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To: Local Workforce Area Signatory Officials
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From: Nina Stagers, AED – Workforce Development

Subject: **Regionalism Strategies**

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Regionalism is a cross-collaborative strategy between local areas, regions, and states that holds significant potential for strengthening workforce systems and fostering talent-to-workforce pipelines. Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) should utilize regionalism to enhance partnerships, create collaboration across workforce systems, and enhance economic opportunities for South Carolinians.

How to Use This Guidance

This memorandum serves two functions: 1) provide strategies to develop workforce structures through regionalism, and 2) list some existing cost-saving examples within South Carolina’s LWDAs and other states for Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) to consider. This guidance is also intended to stimulate discussions for innovative regionalism practices. LWDBs are encouraged to engage with other LWDBs to develop innovative practices between South Carolina’s four planning regions, twelve LWDAs, and neighboring states.

Context within WIOA

South Carolina identified four WIOA planning regions (Link Upstate, Central, Pee Dee, and South Coast) to align common workforce development activities and resources across LWDAs, based on shared population centers, labor force conditions, commuting patterns, and industry compositions. The establishment of these regions allows for a deliberate framework for coordination among regions through the regional planning process. See [20 CFR §§ 679.200-679.210](#).

LWDAs within planning regions are encouraged to use the WIOA regional planning process to develop innovative strategies to achieve the ultimate goals of serving job seekers and employers. See [20 CFR §§ 679.500-679.520](#). To realize regionalism as a practical strategy within the planning process, it is vital to recognize existing and potential regionalism tactics allowable under WIOA.

Strategies to Realize Regionalism

➤ **ADVANCE INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS**

Under WIOA, LWDAs must establish and develop relationships and networks with large and small employers and their intermediaries and develop, convene, or implement industry or sector partnerships. See [20 CFR §§ 678.435](#). WIOA defines “industry partnerships” as a workforce collaborative, convened by or acting in partnership with a state board or local board, that organizes key stakeholders in an industry cluster into a working group that focuses on the shared goals and human resources needs of the industry cluster. Collaborating and sharing best practices for developing partnerships with industry clusters is a practical avenue for LWDBs to strengthen talent-to-workforce pipelines.

LWDBs should utilize Labor Market Information (LMI) to prioritize industry partnerships across regions. LMI resources highlight commonalities within South Carolina’s regions despite different regional economies. For instance, according to 2023 LMI data, four industries (such as Manufacturing and Healthcare/Social Assistance) consistently ranked among the top five largest industries in terms of employment in each of South Carolina’s four regions. For more information, see the [Labor Market Information](#) page on the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce (DEW) website: <https://dew.sc.gov/>.

LWDBs are also encouraged to consider the [Next Generation Sector Partnerships Initiative](#). This initiative provides a [Toolkit and Training Manual](#) for building industry partnerships. As of 2022, a companion [Rural Field Guide](#) for developing industry partnerships is also available.

➤ **UTILIZE SECTOR STRATEGIES**

A sector is a general segment of the economy that contains similar industries. An example is the transportation sector, which includes train, trucking, airline, and other similar industries. Sector-trained job seekers can apply relevant skills across multiple industries.

For example, by utilizing sector strategies, the workforce system can directly align occupational skills training and other workforce development services with the needs of employers in a sector. Fostering sector-focused skills attainment can drive development of the skilled employees necessary for South Carolina employers to thrive and compete in evolving economies. For job seekers, this can yield better job outcomes, job performance, and job satisfaction through increased earnings and improved job quality for upskilled job seekers. For employers, the capabilities of sector-trained employees can lead to increased employee productivity and employee retention and the reduction of other operating costs due to the minimized training costs.

Fostering sector-focused skills attainment for job seekers gives LWDBs the opportunity to outreach to employers about business services allowed under WIOA, including the following examples:

- Customized assistance or referral for assistance in the development of a registered apprenticeship program
- Innovative workforce investment services and strategies for area employers, including employee skills upgrading

LWDBs are encouraged to partner with employers across industries to develop and execute sector strategies.

See [20 CFR §§ 678.435-678.440](#). For more information, see the following resources: "[Sector Strategies: Aligning the Skills of the Workforce with the Needs of Employers](#)"; "[Promoting the Adoption of Sector Strategies by Workforce Development Boards Under WIOA](#)"; and "[How are Sector Strategies Connecting People with Work?](#)"

➤ **EXPAND VIRTUAL SERVICES**

WIOA encourages the workforce development system to increase its capability and capacity to deliver services to job seekers and businesses through virtual modes.

Some possibilities include:

- Virtual job fairs and hiring events
- Online program orientation sessions (recorded and/or live sessions)
- Live online job search, resume, and other workshops
- Online one-on-one job interviews
- Online one-on-one case management sessions

Virtual services can be an effective regionalism strategy with cost-saving implications. For example, LWDAs can coordinate to host virtual job fairs with employers and job seekers. Outside of the typical technological expenses, costs are minimized compared to in-person job fairs where certain expenditures, such as travel expenses, are avoided.

LWDAs have **free** access to the Brazen Virtual Event Platform which allows attendees to engage with and connect to employers and/or SC Works staff virtually for hiring events, opportunity events, community resource events, interviews, workshops, and more. The platform allows for multiple concurrent events across South Carolina.

For more information, see the following resources: "[Virtual and Remote Learning and Service Solutions](#)"; "[Rural Outreach Strategies: Connecting Workers and Employers to the Workforce System](#)"; [TEN 13-20](#); and State Instruction 20-12, [Virtual Events in the Brazen Platform Policy](#).

➤ **EMPOWER JOB SEEKERS THROUGH EDUCATION**

South Carolina's four WIOA planning regions were identified with specific criteria, including whether the areas have the appropriate education and training providers, such as institutions of higher education and technical education schools, and the prospect of educational attainment for job seekers. See State Instruction 15-08, [Identification and Alignment of WIOA Planning Regions](#).

LWDBs can empower job seekers to gain employment across regions by collaborating to enhance workforce development programs within South Carolina's educational institutions. Through South Carolina's colleges and universities, job seekers can utilize state and federal funding pools, such as Lottery Tuition Assistance, Pell Grants, SC Win Scholarships, and discretionary grants like the apprenticeship expansion funding, to pursue their academic goals and gain certificates, degrees, and diplomas. Furthermore, Adult Education Programs continue to develop and implement Integrated Education and Training (IET) Career Pathways that are developed with the SC Technical College System and other workforce training providers to meet local and regional workforce area needs. Leveraging these resources increases access to education, training, and supportive services, resulting in greater credential attainment and a more highly skilled workforce. For more information, see South Carolina's [College and Higher Education](#) webpage on SC.gov, [South Carolina's Commission on Higher Education](#) (CHE) website, and the [SC Technical College System](#) website.

LWDBs should align approved programs to the training needs for jobs relevant in today's market, such as cybersecurity, electric vehicle manufacturing, infrastructure, energy efficiency, and advanced manufacturing jobs. See [South Carolina's WIOA State Plan](#). Additionally, regional engagement by LWDBs in recruiting more education providers to enter the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) can improve consumer choice for job seekers and give job seekers more options to pursue training opportunities. For more information regarding the ETPL, see [TEGL 08-19](#) and State Instruction 20-03, Change 2, [Eligible Training Provider List](#).

➤ **CONSIDER INNOVATIVE FUNDING MECHANISMS**

WIOA encourages leveraging partner resources and allows the braiding of funds in order to fill gaps in the service needs of individuals. Braiding occurs when multiple funding streams, separately and simultaneously, provide specific services that support an individual with different needs while retaining the ability to track and account for funds separately. Through braiding of funds, LWDBs have an opportunity to use WIOA funds more efficiently and are encouraged to share their processes with other local areas. See the US Department of Labor's (DOL) webinar, "[Yes, WIOA Can! Effectively Leveraging or Braiding Multiple Funding Sources with WIOA](#)." See also [TEGL 21-16](#), [TEN 13-20](#), and "[Resource Leveraging & Service Coordination to Increase Competitive Integrated Employment for Individuals with Disabilities](#)" (a joint letter issued by DOL and other federal agencies) and its [attachment](#), and State Instruction 21-03, [TAA and WIOA Dislocated Worker Program Co-enrollment Policy](#).

➤ **FOSTER ACCESS TO SC WORKS CENTERS AND SERVICES**

Strategic placement of SC Works centers is critical to ensuring access to programs and services. Local areas are encouraged to collaborate in establishing new access points, such as outreach locations and connection points, for strategic placement with the location of job seekers in mind. By doing so, job seekers who are far from a comprehensive SC Works center can conveniently access services closer to their homes.

Local areas should consider the following:

- Locate SC Works centers on public transit routes and/or in areas where data shows more individuals are in need of services.
- Consider current locations in neighboring local areas when choosing new access point locations.
- Initiate events at local gathering places, such as grocery stores, faith-based institutions, barber shops, and shopping centers.

- Leverage Connection Points—a site established by DEW, or by LWDBs in collaboration with DEW area directors and regional managers, to house outreach materials and/or electronic access to workforce system services. For more information, see State Instruction 19-03, Change 1, [SC Works Centers and the One-Stop Delivery System](#).

Collaborative Examples

LWDBs should consider collaborative efforts in carrying out activities due to their effects on strengthening workforce systems, including cost-saving effects. Examples of collaborative cost-sharing exist, and some include:

- Shared Grants and Contracts
 - Pee Dee and Upper Savannah local areas aligned supportive service policies by applying together to the [H-1B Rural Healthcare Grant](#), in which the Pee Dee Council of Governments (COG) was the lead applicant.
 - Upper Savannah COG applied for DOL's Career Dislocated Worker Grant funding [on behalf of a consortium of five workforce development areas](#) across the state.
 - Upstate and Greenville released a joint Request for Proposal (RFP) and entered into [a joint Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Operator contract](#) with a service provider.
- Regional Job Fairs
 - North Carolina & South Carolina held the "[Job Fair of the Carolinas](#)" through a cross-partnership between NC Works and SC Works.
 - Massachusetts held the "[New England Regional Job Fair](#)," a virtual job fair where all six New England states were involved.
- Collaborative Outreach
 - In Virginia, local boards worked together to conduct business outreach to ensure industry needs were met while minimizing the number of programs and staff contacting employers. See, "[State and Local Efforts to Strengthen Workforce System Governance and Planning under WIOA](#)," p. 29.
- Sharing Best Practices and Documents
 - LWDBs may consider sharing appropriate documents (e.g., local policies, standard operating procedures, and other various materials) and best practices for administrative functions which could reduce administrative costs and labor.

NOTE: LWDBs must be mindful of all applicable regulations, policies, and requirements when utilizing other local area documents.

- Cost-Sharing Staff Positions
 - Local areas may consider positions that could be shared between local areas. Some shared staff examples include: SCWOS Coordinator, Service Provider Accountant, Business Services Lead, and SC Works Operator.

These examples show avenues where local areas and regions can minimize and/or share administrative/operational costs while still providing services effectively.

Regionalism's Future

By focusing on these strategies and increased collaboration, LWDBs can create more efficient and effective workforce development systems. However, this is not an exhaustive list. As South Carolina's workforce systems evolve, additional strategies may arise. Local areas should continue to share best practices and cross-collaborate to ensure continuous improvement to the SC Works system for South Carolina's job seekers and employers.

Questions may be directed to WorkforcePolicy@dew.sc.gov.