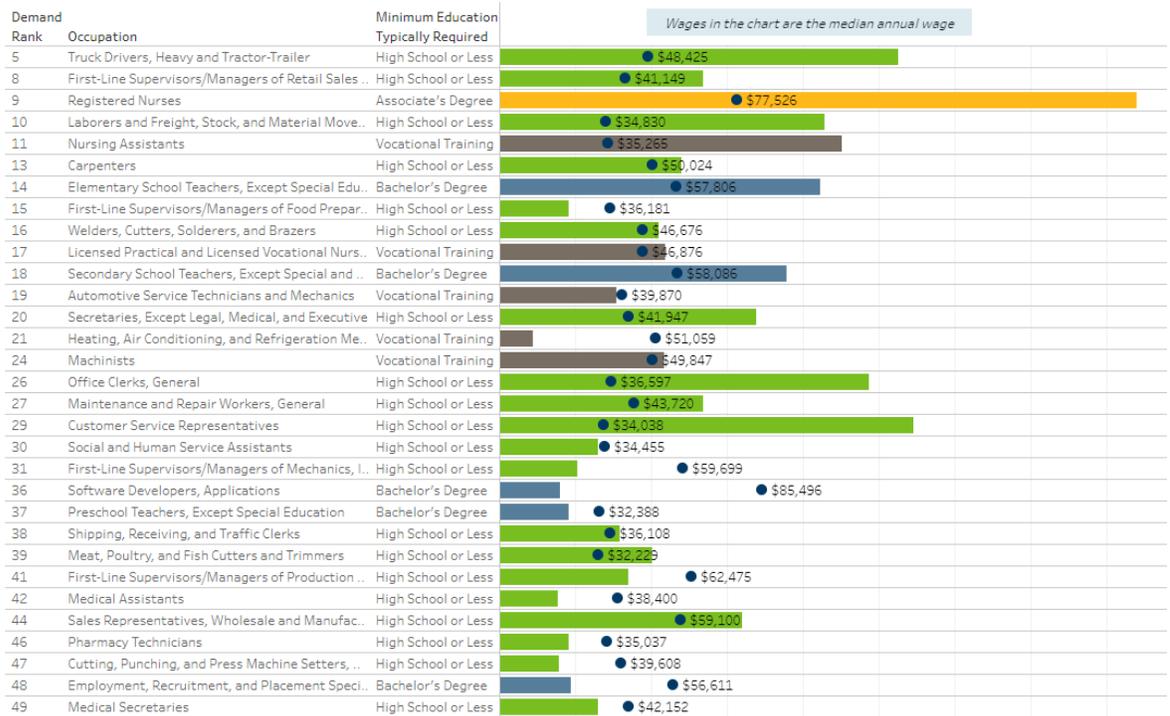
Despite slowing employment growth, the broad economy of the region is quite strong, with faster than statewide labor force growth from 2004-2019 (+12.4%). Sectors that outpaced statewide growth in the most recent year (2017-2018) include agriculture, manufacturing, wholesale trade, retail trade, transportation and warehousing, and other services. The largest number of jobs added in the past year was in the manufacturing sector (+636 jobs), followed by retail trade (+488).

Emerging industries in the region that have substantial growth in the past few years include air transportation, private households, warehousing and storage, chemical manufacturing, accommodation, support activities for agriculture, and specialty trade contractors.

Another important indicator of regional economic synergism are industries with high location quotients. In Central Minnesota, subsectors with high relative concentration of employment include motor vehicle body and trailer mfg., poultry and egg production, household and institutional furniture product mfg., nonmetallic mineral product mfg., other motor vehicle dealers, industrial machinery mfg., support activities for animal production, animal slaughtering and processing.

The most in-demand occupations are included in the chart below. The wage has been filtered to \$31,800, the minimum cost to live for a single person with no children. The educational requirements for the most in-demand occupations are also included in the chart, a reflection of the types of formal training required. For higher paying occupations without formal educational requirements, skills, or credentialing are likely required to gain employment.

Occupations In Demand for Central Minnesota, 2019



The economic conditions in Central Minnesota are strong despite recent layoffs and company closures. Please refer to the entire Central Minnesota Regional Profile attached for additional detail (Attachment B).

2. What is the regional strategy to coordinate efforts to address existing and in-demand industry sector and occupations workforce needs? Describe the methodology for outreach to these industry sectors and how they will be connected with the workforce system in the region.

The R3LPB membership includes the Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services, Inc. (CMJTS) Joint Powers Board (JPB) chair and vice chair, CMJTS LWDB chair and vice chair, CMJTS chief executive officer, Career Solutions (CS) JPB chair and vice chair, CS LWDB chair and vice chair, and CS executive director. Support staff from both CMJTS and CS attend as non-voting members. Other key guests attend, as requested.

The LWDA boards have industry sector representation as members. LWDA staff participate in local industry sector associations or groups when available. Industry experts are brought in for presentations to both the LWDA boards and the R3LPB for guidance in workforce strategies.

The R3LPB has identified the following sectors as in-demand based on DEED labor market information as well as employer (stakeholder) input:

- Manufacturing
- Healthcare
- Construction/Transportation
- Natural Resources and Energy (Agriculture)
- Professional and Business Services (Information Technology)

Identifying in-demand occupations and employment projections through use of data about employment by location, labor supply and demand, earnings, unemployment, and demographics of the labor force helps employment specialists/career counselors and their jobseekers find relevant training opportunities to fill skills gaps, address skills shortages in the current economy, and anticipate employer need for trained workers in the listed fields.

A roster of sector partnership members will be developed and updated consisting of individuals who will represent the business partners, specific organizations representing targeted populations, and those providing pathway-specific services. Specific organizations representing targeted populations include Adult Basic Education, Minnesota State Colleges, Functional Industries, RISE, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and others, as appropriate. This partnership will be business driven and create solutions that integrate education, workforce, and economic development resources across systems that provide businesses, individuals, and communities the opportunity to grow the state's economy.

The following are sector initiatives identified by the R3LPB being facilitated by or occurring in the region:

Manufacturing: Central Minnesota Manufacturers Association (CMMA) is a successful membership-based organization which exists to enhance Region 3's interrelated industries and to gain and hold a competitive advantage in today's global marketplace. CMMA hosts monthly membership meetings, special events, and social gatherings. CMMA has 156 members with over 50% from manufacturing firms. CMMA consists of a healthy mix of new and sustaining members, including a strong cross section of manufacturers, servicers, suppliers, and supporters. It has contributed more than \$80,000 in grants, sponsorships, and scholarships since its inception. This support and investment in communities includes college scholarships, high school robotics, STEM education, events and expos, student field trips, youth apprenticeships, partnership with Wright Technical College, Tour of Manufacturing, and more. The R3LPB will continue to provide staff support, demographic statistics, labor market information, and organizational development assistance. CMMA members hold a seat on the respective LWDBs, as well as CMJTS and CS staff either holding committee memberships on CMMA or active participation at large membership meetings. This group is actively involved in the sector-led EPIC activities (large scale, hands-on career exploration event for high school sophomores), development of a Career Pathway website, actively promoting youth apprenticeship throughout Central Minnesota, and hosting a Jamboree informational event on youth engagement in manufacturing occupations.

Healthcare: The Central Minnesota Healthcare Taskforce has changed its name to the Central Minnesota Healthcare Coalition and is led by a group of members versus a stand-alone employer-

led sector group. The coalition met and completed a strategic plan, moving forward with the help of a consultant. The strategic plan focused on three specific issues that continually rose to the top of the healthcare summits: training and education, recruitment, and retention. Coalition members signed up for one of the three subcommittees to tackle each issue. This group has been temporarily put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic that is affecting healthcare providers. (See attached healthcare coalition strategic plan – Attachment C).

Additional healthcare initiatives to promote healthcare include:

- SCRUBS camps
- Partnerships and collaborations to promote and offer certified nursing assistant training in local high schools
- Healthcare partners lead “hands-on activities” at both EPIC and IGNITE events
- CareerONE summer youth camp – healthcare track option

Business Services programming for all in-demand sectors: Incumbent worker programming policy gives preference for projects submitted from high-demand industries.

The WorkWright radio program is a collaboration between CMJTS and KRWC to highlight CareerForce partners and programs and a local employer every Monday morning. This has been a successful model to promote sector initiatives and help with recruitment efforts of employers. The goal is to replicate this program throughout Central Minnesota.

Human Resource Networking groups are facilitated throughout the region and provide a platform to share industry challenges with their peers. Rule number one of these groups – leave competition at the door.

Sector-specific hiring events: These events focus on a targeted industry and promotional efforts to identify individuals looking for sector careers is made.

Educational initiatives: Occurring throughout the region, these initiatives promote that youth and young adults focus on a career or industry sector early in their high school career. Tiger Pathway in Hutchinson is a great model. Local employers provide equipment and input on curriculum to help youth identify and attain career skills prior to high school graduation. This allows youth to explore careers prior to paying for a college education that might not align with their skills and interests. CareerONE offered by CS is summer programming that provides eligible youth with career exploration in specific sectors. Central Minnesota high schools are promoting sector knowledge by hosting the DEED LMI expert at high school registrations and conferences to ensure that parents and students know the in-demand careers to help guide their planning.

Region 3 works directly with employers, private and public training providers, and union labor organizations to provide work-based training opportunities that meet the needs of business. The regional goal is to continue work-based training initiatives through activities like on-the-job training (OJT), registered apprenticeship, work experience and transitional jobs, workforce protégé, and incumbent worker training program (IWTP). Work-based training methods are a

proven and effective strategy that meet employers' workforce needs. The R3LPB surveyed employers and created an employer database to better match their needs with work-based training methods. The information collected is used to connect educators and service providers to young people, career changers, and other jobseekers in Region 3 who want to meet with employers to learn more about occupations in their specific area of career interest. The goal is to update this information, complete additional surveys, and create an online directory that will be on both the LWDA websites. This will promote sector engagement.

Wagner-Peyser works closely with representatives from the R3LPB to assist with regional sector workforce needs. Coordinated efforts with our On-Site Hiring events culminated in hosting hiring events for the untapped workforce populations with disabilities, criminal backgrounds, and new immigrants. The On-Site Hiring events are held monthly and are focused on industry sector needs and demands.

The DEED workforce strategy consultant supports regional initiatives and will share partner information and services as appropriate.

The CS executive director attends quarterly meetings of the St. Cloud Area Executive Director/CEO networking group. Participation in this group allows community CEOs to engage in pertinent conversations specific to their management role. Topics relevant to workforce development include discussing current industry challenges, problem solving, and obtaining access to industry experts who have implemented best practices.

With the continued evolution of the COVID-19 crisis, the regional strategy is to ensure all partners in the workforce development system remain flexible and responsive to the needs of the local businesses in the region. As resources and tools are available, information is shared to all contacts/networks and partners.

3. Describe how the local boards will direct regional workforce system alignment through shared policies and practices. In this description include any cooperative service arrangements being planned for the region and how they will promote consistency within the regional workforce development area and with state policy.

A Region 3 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was created between LWDA 5 and LWDA 17. Both parties entered into this agreement with the understanding that the LWDA boards would “maintain their local identities” and collaborate as the R3LPB, serving the 13-county region of Benton, Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Kandiyohi, Meeker, McLeod, Mille Lacs, Pine, Renville, Sherburne, Stearns, and Wright counties.

Furthermore, the MOU creates a R3LPB designed to provide oversight of the regional planning process and its sector strategies, review labor market and economic data, select sectors for the region based on this data, explore opportunities to share resources and seek additional funding sources to better serve Region 3 employer and jobseeker needs, organize and create a regional vision that is employer-driven and proactive in creating solutions to meet their needs and

collaborate with CareerForce partners to establish a quality customer service delivery system responsive to both jobseekers and employers. The MOU also lays out a methodology, duration, and modification determinations, dispute resolution and other necessary provisions. The MOU is signed by all elected voting members of the R3LPB to solidify the partnership.

Furthermore, there are cooperative agreements signed between the two LWDA's—for LWDA 5 to provide accounting and HR services to LWDA 17. In addition, cooperative agreements are in place for collaborative/regional grants that have been awarded, such as the Rural Career Counseling Coordinator grant (RC3), which provides the opportunity to expand current agreements. CS and CMJTS will consider and determine the need, format, and content of additional cooperative service agreements as needed to promote consistency within the region and align with state policy.

Expanding and enhancing partnerships and collaboration: The R3LPB encourages both the CS and CMJTS LWDBs to collaborate on competitive grants that serve Region 3 in the best interests of both jobseekers and employers.

Each CareerForce location in Region 3 holds staff meetings regularly to identify and implement regional services, including career, training, and/or follow-up services for jobseekers. These meetings allow for discussions leading to program alignment of goals. Staff meetings include co-located CareerForce partners (e.g., CS, CMJTS, Job Service, Vocational Rehabilitation, Adult Basic Education, Public Assistance, Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), and State Services for the Blind). A minimum of one meeting is scheduled annually.

The one-stop operator (OSO) consortium, a collaboration of CareerForce partners, meets on a quarterly basis to review the regional plan goals and ensure activities are being completed and reported to the R3LPB and LWDBs. Shared training and updates occur among all the partners. Additional professional training opportunities are shared as well as best practices amongst programs. One such training opportunity is the eLearning modules developed by the National Institute on Disability. These modules are shared with all one-stop partners. The topics are:

- Serving Individuals with Disabilities
- Working Across Partners
- Providing Inclusive Business Services

As an OSO partner, Wagner-Peyser takes guidance in policy alignment from the R3LPB and LWDA's 5 and 17.

Regarding Business Services, each partner within CareerForce locations, including CMJTS, CS, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Wagner-Peyser, Veteran Services, have varying roles for staff participating in reaching out to employers. All Region 3 business service staff meet on a semi-annual basis to ensure a coordinated effort and message to the business community. Aligning a consistent message and approach are important. Some key concepts agreed upon include:

- Viewing businesses as customers
- Taking steps to understand their needs

- Understanding that businesses make decisions based on their needs, not programming available
- Asking what the business seeks from relationships, as opposed to the service provider's goals
- Employer Navigator services are promoted

To ensure system alignment, in addition to alignment of policy and practices, common goals are identified based on R3LPB directives, one-stop-operator conversations, and community stakeholder input. Specific strategies are developed collaboratively, and partners participate jointly with initiatives occurring in the region that align with the identified goals, some of which are included in the cooperative agreements. Most of these initiatives include not only CareerForce partners, but also community members, education organizations, and employers.

Addressing the need for skilled workers in the region:

One initiative is the “*Untapped Workforce Series*”: Employer educational events are being offered to help promote potential workforce populations that are currently unrepresented in the workforce. These sessions provide tools and resources to the employers in the region. Untapped populations include:

- Persons with disabilities
- Older workers
- Offenders
- Veterans
- Youth and young adults
- Immigrants
- Low-income persons/families

Hiring Events: Each of these educational seminars are followed up by a hiring event targeting the *untapped population* of focus. Surveys are completed by the employers after each hiring event to track if job offers were made as a result of participation in the hiring event. In addition, topics of interest to employers have been identified, such as cyber security, support for employees, on-going labor market information and others. Sessions will be held to address employer interests. Coordinated fundraising events and a collaborative grant through the Initiative Foundation are some of the ways these events have been jointly funded.

Incumbent worker training is provided to upskill employers' current workforce and assist businesses with layoff aversion. Both LWDAs in the region offer this resource to businesses. CMJTS and CS staff give presentations to professional employer groups and make direct contacts for the purpose of offering incumbent worker (IW) and other resources to businesses. CMJTS has become the “go to” resource on how to deliver incumbent worker training to businesses. In support of regional goals, the workforce strategy consultant refers local businesses to both LWDAs and to state resources to help increase the skills of their current workforce.

Expanding and Enhancing Career Exploration:

Career exploration to students in Region 3 through the following activities/events:

IGNITE Your Future: A Hutchinson’s IGNITE Your Future event – includes partnerships with CMJTS, Ridgewater College, the Hutchinson and Litchfield Chambers of Commerce, and several key businesses to organize this community collaborative hands-on career exploration event. Held at Ridgewater College, there were 13 schools, 1,200 students, 100 businesses, and 75 volunteers in attendance. This is now an annual event with potential expansion to the Willmar Campus.

Exploring Potential Interests and Careers (EPIC): A large-scale, hands-on career exploration event at St. Cloud Technical and Community College. EPIC is an annual hands-on career exploration event supported through a community-wide collaboration. CS and CMJTS are partners and heavily involved with planning and executing this annual event. The goal is to create a high-quality career exploration annual event that effectively bridges education and industry for high school students in Central Minnesota, contributing to the fulfillment of the economic and workforce needs of the greater Central Minnesota region. This unique event format allows students hands-on, interactive experiences that simulate the activities of a variety of careers achieved through a multitude of educational accomplishments. EPIC is supported by a community-wide collaborative of business, education, nonprofit, and government organizations.

Topics covered with the students:

- Education and or training requirements for jobs in this industry
- Work available with the participating employers, including hours, schedule, vacation, promotion, culture, etc.
- Financial expectations – salary opportunities, growth potential, economic outlook, etc.

Six career fields that are represented:

- Engineering, Manufacturing, Technology
- Health Science Technology
- Human Services
- Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resource
- Business, Management, and Administration
- Communications & Information Systems

Student attendance in 2020: 3,500 10th graders from 29 schools within a 45-miles radius of St. Cloud. Next Event: February 2021.

Hands-on Career Exploration Event in Region 7E: Expansion goal is to develop and offer an event similar to EPIC and IGNITE for EDR 7E. The GPS Workforce committee co-chairs have had several meetings with local chambers and businesses on starting their own hands-on career exploration event in the 2020-21 school year. A survey was created and sent out to all school districts to confirm the support of this type of event.

Construct Tomorrow shares hands-on construction trades experiences with high school students. Sponsored by the construction trades unions, construction employers, and local partners, this career exploration event promoting apprenticeship trades education, has been held in Hinckley in partnership with CMJTS and the Mille Lacs Band and in St. Cloud since 2016.

CareerONE: CS' CareerONE is a unique summer youth employability skills training opportunity, which provides youth ages 14–17 identified as at-risk with a realistic and positive work-readiness skills training in a safe, nurturing, and learning-rich environment. It also helps prevent participants from regressing academically during the summer months. Youth participate in a variety of classroom activities, including teamwork, contextual academic enrichment, career exploration, work-readiness skills, workplace safety, financial literacy, reflections and journaling, and work projects for community-based organizations and agencies.

CareerONE has three 40-hour Career Tracks (about 4 hours per day over 10 days):

Healthcare

1.5 college credits for CPR/first aid
1.5 college credits for CNA prep course
Health terminology class
Mock accident scenes and how to react

Construction/Manufacturing

Safety Awareness class that will give students OSHA 10 and 2 college credits
Build raised planter boxes to donate to community
Design cell phone holders on computer and print using 3D laser printer

Business Technology (new track)

2 college credits for Excel class – 20 hours
Other 20 hours are not confirmed yet but will be geared towards sales/marketing of business and products.

SCRUBS Camps: A hands-on healthcare career education exploration. St. Cloud Scrubs Camp is a collaborative effort between the business and industries of the St. Cloud region, St. Cloud Technical & Community College, and St. Cloud State University. This is an engaging, interactive, and fun day camp open to any student entering grades 7–12 in the fall. Students spend three days exploring a variety of healthcare careers like nursing, laboratory science, social work, alternative therapies, and many others. Students experience these careers through field trips and hands-on activities facilitated by healthcare professionals and college faculty. Students are provided a t-shirt, daily lunches, and snacks. Scrubs Camp will run Tuesday, July 14 to Thursday, July 16, 2020. CS and DEED partners assist with labor market activities. A day long SCRUBS camp occurs in Cambridge at Anoka Ramsey Community College. All one-stop partners will promote the training opportunity.

CTE Jamboree: Central Minnesota Manufacturing Association's (CMMA) first Career and Technical Education (CTE) Jamboree was held on Nov 21, 2019. The event focused on bridging businesses with schools and the opportunities that are available for student apprenticeships and work-based learning opportunities. A second event is currently being planned for August 2020.

Career Pathway Infographics: A Rural Career Counseling Coordinator (RC3) initiative started in 2018 has been the creation of career pathway infographics. Through collaboration of all the RC3 staff, 16 career pathways have been created, as well as some for occupations in-demand. These are being shared with local schools and employers. Additional sharing of the career pathway infographics, through social media, information on websites, and WIOA partner networks is planned. These infographics are updated annually, and additional occupations in-demand created. A goal this year for existing pathways is to make the electronic format more interactive.

Innovative Approaches to Career Readiness: An initiative and spring event hosted by the Workforce Committee of GPS 45:93 (regional economic development collaborative in Region 7E) has focused on connecting schools and employers with opportunities for partnership that will increase innovation and opportunities for career and technical education to meet employer needs. It also works to highlight labor market and training information for parents and students. In its first year, the event hosted Cardinal Manufacturing, a high school student-run manufacturing business and training program from Aleva/Strom High School. Students shared the success of their program, followed by a fall tour of their school and program. Additional programs, such as Tiger Path 2.0, and the efforts and successes of local schools have been shared as inspiration. The May 2020 event has become limited due to COVID-19; however, it will feature the keynote speaker electronically. The showcase of Mora High School programs and highlights of innovative fund grantee schools will be postponed. The GPS Workforce Committee offered a grant opportunity for schools in Pine, Isanti, Chisago, Kanabec, and Mille Lacs counties. Four schools were offered grants: Rush City for their career-readiness kickoff, Willow River for their Lessons for Life Workshop, TRIO Wolf Creek on student career exploration, and Mora for their presentation event with Luke Greiner presenting at parent-teacher conferences. Co-chaired by CMJTS staff and the regional workforce strategy consultant, the GPS 45:93 Workforce Committee will continue to promote connections between schools, employers, students, and parents to highlight labor market information, increase opportunities for career and technical education innovation, and career exploration in Region 7E.

Tiger Path 2.0: An event hosted by Hutchinson High School and Southwest Initiative Foundation to share all the innovative career pathways and career and technical education opportunities happening in the McLeod County area. CMJTS staff presented information on LYFT activities to attendees and offered suggestions for replication in other areas across the state. Best practices from Central Minnesota were highlighted, including youth apprenticeship. An action planning worksheet was shared that is promoted to school districts to continue the conversation and expand career pathways activities in their area.

Launch Your Future Today (LYFT) is a rural career and technical education (CTE) pathway initiative with the purpose of rebuilding CTE in west Central Minnesota. The goal of LYFT Pathways is for

every secondary student in the region to gain marketable skills through meaningful CTE courses and opportunities, which lead to further education and careers that match our region's labor market needs. Through this initiative, CMJTS staff assist school-identified students with vocational exploration and advise them on the steps required to enter careers of interest. They also help the students build workplace skills and coordinate work-based learning opportunities, internships, job shadowing, informational interviews, etc., to give them first-hand knowledge of local jobs, employers, and industries.

College tours and career fairs are being promoted across the region. Both LWDA 5 and 17 have active participation with the Perkins consortiums across Region 3.

Career events targeted for educators: Business & Industry Summit Sauk Rapids-Rice High School was held on February 10, 2020. The vision for this event was to foster communication and collaboration between educators and local business/industry leaders to better understand how they can prepare students for the future workplace. The full event was held from 7:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m. with all 650 district staff from Sauk Rapids-Rice schools interacting with approximately 50 local businesses. School staff participated in face-to-face, real-life discussions with local business owners and employees, and engaged through interactive activities designed to help them understand the skills and interests necessary to succeed in various industries. Six career clusters were showcased, including Health, Science & Technology; Engineering, Manufacturing & Technology; Arts, Communications & Information Systems; Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources; and Business, Management & Administration. This was a collaborative effort and partners included CS, SR-R High School, Benton Economic Partnership, St. Cloud Chamber, Sauk Rapids Chamber, Rice Chamber, United Way, PFSS, and GSDC. The goal is to continue and replicate this event across the region.

Career Crawl for the K-12 teachers: Another innovative strategy to assist educators in industry knowledge is to take educators to the business. The DEED workforce strategy consultant and CMJTS will assist Buffalo High School in putting together a Career Crawl for the K-12 teachers on a fall 2020 in-service day. This will allow teachers to learn about the businesses in their community. (This event is a replica of a similar event held in Princeton.)

CEO in the Classroom: Entrepreneurship education seeks to prepare people, especially youth, to be responsible, enterprising individuals who become entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial thinkers and contribute to economic development and sustainable communities. The CEO program is much more than a textbook course. Rather, students are immersed in real life learning experiences with the opportunity to take risks, manage the results, and learn from the outcomes. Partners assist in providing additional programming and credentials when available (e.g., National Retail Federation Customer Service and Sales credential), assistance with business tours, mock interviews, and development of new CEO programs. Currently, the following school districts offer CEO programs: Willmar High School, Wright Technical Center, and a Western Stearns County Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities (CEO) Program, which started in the 2019 school year for combined Albany, Sauk Center, and Melrose schools.

Ensuring those in need receive the information about services:

Collaborate with partners to develop outreach, informational materials, engagement, and dissemination strategies for the following groups:

- Farmers who are struggling – receiving information about dislocated worker programs
- Small businesses impacted by COVID-19
- Populations experiencing economic disparities

With the COVID-19 pandemic, workforce development staff and partners have had to be innovative in the ways to provide services to individuals. Use of electronic communication, such as WebEx and Zoom, are being used.

4. Describe how the regional approaches used will ensure that it includes diverse representation, specifically among populations experiencing the greatest barriers to employment or communities facing the greatest levels of economic disparities?

R3LPB, CMJTS, and CS staff engage with organizations representing targeted populations, through continued use of surveys, data collecting, conducting focus groups, and program outreach. This will ensure greater awareness of resources available to diverse populations, specifically among people experiencing barriers to education and employment opportunities in Planning Region 3. Committees will be developed as a result, and stakeholder engagement will occur through sector-led activities planned through collaboration with partners.

Through targeted outreach and engagement, increased knowledge of staff, and specific programming, those populations experiencing disparities will enroll in and increase outcomes in service programs.

Recruitment efforts are being made to increase diversity and representation of individuals experiencing disparities on boards, committees, and staff.

Initiatives to Engage those with Disabilities

The goal of the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) is to increase access to the CareerForce System and programs for persons with disabilities. The best practices for case management, including the use of integrated resource teams, guideposts for success in youth goal planning, and customized employment, will be shared with other Rural Career Counseling Coordinators (RC3). The sharing of knowledge and resources with the broader system will create an effective referral process, ensure a close relationship between all partners, and increase services to more jobseekers. DEI staff from CMJTS were selected to be part of an e-Learning taskforce with the National Disability Institute to make disability services information and resources available to all staff in American Job Centers. This training will be shared with all Region 3 partners. The goal is to have greater awareness and promote inclusiveness in the CareerForce System.

Regional Employment Networks include Functional Industries, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, RISE, Options, and CMJTS. Employment Networks help ticket holders (those 18–64 years of age) receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) become self-sufficient. Communication and referrals between Employment Networks will be ongoing. All partners provide or offer unique services and refer ticket holders to the appropriate service agency. The CMJTS Ticket Team, comprised of six employment specialists, will complete the benefits analysis coaching training through the Minnesota Department of Human Services. This curriculum focuses on assisting those individuals receiving SSI or SSDI navigate employment options and the impact on benefits. Regional employers will be educated about available ticket to work incentives. An Ability Resource Fair, a career fair serving individuals with diverse abilities and providing resources, will be held in 2021.

SOAR Services: CMJTS will provide SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) services as a subcontractor through Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council. SOAR is a national program designed to increase access to the disability income benefit programs administered by the Social Security Administration (SSA) for eligible adults and children who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness and have a serious mental illness, medical impairment, and/or a co-occurring substance use disorder. These advocacy services will be available to individuals in Region 3.

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS): In partnership with Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS), CMJTS provides Pre-ETS to youth with disabilities, ages 14–21, who are potentially eligible for VRS services. Career You provides an opportunity for these youth to explore career and training options, gain work skills, and learn how to be successful after high school, including post-secondary education and/or competitive employment. Through Career You, youth are provided services one-on-one or through large group activities, which are centered on job search/exploration, post-secondary education counseling, work-based learning, budgeting, work-readiness training, self-advocacy instruction, and community learning projects. CareerQuest is a program, funded by the Minnesota Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, designed to help high school students prepare for life after graduation. It is a chance for youth to explore career and training options, gain work skills, and learn how to be successful after high school. CareerQuest is for students who have any type of disability and want to prepare for a bright future. Career Planners work on MCIS career assessments with students and complete Skills Verification Assessments, Skills Sort, Post-Secondary Educational Choices and Financial Aid options, as well as a Cost of Living Estimator that reflects life after high school.

Initiatives to Engage those with Criminal Backgrounds

The Leaving Incarceration Finding Employment (LIFE) Project, incorporating the 360° Career Success Skills modules, is tailored to address a person's criminal background and help avoid recidivism. Currently, CMJTS is facilitating the LIFE Project in the McLeod and Wright County jails and plans to expand these services to additional counties in the future. To expand opportunities for individuals with criminal backgrounds, a collaboration with SW PIC, Central Lakes College, Adult Basic Education, and the Renville County Jail will be partnering to provide the LIFE project curriculum with hands-on, industry-specific skills (e.g., welding training), to ensure those being

released have concrete skills for their résumé as well as transition skills. This is a pilot project that if successful, will be replicated across the region.

Initiatives to Engage People of Color

The Immigrant Employment Connection Group (IECG) is a collaboration of St. Cloud community businesses and organizations. The group's focus is to better the St. Cloud community by working with the Somali population and address workforce development issues which improve the health and wellbeing of jobseekers and their families. To make the greatest impact, the group's focus is on individuals within the Somali community who possess minimal skills and have multiple barriers to employment, including cultural and language barriers and transportation issues. The IECG is working with employers to help them overcome real or perceived hiring barriers. They are also helping jobseekers to obtain employment. The IECG is creating meaningful connections between employers and jobseekers in Region 3. Committee members include service providers, local employer representation, education, and representation from the immigrant population. This group had achieved the initial goals of job fairs and educational events. It is re-establishing new goals moving forward.

The Ridgewater College Multi-Cultural Outreach Coordinator, Jehana Khan Schwandt, serves as a liaison between workforce development, the college, and the community in Economic Development Region 6E. The goal is to engage populations experiencing inequities in education and employment and develop multi-cultural events and marketing/recruitment strategies to inform multi-cultural populations of resources available. Meetings began in January 2017 and continue quarterly. Jehana Khan Schwandt is an active member of the CMJTS Youth Committee of the LWDA 5 board.

Initiatives to Engage At-Risk Youth and Young Adults

Partner for Student Success (PFSS) unites Central Minnesota parents, businesses, community organizations, and public-school districts to support student success. The PFSS Board of Directors consists of 21 members from 19 partner organizations, and PFSS committees and working groups consist of more than 70 organizations from across the greater St. Cloud area. PFSS has a cradle-to-career approach, including a pre-K and elementary as well as college and career-ready work groups. The CS executive director sits on the college and career-readiness steering committee and co-chairs the experiential learning planning group. Participation at this level creates opportunities for Region 3 to expand education and employment services to youth and young adults. PFSS engages, aligns, and coordinates community resources to set goals, define priorities, and close gaps; creates awareness and urgency around PFSS and student success within the community; advocates for financial support and resources around student success; and monitors and measures progress against the community goals and priorities.

Grants received by each LWDA will provide programming to targeted populations.

Pathways to Prosperity grants:

CMJTS' P2P provides the ability to partner with Adult Basic Education providers and local colleges to give 38 low-income individuals the training necessary to enter careers as either certified nursing assistants or commercial drivers. The Pathways to Prosperity Program will serve adults

who are living at or below 200% of the federal poverty guideline. No less than one-third will be People of Color and no less than one-fourth of the cohort will be made up of people who have one or more disabilities.

CS' P2P is designed to provide workforce development and training opportunities to economically disadvantaged adults that will help them develop increased career awareness; acquire basic skills education; participate in skills-training programs; and place into employment in high growth, high demand industries with long-term employment opportunities. CS' P2P jobseekers in 2019 were able to explore careers in manufacturing, work on completing a GED and résumé writing, and learn in-demand welding/ manufacturing skills. CS will continue this program.

Job Service and CMJTS have a long-standing history of coordinating services through pathway programs for low-income and New American recipients of public assistance. Recent pathway programs include pre-manufacturing and forklift training, hospitality training for non-English speaking recipients, and CNA training. These pathway programs have been very beneficial to the recipients and have provided access to support services and post-secondary credentials for those enrolled.

Women's Economic Security Act (WESA) grant: CMJTS' Women-on-the-Move project will focus on serving women ages 16 and over, particularly women of color. The project will help 50 women identify better-paying jobs in traditionally male-dominated professions (e.g., manufacturing-related careers, commercial driving), where their talents and interests will be put to good use. The Women-on-the-Move project will then help these women obtain the training necessary to enter these fields. Career coaching and mentorship will be provided by women already successful in nontraditional arenas and it is expected that at least half of the women served will also be enrolled in additional employment and training programs to help them achieve success.

Support Services Grant: CMJTS' Colorful Tomorrow project will provide employment preparation assistance, financial literacy instruction, career training, paid internships, and entrepreneurial skills exploration activities to 25 additional residents of Central Minnesota, particularly those receiving public assistance. All Colorful Tomorrow participants will be People of Color and CMJTS will focus recruitment in the Willmar and Southeast St. Cloud areas.

Immigrant and Refugee Community Workforce Development and Business Partnerships

LEARN & EARN Program: CS has been doing extensive work with the immigrant population in Central Minnesota. In 2016, CS started collaborating with the Coleman Company in Sauk Rapids. A program was started for young adults aging out of high school (ages 18–24) who have been in the country for 1–5 years and have a desire to continue their education. In partnership with the Coleman Company and Adult Basic Education, the LEARN & EARN program was created. Participants spend 4 hours working and 4 hours in training for 7 weeks. Outcomes of the program are improved math and reading scores, work experience, and employment. Almost all participants since 2016 continued their education in the fall by attending Adult Basic Education. Through new grant funding, this summer, CS will be using the LEARN & EARN program model for the construction industry. Currently, two employers have agreed to help develop the

training curriculum and provide work experiences for participants. LWDA 5 hopes to replicate this program.

Community Outreach: The immigrant population has several barriers to obtaining employment. One of the largest barriers for them is transportation. Because of this barrier, CS staff take their services into the community. CS provides services in multiple locations throughout the community. Sites include La Cruz Community, Community Outpost, Quarryview Education Center, and the Islamic Center. CMJTS provides services at the Iftiin Somali Youth Center.

Iftiin Somali Youth Organization

The IFTIIN Somali Youth Organization creates a safe and engaging space for youth within the community. The organization provides resources and services to lead the youth to success. Preparing the students academically, socially, mentally, and physically to be active citizens and pursue higher education. CMJTS youth staff can meet with youth onsite for services.

LaCruz

La Cruz is an apartment complex and townhomes on the southside of St. Cloud that houses a large Somali population. La Cruz has a community center within the apartments and townhomes where residents can visit with onsite CS bilingual staff who provide services. CS staff assist residents with completing job applications, résumés, and mock interviews. CS staff are dedicated to meeting with residents at this location.

Community Outpost

The Community Outpost, also known as the COP House, is located in the southside of St. Cloud as well. The St. Cloud Police Department has partnered with human service providers such as CentraCare and Stearns County. Some of the services offered onsite include WIC, public health nurses and a registered nurse from CentraCare are available for triage. CS bilingual staff connect with community members who are already there to assist with job searching skills, job applications and interviews. The Community Outpost is open to all community members in the Southside neighborhood.

Quarryview Education Center

CS also provides services to immigrants at Quarryview. Jobseekers can get assistance with résumés, cover letters, résumé review, job applications, employer research, interviewing techniques/ practice, job search websites and community resources and services. CS staff are available at Quarryview from 9:30–12:30 a.m. on Wednesdays.

Islamic Center

The Islamic Center of St. Cloud hosts hundreds of students and parents for education and community awareness programs. CS presents youth programs to the Islamic Center, including Youth at Work and CareerONE. Students are recruited to participate in the programs in the summer and fall. CS, in partnership with the Islamic Center, conducted a number of summer youth programs involving career exploration and work-based experiences. In 2019, there were 12 outstanding Islamic Center students that completed work experience hours at the Islamic Center

to mentor another 50 students. In the fall of 2019, the Islamic Center was also a work experience site for a cohort of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) youth who were new to the country.

Immigrant Business Services: Cultural Training, Cultural Accommodations & Communication Solutions

CS is also able to assist businesses with immigrant services. Cargill expanded their production facility in Big Lake. They were struggling to fill 40 new food handler positions. The company's HR manager reached out to CS to receive help with filling those positions with immigrant populations. In less than three weeks Cargill was able to fill 40 positions. Once the immigrant employees started working at Cargill, management encountered issues with communication and cultural gaps. CS bilingual staff created cultural training for supervisors and management to make them aware of the culture of their new employees, and provided training for employees, so they also understand the company's culture, responsibilities, and expectations.

Cintas in St. Cloud reached out to CS seeking help regarding communication barriers with their immigrant population. CS staff members responded to Cintas' request and resolved their issues related to cultural misunderstandings and provided suggestions to ease communication barriers.

BWS Cleaning Services reached out to CS seeking assistance with cultural competency training as a large number of their employees are East African. CS staff provided two hours of cultural competency training to the executive management of the company. After the initial training, BWS requested line managers receive the same training as they felt the training was helpful. Since then, CS has provided continuous cultural competency counsel to BWS.

Spee-Dee Delivery Service was experiencing some communication barriers. A group of employees thought they were handling packages containing pork and alcohol and were ready to walk off the job. Mediation services were provided to their employees by CS, explaining that this was misinformation. In working with both parties, recommendations for policies and procedures to be translated into Somali were given to human resources to resolve issues going forward.

Ensuring stakeholder engagement reflects programming and policies:

- Hold focus groups – fall/winter of 2020
- Surveys to program participants sent and feedback incorporated, when appropriate
- Provide training to staff and partners on populations experiencing disparities, disabilities, offenders, new Americans, older workers, veterans

Region 3 will be exploring the Inclusive Employer Designation being implemented by Rural Minnesota CEP.

5. Describe how performance negotiations will be managed among the local workforce development areas within the region.

Each LWDA will negotiate performance measures.

The CMJTS LWDB expects local service providers to, at minimum, meet the performance standards negotiated with the governor and local chief elected officers (or JPB), as they apply to each program. Historically, LWDA 5 has met or exceeded all performance standards under WIA/WIOA and it is anticipated this will continue.

As required by WIOA, a more collaborative and robust service delivery system has been implemented. This includes common performance measures for core partners.

The CMJTS LWDB will review performance on a quarterly basis, as well as a more in-depth performance evaluation at the close of each program year. Staff will provide board members with a dashboard of key performance indicators, allowing board members to identify and manage potential issues throughout the program year. Specific program performance will be shared with CMJTS LWDB committees on a more regular basis. For example, Youth Program performance will be reported to the Youth Committee at each meeting held every other month, and Adult and Dislocated Worker Program performance dashboards will be reported to the Workforce Development Committee monthly. The CMJTS Business Services coordinators complete and submit a detailed report on employer engagement each month to the board. The board also receives monthly an updated on-the-job training and incumbent worker activity report for review.

The CS LWDB will review performance on a quarterly basis, as well as a more in-depth performance evaluation at the close of each program year. Staff will provide board members with a dashboard of key performance indicators, allowing board members to identify and manage potential issues throughout the program year. Specific program performance will be shared with CS LWDB committees on a more regular basis. For example, Youth Program performance will be reported to the Youth Committee at each meeting held every other month, and Adult and Dislocated Worker Program performance dashboards will be reported to the Program Committee on a quarterly basis.

6. Describe how the region's workforce development efforts will be coordinated with economic development services and providers.

LWDA 5 and 17 staff are active participants at the table in the economic development organizations across Central Minnesota as outlined below:

Economic Development Region 7W:

Central Minnesota Quad Counties CEDS Steering Committee for Region 7W. This is a continuation of the work of the EDR 7W CEDS, which is a necessary document that allows the region to apply for federal grants for emergency disaster and federal economic development

funding. Key players—economic development professionals for the four counties and cities in EDR 7W—are the primary conveners and advocate for this initiative. Partners include community/economic development coordinators, county administrators, county commissioners for 7W, workforce development professionals, private industry, school officials, and required partners under CEDS. The project is ongoing, with Joint Powers Board meetings being facilitated by CMJTS until further decisions on the future of this mission is determined. Once determined, a new board will be established under the rules of the CEDS guidelines. CMJTS will continue to facilitate updates to the CEDS to maintain compliance and ensure that community needs are met.

Wright County Economic Development Partnership (WCEDP). The WCEDP’s mission is to create a healthy and diverse environment for existing, expanding, and new businesses, which in turn creates employment opportunities and enhances the overall economic vitality of the region. Local area businesses are the primary conveners and advocate for this initiative and the WCEDP board chair oversees the project. Wright County cities, municipalities, and infrastructure providers deliver funding through membership dues. Wright County also provides operational funding on an annual basis. Additional partners include community/economic development coordinators, county commissioners for EDR 7W, small business development centers, workforce development professionals, private industry, educators, and city officials. The WCEDP is the primary point of contact for existing, start-up, expanding, and relocating businesses. The Partnership provides technical and financial assistance to businesses and communities within Wright County. The WCEDP provides monthly development and capacity-building seminars on various topics. Past topics include Regional Economic Outlook by the Federal Reserve Bank, Marketing Your Website by U of M Extension, Legislative Updates, A Site Selector’s View of Wright County, and more. The WCEDP also administers a revolving loan fund to provide business development assistance. The involved CMJTS Business Services coordinator is a seven-term board member and two-time board chair. Meetings are held monthly and work with this group will continue. The WCEDP works to identify and assist Wright County businesses with their workforce needs to create a long-term vibrant community through education, training, marketing, and collaboration.

Wright County companies continue to thrive in a strong economy, but a severe worker shortage overshadows their growth and profitability and hampers their desire to expand. Growth will come to those companies that understand their employee needs, partner with existing CareerForce programs, utilize educational institutions at the high school and post-secondary levels, and have leveraged the appropriate combination of automation, productivity strategies, effective leadership, team development, and strategic planning. The group has created a web-based interactive career exploration and workforce pathways tool to assist students, parents, and teachers in making informed decisions about education, training, and local labor market opportunities.

The Greater St. Cloud Development Corporation (GSDC) is a private collaboration of approximately 250 regional business and community leaders within Benton, Sherburne, and Stearns counties in Central Minnesota. The charge of the GSDC is to spearhead the economic development efforts of the greater St. Cloud region by identifying and unifying opportunities to

engage community leaders, foster business growth, expand and nurture the area's talent base, and support the communities that make up the greater St. Cloud region.

Economic Development Region 7E:

CEDS Committee for EDR 7E. Part of the work of the East Central Regional Development Commission (ECRDC) is to develop a CEDS plan, which serves as “an economic roadmap to diversify and strengthen regional economies.” The CEDS Committee is made up of a broad cross-section of public and private interests, and provides input, direction, implementation, and monitoring of the CEDS. The LWDB is an advocate for the CEDS as it impacts workforce development and the labor market. As a partner, the LWDB provides staff support and project guidance. A CMJTS staff representative has been part of this committee since 2009. The five-year CEDS plan was adopted in 2017 and is updated annually. Several projects funded by the EDA through this work in recent years include campus upgrades at Pine Technical & Community College, infrastructure for the Sandstone Medical Campus, Pine Technical and Community College Business Incubator, ECRDC Business Park Marketing, and Polaris Research and Development Facility, Wyoming, MN.

GPS 45:93 (GPS) is a nonprofit, regional economic development consortium in EDR 7E dedicated to growing and attracting businesses with high-paying jobs to East Central Minnesota. It takes its name from the point of latitude and longitude at which the four original counties in the partnership meet—the point of opportunity. The mission statement of GPS is: Collaborate to strengthen the regional economy by providing a regional approach to workforce development, business attraction, retention, and expansion—acting as a conduit for members and the region to access resources and educational opportunities.

GPS membership includes economic/community development and workforce development professionals, cities, counties, businesses, banks, chambers, utilities, K-12 and higher education, the Mille Lacs Band, and community organizations concerned about the economy and workforce. The partnership believes “when one wins – all win.” The group meets monthly and is hosted at member locations throughout the region. The organization has a board of directors composed of representatives from a member of the governing body for each participating city and county, post-secondary and K-12 education entities, DEED, and others, which may include staff from each participating city and county, Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures, chambers of commerce, economic development entities, the CMJTS Workforce Development Board, financial institutions, private industry, utilities, and community-based organizations. Non-voting members include elected officials from the Minnesota Legislature, U.S. Congress, and the Initiative Foundation in Little Falls. A number of current and former LWDA 5 board members and CMJTS staff are key members of the GPS group and DEED’s regional workforce strategy consultant also attends.

GPS has several key committees that meet regularly to help accomplish its goals.

The Workforce Committee that meets monthly and is co-chaired by the representative CMJTS staff member and the regional workforce strategy consultant. This committee supports and promotes regional workforce resources such as those offered through CareerForce and its partners, as well as projects and initiatives such as Construct Tomorrow. For the past two years

the Workforce Committee has hosted events entitled “Innovative Approaches to Career Readiness.” During 2019, the committee awarded small grants with funding from the Initiative Foundation to three local high schools as seed funds for their innovative career-readiness projects.

The Broadband Committee actively pursues opportunities to improve the reach of high-speed broadband across our rural area. The committee has worked on several opportunities with Blandin and GPS and its members participate in and have held offices with the Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition.

GPS holds a membership in the Community Venture Network which provides an opportunity for member communities to hear presentations from and be connected directly with small to medium-sized businesses looking to locate or relocate in rural communities. This is one tool GPS uses for business expansion in the region. GPS and its Marketing Committee works to promote the region as a whole and finds ways to showcase each community. The committee has hosted several Familiarization Tour (FAM Tour) events to showcase the region for business recruitment with site selectors.

Economic Development Region 6E:

The Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC) is the RDC for EDR 6E. It administers state and federal programs, coordinates multi-jurisdictional activities, and provides technical assistance to government, businesses, and local organizations to maintain or enhance the quality of life in Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, and Renville counties. CMJTS has represented workforce development on the board of commissioners, advocating for and providing input for workforce development issues. Each of the four counties are represented by a county commissioner, a city representative, and a township representative. In addition, cities with populations over 10,000 are entitled a member, and two school board representatives are required. Other special interest members are chosen to meet the needs of the federal EDA requirements for Economic Development Commissions. The MMDC currently has 21 commission board member seats and meets five times a year.

Willmar Lakes Area Vision 2040. Strategy #2 Workgroup: Economic Diversity. This group conducts strategic planning for the future of the Willmar Lakes Area (Willmar and Kandiyohi counties). The overall plan outlines four goals and 21 strategies which align with strategic plans that are underway, while others are new and address the region’s future as a center of excellence. Strategic Goal Two is to strengthen the region’s occupational diversity through a strategic mix of workforce training, economic measurement, enhanced career options, and support for entrepreneurs. This sub-committee developed a promotional video of manufacturing companies in Kandiyohi County and conducted a tour of businesses for Willmar High School teachers and students. Willmar has a high percentage of Latino- and Somali-owned businesses in its downtown area. For its next project, the committee is exploring ways to help small minority-owned businesses thrive and grow. CMJTS holds a seat in this subcommittee, representing workforce development. Key members include city and county elected officials and staff, the

Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission, the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce, Ridgewater College, and the MinnWest Technology Campus.

Regarding economic development services and providers, each partner within CareerForce locations have varying roles for staff participating in reaching out and partnering with economic development.

7. Describe any regional coordination of administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate. Also, please describe regional coordination of transportation and other supportive services.

Each local area has well-established cooperative agreements in place with multiple partners/stakeholders and those will continue.

Regionally, the Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) is the main source of cost arrangements for all partners in CareerForce. Additional cost sharing agreements or cooperative agreements have been created when applicable. CS currently contracts with CMJTS to provide accounting and fiscal services. Short-term human resource service contracts have been drafted. A contract with Vocational Rehabilitation Services to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) is in place for both LWDA 5 and 17.

Wagner-Peyser has not had an additional coordination of cost arrangements outside of the cost sharing agreement through the IFA requirements. Eligibility-based programs provide the transportation and support services to our customers. If Wagner-Peyser customers are co-enrolled in Title 1 eligibility-based programs, they would have access to transportation and support services.

Communication between all partners when clients are co-enrolled ensures there are no duplication of support services, but rather a blending and braiding of program funds to best serve the client.

CareerForce staff participate on local committees regarding transportation, housing, and childcare to help be part of the solution. The committees address issues in a collaborative effort.