

Program Year 2025 - 2028 Regional Plan

East Bay Regional Planning Unit

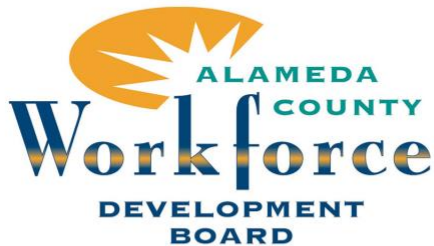
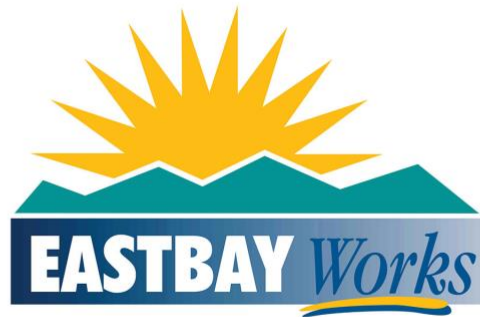


TABLE OF CONTENTS

		PAGE
I.	INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW	3
	A. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act	3
	B. Regional Plans and the WIOA Planning Structure	3
	C. California’s Strategic Workforce Priorities	4
	D. Overview of the EAST BAY RPU and the Region	5
	E. Approach to and Context for Plan Development	6
	F. Program Year 2025-28 Regional System Priorities	6
II.	ANALYTICAL OVERVIEW OF THE REGION	8
	A. Analysis of Labor Force Participation and Employment and Unemployment Data	9
	B. Analysis of the Educational and Skill Levels of the Workforce, the Current Needs of Employers in the Region, and Relevant Skill Gaps	12
	C. Analysis of Industries and Occupations with Existing and Emerging Demand	14
	D. Trends Impacting the Future Workforce	16
III.	REGIONAL INDICATORS	19
	A. Regional Indicators and Associated Metrics	19
	B. Impact of Indicators and Metrics on Service Delivery	21
IV.	FOSTERING DEMAND-DRIVEN SKILLS ATTAINMENT	23
	A. Targeted and Strategic Industries	23
	B. Sector and other Industry-Focused Initiatives	26
	C. Strategies to Communicate with Regional Employers	30
V.	ENABLING UPWARD MOBILITY FOR ALL CALIFORNIANS	32
	A. Working with Businesses that Provide Quality Jobs	32
	B. Shared Target Populations and Targeted Service Strategies	33
VI.	CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY	35
VII.	ACCESS AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE	39
VIII.	ALIGNING, COORDINATING, AND INTEGRATING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES	42
	A. Regional Service Strategies	42
	B. Regional Administrative Cost Arrangements	44
IX.	PROGRAM YEAR 25-28 REGIONAL SYSTEM PRIORITIES	46
X.	ATTACHMENTS	51
	A. Stakeholder and Community Engagement Summary (Attachment 1)	52
	B. Public Comments that disagree with the Regional Plan (Attachment 2)	n/a
	C. Signature Page (Attachment 3)	n/a

I. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

With the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014, Congress moved the national workforce system in a new direction in terms of how to approach economic and labor market demands. While establishment of local workforce areas over the last four decades has always taken into account local labor markets, WIOA recognizes that economies tend to be regional, spilling easily over jurisdictional boundaries that commerce and labor sheds finds inconsequential. WIOA's recognition of regional economies gave rise to California's establishment of Regional Planning Units (RPUs), which represent groups of local workforce areas that work collaboratively to develop strategies reflecting regional economic needs of business and the workforce. In accordance with federal and state guidance, the East Bay RPU (to be referred to as EBRPU, henceforth) has developed this four-year Regional Plan to guide strategic initiatives throughout Program Years (PY) 2025-28, which covers July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2029.

A. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

Passed by Congress with a wide bipartisan majority, WIOA is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in a global economy. WIOA represents the most recent version of federal workforce legislation providing funding to states and local areas to administer and operate workforce development programs. WIOA was preceded by the Job Training Partnership Act (active from 1982 to 2000) and the Workforce Investment Act (active from 2000 to 2015).

WIOA requires that a workforce development board (WDB) be established in each local workforce development area (LWDA). The area's chief local elected officials appoint members to the WDB. Local workforce development boards are business-led and the majority of members must come from the business community. Required WDB members also include representatives from labor, education, economic development, and specific federally funded workforce programs. The chief local elected officials may also select representatives from other groups, such as, community-based organizations, to sit on the WDB.

While the PY 2025-28 Regional Plan addresses the programs, services, and activities of many organizations that derive their primary funding from a wide range of federal, state, and private programs, it is WIOA that requires the development and publication of the Plan and that prescribes its core content.

B. Regional Plans and the WIOA Planning Structure

The EBRPU's Regional Plan is best understood within the context of a three-tiered planning structure envisioned by WIOA that requires development of plans at the state, regional, and local levels.

State Plans: Under WIOA, state plans communicate the vision for the statewide workforce development system. WIOA planning requirements aim to foster effective alignment of federal investments across job training and education programs, in order to coordinate service delivery among programs for shared customers; improve efficiency; and ensure that the workforce system connects individuals with high-quality job opportunities and employers. Cross-program planning promotes a shared understanding of the workforce needs within each state. California's PY 2024-2027 Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan represents agreement among the WIOA core program and other partners and serves as the framework for the development of public policy, fiscal investment, and operation of the state workforce and education systems.

Regional Plans: In states such as California, where Governors have established workforce planning regions encompassing one or more LWDAs, regional plans are required. Local WDBs within the region participate in a planning process that describes elements such as: analysis of regional labor market data, development and implementation of sector initiatives for targeted industries and in-demand occupations; coordination of workforce services with regional economic development services and providers; and establishment of regional service strategies, including use of cooperative service delivery agreements.

Local Plans: The local plan is intended to serve as a four-year action plan to develop, align, and integrate the local area's job-driven workforce development systems and provide a platform to achieve the local area's vision and strategic and operational goals. Features of the local plan include: coordination among economic development, education, and workforce partners to build a skilled workforce through innovation in, and alignment of, employment, training and education programs; implementation of job-driven strategies and services through the local career center system; and delivery of education and training to ensure that individuals, including youth and individuals with barriers to employment, have skills necessary to compete in the job market and that employers have a ready supply of skilled workers.

WIOA requires that Local Plans be incorporated into the Regional Plan. Therefore, the PY 2025-28 EBRPU Regional Plan includes the PY 2025-28 Local Plans developed by the region's four local WDBs.

C. California's Strategic Workforce Priorities

California's Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan describes the state's priorities for the public workforce system. Under the leadership of the Governor and the Secretary of the Labor and Workforce Development Agency, California's vision for the future of workforce development is centered on the establishment and growth of a workforce system that promotes opportunity, job quality, and environmental sustainability for all Californians. The state is committed to developing a workforce system that enables economic growth and shared prosperity for employers and employees, especially those with barriers to employment, by investing in industry partnerships, job quality, and

meaningful skills attainment. One area in which the California Workforce Development Board (CWDB) pursues these aims is through its “High Road” programming. High Road refers to a “family of strategies” for achieving a participatory economy and society by aligning workforce, economic policy, and different interests with long-term goals of environmental sustainability, high-quality jobs, and a resilient economy. High Road emphasizes the complementary nature of these aims over the long term. In practice, High Road policy builds upon areas where the interest of employers (in trained and productive workers), workers and jobseekers (in good quality and accessible jobs), and environmental protection (for a sustainable future for all) overlap to create pathways to high-quality jobs while raising the profile of existing ones.

In consideration of the practical implementation of High Road principles in workforce development policy, the CWDB describes in the current State Plan four distinct “flavors” or styles of intervention. These interventions are directly relevant to High Road projects but also inform, to a greater or lesser extent, all of CWDB’s workforce efforts. They include: (1) lifting all workers to the “High Road”, (2) professionalizing precarious work (i.e., employment that is temporary, non-standard, and insecure, often with poor pay and no protection); (3) democratizing access to high-quality, middle-skill jobs; and (4) participatory planning for a low-carbon economy.

In accordance with the requirements of WIOA, both the EBRPU Regional Plan and the four associated Local Plans support the State Plan priorities by:

- Maintaining a dual focus on providing programs and services that meet the needs and support the goals of businesses and job seekers/workers.
- Concentrating on industry sectors which drive growth and prosperity within local labor markets and regional economies.
- Targeting jobs that offer career advancement opportunities and that lead to positions that pay family-sustaining wages and provide pathways to self-sufficiency and the middle class.
- Committing to the adoption and implementation of strategies and processes that support environmental sustainability and climate resilience through workforce development.

D. Overview of the EAST BAY RPU and the Region

The East Bay Region of California is a sub-region of the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area, one of the most productive and prosperous regions on the planet. The EBRPU is a partnership of member workforce development boards representing Alameda County and the City of Oakland, and Contra Costa County and the City of Richmond. It is one of the state’s fifteen regional planning units established by the CWDB following the implementation of WIOA.

The four workforce development boards comprising the East Bay RPU have a long-standing regional partnership pre-dating WIOA, under the *EASTBAY Works* brand. Since 1997, the adoption of a common moniker has helped to create a unified brand that helps

achieve many of California's goals for regionalism, as it establishes a singular identity that is recognizable to businesses and job seekers and can be used to promote workforce development services and initiatives. Directors, and managers representing programs serving adults and youth of each of the four Boards meet regularly to discuss challenges, identify solutions, promote implementation of regional strategies.

It should be noted that East Bay region, EBRPU, and EASTBAYWorks are used interchangeably throughout the PY 2025-28 Regional Plan. Also of note are the following abbreviations for the local boards that are used throughout the Regional Plan: Alameda County Workforce Development Board (ACWDB); Oakland Workforce Development Board (OWDB); Richmond Workforce Development Board (RWDB); Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County (WDBCCC).

E. Approach to and Context for Plan Development

To support development of the PY 2025-28 Plan, the region contracted with experienced workforce and economic development subject matter experts to design the stakeholder engagement process, analyze labor market and workforce data, facilitate community forums, and craft the language of the plan. Local board directors, managers, and staff were active during every stage of the plan development. The content of the Plan contemplates myriad opportunities and challenges that are expected to persist over its four-year span. Several of these are highlighted in Section II, *Analytical Overview of the Region*.

F. Program Year 2025-28 Regional System Priorities

During the process of developing the PY 2025-28 Regional Plan, business and industry leaders, community members, regional stakeholders, and system partners were invited to participate in a series of discussions regarding the direction of the local workforce system over the next four years. As a result of these discussions, the following priorities have been identified:

- Develop strategies to reach businesses of all types and sizes.
- Enter into partnerships with businesses.
- Define job quality and what constitutes a good job in the East Bay.
- Advise on strategies for managing new generations of workers.
- Identify and implement effective strategies to connect under-served populations with services leading to employment.
- Implement programs that provide income support during skills training and career preparation.
- Identify core employability skills and incorporate them into career services and training.
- Examine opportunities to contextualize basic skills and other core skills into instruction.
- Improve strategies to expose current and future generations of workers to careers.

- Build a wider coalition of workforce development system stakeholders.
- Develop resilience strategies to minimize impacts of disruptions to the labor market.
- Align strategies across plans.

Section IX of this plan summarizes these and other regional issues, strategies, approaches, and key considerations that workforce system leadership and system partners will examine over the four-year course of this plan.

II. ANALYTICAL OVERVIEW OF THE REGION

In late 2024, EASTBAY Works commissioned an analysis of key economic, demographic, and labor market data within the region. The product of this analysis, completed by the East Bay Economic Development Alliance (EDA), has fully informed this section of the PY 2025-28 Regional Plan by addressing: employment and unemployment data; educational and skill levels of the workforce, current business needs, and relevant skill gaps; and analysis of industries and occupations with existing and emerging demand. EDA notes that its analysis primarily utilizes data from Lightcast, a global leader in labor market analytics, which derives workforce data and insights from official government sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau, Bureau of Economic Analysis, and Bureau of Labor Statistics, as well as real-time labor market trends of job posting platforms.

EDA's analysis is too lengthy to fit within the Plan's narrative and includes an extensive series of graphs and tables. Select information from EDA's report, along with a few charts and graphs, is included within this section. The full version of the analysis is available at www.eastbayworks.com.

Overview of Current East Bay Workforce and Labor Market

The East Bay has a strong reputation as a highly productive, dynamic, and innovative economy with a skilled and educated workforce serving a wide range of businesses in the greater Bay Area. For decades, the region has been a major hub for innovation and entrepreneurship, anchored by top-tier institutions such as UC Berkeley, California State University-East Bay, ten community colleges, and three national laboratories, giving employers direct access to abundant talent. It is, in many ways, not surprising that Lightcast forecasts that the East Bay economy will outpace statewide job growth of 7 percent, achieving an 8 percent increase between 2023 and 2033.

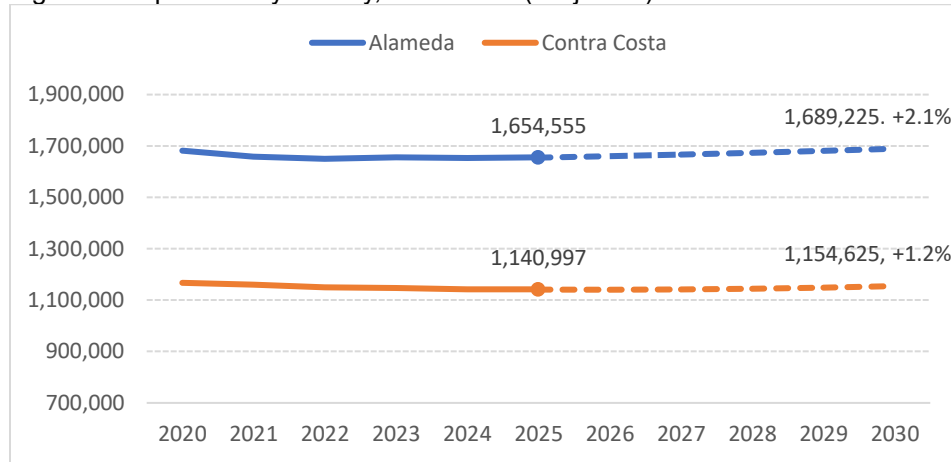
While highly productive and diverse, the future of jobs is complex and evolving. Like most advanced economies, the East Bay economy is undergoing a profound transformation driven by rapid advances in artificial intelligence, high performance computing, and automation. These innovations are fundamentally changing how work is organized and the types of workers and skills needed now and in the future. Post-pandemic shifts have altered where work is performed, and challenges related to the Bay Area's high cost of living and access to education and training resources will continue to exacerbate economic disparities if proactive interventions are not made. Tracking current and emerging workforce needs, planning for regional economic development efforts, and aligning resources for strategic action will be crucial to creating an environment where all East Bay workers and residents can thrive and access the Bay Area's tremendous opportunities.

Population and Migration Trends

According to the California Department of Finance, the East Bay's population was 2,788,495 as of January 2024. Alameda County's population represented nearly 60

percent of the regional population and Contra Costa County constituted 40 percent. Between 2020 and 2024, the population declined by nearly 59,800 residents, or 2 percent: a slightly higher rate of decline than the state overall at 1 percent. Over the next five years (2025-2030), the State of California projects the population in Alameda and Contra Costa counties will grow by 2.1 percent and 1.2 percent, respectively, while it projects an increase of 1.4 percent statewide (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Population by County, 2020-2030 (Projected)



Source: CA Department of Finance, 2024.

Both the region and the state are experiencing a decline in birth rates. In 2023, the East Bay recorded approximately 27,300 births, down from 30,000 in 2019, marking a 9 percent decrease. Alameda County experienced an 11 percent decline, while Contra Costa County saw a 5 percent drop. Statewide, birth rates fell by 11 percent between 2019 and 2023.

The state projects that this downward trend will continue over the next decade, with birth rates expected to gradually increase after 2035. The state further projects that birth rates will continue to decrease over the next 10-year period and will gradually increase after year 2035.

As of 2022 (the year with the latest available data from the Internal Revenue Service), the East Bay saw a negative net migration of nearly 31,000 residents, indicating that more people moved out of the region than moved in that year.

A. Analysis of Labor Force Participation and Employment and Unemployment Data

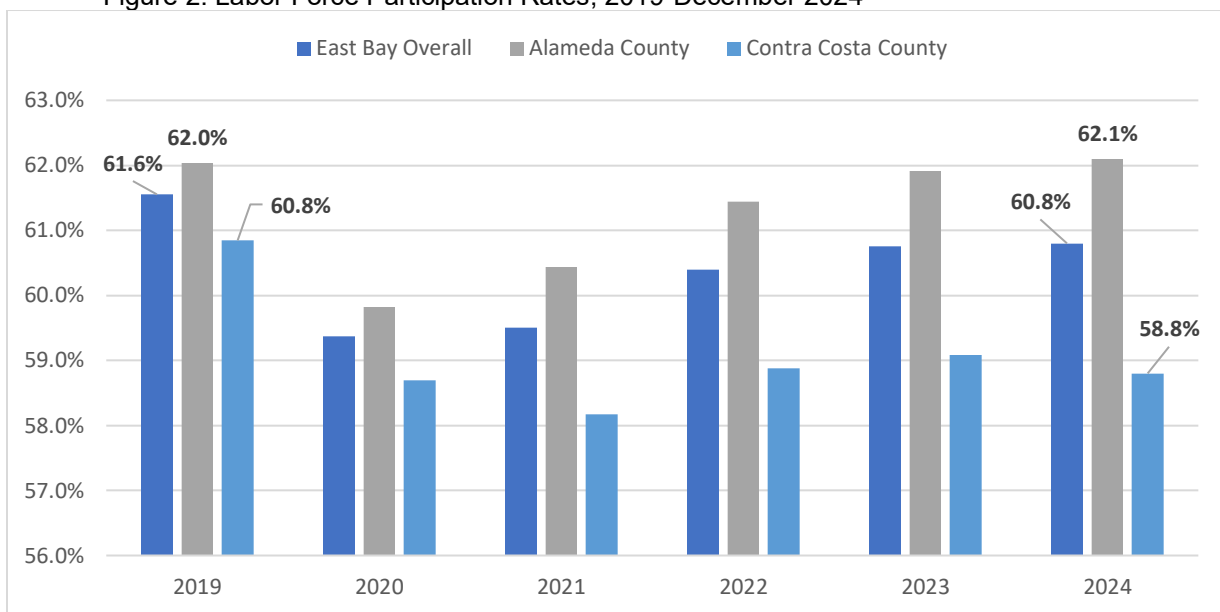
The following data and charts illustrate labor force participation and unemployment in the region:

The Labor Force Participation Rate

This rate is the percentage of the population ages 16 and older who are employed or actively looking for work, as a share of the total non-institutionalized civilian working-age population. The labor force participation rate is an important economic indicator of current labor market trends and a metric to gauge the overall health of the economy.

As of December 2024, the East Bay’s overall labor force participation rate was 60.8 percent (62.1 percent in Alameda County, and 58.8 percent in Contra Costa County), as shown in Figure 2. While the East Bay overall and Alameda County have made a full recovery since pre-pandemic (2019) levels, Contra Costa County is experiencing a slight lag.

Figure 2. Labor Force Participation Rates, 2019-December 2024



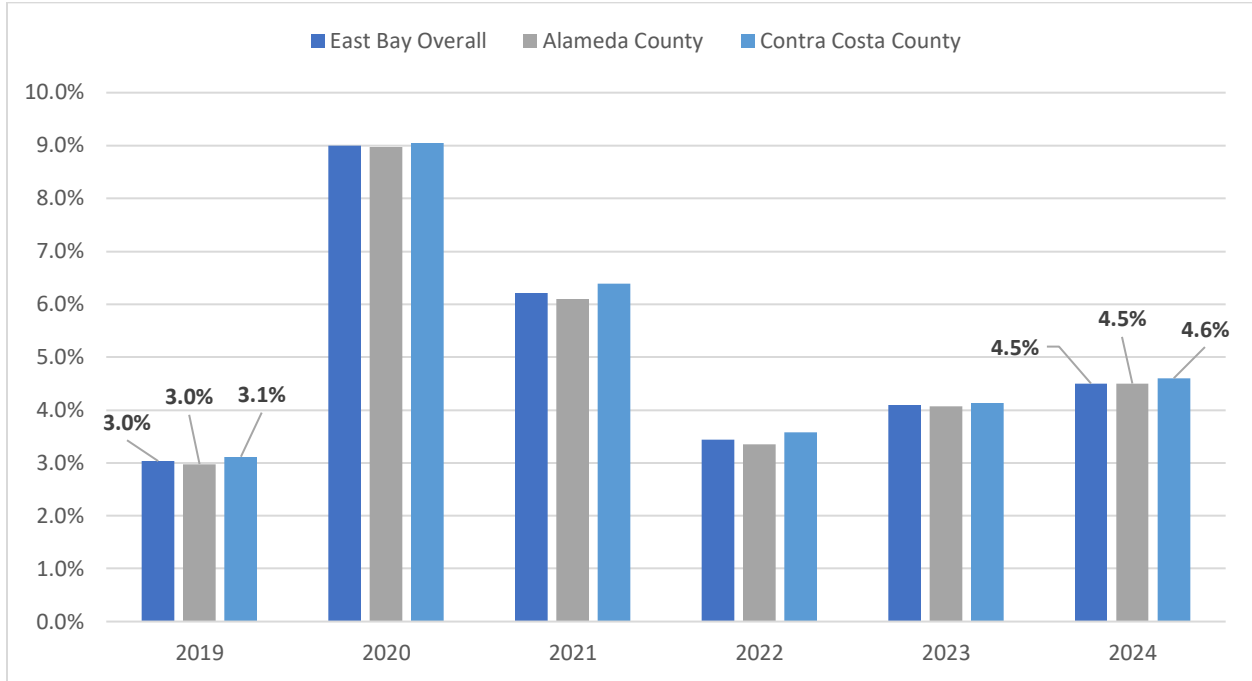
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; Lightcast, 2025.

The Unemployment Rate

This rate measures the percentage within the labor force who are currently without a job. Unlike the labor force participation rate, the unemployment rate does not take into account those who have given up looking for work. Nonetheless, it is helpful to look at both rates together to better understand an economy’s real employment status. A low unemployment rate and high labor participation rate, in general, indicate a healthy economy with plentiful job opportunities and low economic distress.

As of December 2024, East Bay’s unemployment rate was 4.5 percent. Alameda County’s unemployment rate stood at 4.5 percent, while Contra Costa County was slightly above at 4.6%. As shown in figure 3, unemployment rates are gradually recovering from pre-pandemic levels, albeit a bit slower in Contra Costa County.

Figure 3. Unemployment Rates, 2019-December 2024



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; Lightcast, 2025.

In the East Bay, the “prime working age” cohort (aged 25 to 54) of the currently unemployed stands at 67.4 percent. It is slightly higher in Alameda County (68 percent), and lower in Contra Costa County (66.6 percent). One-quarter of the unemployed are found in the 55 years and older cohort in the East Bay overall and two counties. See Figure 4.

Figure 4. Percentage of Unemployed by Age, September 2024

	East Bay Overall	Alameda County	Contra Costa County
Unemployed Persons	65,771	39,221	26,550
< 22	2.4%	2.2%	2.6%
22-24	5.0%	4.9%	5.0%
25-34	24.9%	25.6%	23.9%
35-44	23.7%	23.6%	23.7%
45-54	18.8%	18.7%	19.0%
55-59	9.9%	9.8%	10.0%
60-64	8.5%	8.4%	8.5%
65+	6.9%	6.7%	7.3%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; Lightcast, 2024.

Looking at the share of unemployed by race, the white population constituted 47.8 percent of unemployed East Bay residents, 44.4 percent in Alameda County, and 52.7 percent in Contra Costa County. The second largest share were among the Asian population found highest in Alameda County at 32 percent. The percentage of unemployed Black residents stood at 22 percent for the East Bay overall and in both counties. See Figure 5.

Figure 5. Percentage of Unemployed by Race, September 2024

	East Bay Overall	Alameda County	Contra Costa County
Unemployed Persons	65,771	39,221	26,550
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1.4%	1.4%	1.5%
Asian	28.6%	32.0%	23.7%
Black or African American	22.2%	22.2%	22.1%
White	47.8%	44.4%	52.7%
Total	100%	100%	100%

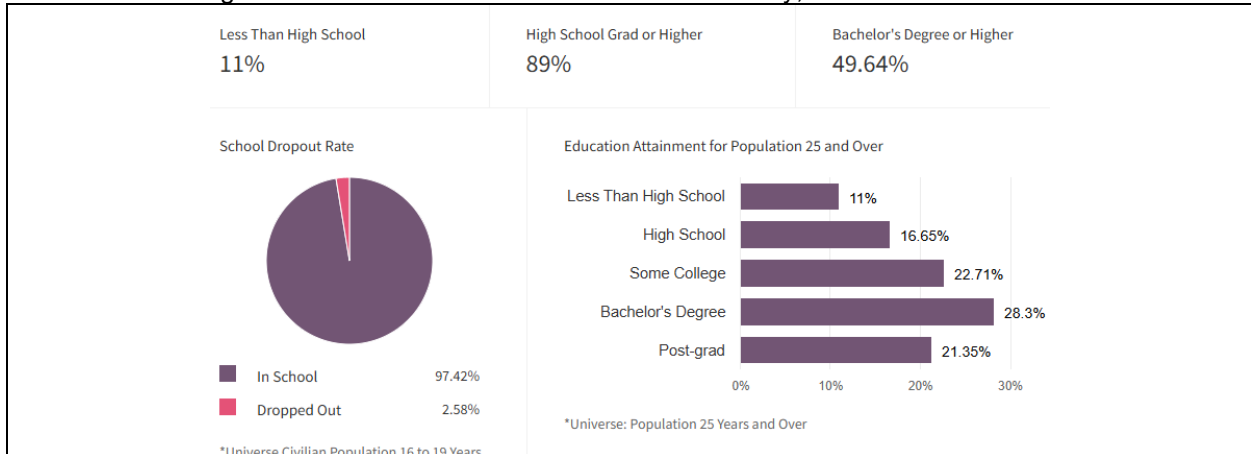
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; Lightcast, 2024.

B. Analysis of the Educational and Skill Levels of the Workforce, the Current Needs of Employers in the Region, and Relevant Skill Gaps

The East Bay region benefits from a highly-educated workforce with nearly one-half and 44 percent of residents holding a Bachelor’s Degree or higher in Alameda County and Contra Costa County, respectively (Figure 6 and Figure 7). In 2023, the East Bay saw 43,782 graduates from higher education institutions. About half of these graduates came from UC Berkeley and CSU-East Bay, the region’s four-year public institutions offering undergraduate and graduate programs. Overall graduation rates increased by 4 percent between 2019 and 2023.

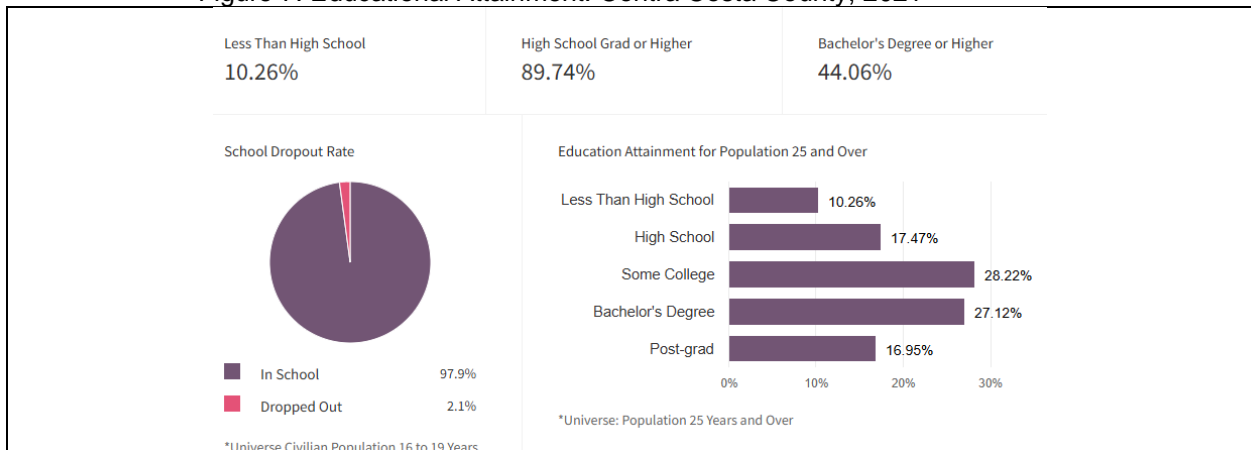
Graduation rates at East Bay community colleges have generally risen, with positive trends at Contra Costa, Chabot, and Las Positas colleges. However, rates at Diablo Valley and Ohlone colleges have been somewhat volatile. Laney College’s rates have remained relatively stable.

Figure 6. Educational Attainment: Alameda County, 2021



Source: U.S. Census ACS 5-Year Survey, 2021; Social Explorer.

Figure 7. Educational Attainment: Contra Costa County, 2021



Source: U.S. Census ACS 5-Year Survey, 2021; Social Explorer.

In-Demand Degrees and Skills

Focusing on in-demand degrees and skills is crucial for several reasons. Employers are more likely to hire individuals with qualifications that match the current market needs. Understanding the types of in-demand degrees and skills can improve job prospects and career stability. Additionally, when educational and workforce institutions focus on these in-demand areas, they can tailor their programs to meet job market requirements, ensuring graduates are well-prepared for their careers. Training in high-demand fields helps individuals fill skill gaps, helping both local companies and communities drive economic growth.

Lightcast analyzes online job postings of popular job boards to provide valuable insights into real-time needs sought by regional employers. This analysis shows a two-year trend of the top-posted jobs by minimum education levels, in-demand degrees, specialized skills, and foundational or "soft" skills that are most frequently in-demand by employers. Additional details on in-demand skills can be seen within EBEDA's full report.

C. Analysis of Industries and Occupations with Existing and Emerging Demand

Following are highlights from EBEDA’s analysis of major industries, occupations, and in-demand job postings.

Industry Employment

As of 2023, there were 1.3 million jobs in the East Bay. The largest industries, in terms of employment, are led by Health Care and Social Assistance (15 percent of total jobs); Government (13 percent); Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (9 percent); Manufacturing (9 percent); and Retail Trade (8 percent). Combined, these industries constitute 714,824 jobs or 54 percent of the East Bay’s total employment.

From 2018 to 2023, the region saw a decrease of nearly 5,000 jobs, or 0.4 percent. This decline was mainly due to losses in Retail Trade (-9,500 jobs, -8 percent), Wholesale Trade (-7,800 jobs, -16 percent), and Accommodation and Food Services (-6,400 jobs, -6 percent): sectors hit hardest by government-mandated closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. Recovery in these industries has been slow.

Conversely, industries that experienced the greatest job gains were in Health Care and Social Assistance (19,800 jobs, 11 percent growth); Transportation and Warehousing (10,900 jobs, 25 percent growth); Manufacturing (10,711 jobs, 10 percent growth); Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (4,700 jobs, 4 percent growth); and Utilities (1,565 jobs, 28 percent growth).

As shown in Figure 8, the industries with the greatest concentration or highest location quotient (LQ) in the East Bay are in Utilities (1.6), Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (1.32); Construction (1.18); Health Care and Social Assistance (1.17); Management of Companies and Enterprises; and Manufacturing (1.12). Location quotient is a way of understanding the industries that are unique and specialized in a regional economy (compared to the national average). Industries with a high LQ are typically (but not always) export industries, which are important because they bring money into the region, rather than circulating local dollars around the economy, which is more typical for retail or restaurants.

Figure 8. Industry Employment Concentration: East Bay, 2023

Industry	2023 Employment Concentration (LQ)
Utilities	1.60
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1.32
Construction	1.18
Health Care and Social Assistance	1.17
Management of Companies and Enterprises	1.14
Other Services (except Public Administration)	1.13
Manufacturing	1.12

Information	1.07
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1.06
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1.05
Transportation and Warehousing	0.97
Educational Services	0.93
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	0.90
Retail Trade	0.89
Accommodation and Food Services	0.88
Government	0.88
Wholesale Trade	0.86
Finance and Insurance	0.70
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	0.14
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0.07

Source: U.S. BLS (QCEW), Lightcast, 2024.

Industry Projections

Lightcast projects that over the next ten years (2023-2033), the top 3 growing industries will be in Health Care and Social Assistance (37,400 jobs, 19 percent growth); Manufacturing (9,600, 8 percent growth); and Transportation and Warehousing (9,600, 17 percent growth). These industries also have high employment concentration with a location quotient above 1.0, which demonstrates that they are more concentrated in the East Bay than in the nation (Figure 9).

Additionally, industries that are projected to grow with high LQs are found in Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (3,100 jobs, 3 percent growth); Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (3,100 jobs, 3 percent growth); and Utilities (1,000 jobs, 14 percent).

Figure 9. Industry Projections: East Bay, 2023-2033

Industry	2023 Jobs	2033 Jobs	# Change	% Change	2033 LQ
Health Care and Social Assistance	201,099	238,505	37,406	19%	1.25
Manufacturing	113,398	123,009	9,611	8%	1.19
Transportation and Warehousing	55,196	64,750	9,554	17%	1.02
Accommodation and Food Services	97,036	104,645	7,609	8%	0.92
Government	166,407	172,020	5,613	3%	0.90
Other Services (except Public Administration)	73,702	78,494	4,792	7%	1.17
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	24,664	27,807	3,142	13%	1.09
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	122,710	125,844	3,134	3%	1.22
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	24,386	25,657	1,271	5%	1.05
Utilities	7,178	8,214	1,036	14%	1.81
Construction	89,608	90,235	627	1%	1.15
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	2,123	2,468	345	16%	0.16
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	310	247	(63)	(20%)	0.05
Unclassified Industry	183	10	(172)	(94%)	0.00

Educational Services	30,973	30,530	(443)	(1%)	0.87
Information	26,084	25,385	(699)	(3%)	0.96
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	71,814	70,288	(1,525)	(2%)	0.85
Management of Companies and Enterprises	22,247	20,335	(1,912)	(9%)	0.93
Retail Trade	111,210	107,017	(4,193)	(4%)	0.88
Finance and Insurance	37,525	32,580	(4,945)	(13%)	0.58
Wholesale Trade	41,225	34,234	(6,991)	(17%)	0.71
Total	1,319,077	1,382,275	63,198	5%	

D. Trends Impacting the Future Workforce

As part of conducting the foregoing analysis, the following trends impacting the future of the East bay workforce were identified.

Upskilling and Reskilling in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

Digital transformation helps drive productivity growth and increase value creation for employers and consumers alike. For instance, in the manufacturing and retail industries, automation and AI have boosted efficiency, transformed supply chains, eliminated certain repetitive tasks and errors, and opened resources for innovation, allowing workers to focus on strategy, creativity, and problem-solving.

Employers are not dramatically eliminating existing occupations but are, instead, redefining job roles and skills. They are focusing on upskilling workers in areas like digital literacy, cybersecurity awareness, data analytics, and collaborative software tools to maintain productivity and cohesion as remote/hybrid work becomes the norm. Beyond technical proficiency, soft skills like critical thinking, collaboration, and communication remain crucial in any workplace (*McKinseys’s Global Survey on Digital Transformation*).

Impacts from a Carbon-Neutral Transition in Contra Costa County

The potential closure of refineries in Contra Costa could result in significant job losses in the coming years, impacting the regional economy and local communities, which will lose substantial tax revenue and economic activity, as refineries are major employers and taxpayers. Closure of refineries can also be disruptive to local and regional supply chains, affecting numerous industries dependent on petroleum products. Additionally, the lack of transition plans can leave communities unprepared for the economic and social impacts of closures. Addressing these potential challenges requires comprehensive planning, investment in alternative industries, and support for affected workers and communities.

As the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors recently adopted a new General Plan and Climate Action Plan, the County is committed to addressing historic injustices and disproportionate impacts that certain communities have endured. The transition for both workers and communities to growing industries in the clean energy sector is envisioned to, potentially, be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to benefit from and contribute to investments in renewable energy generation and storage, manufacturing of electric

vehicles, residential and commercial building decarbonization, and workforce development. It will happen while promoting and supporting growth in clean energy sectors in underinvested areas that will create a just transition to industries that support the clean energy transition, produce new revenue for local communities, provide high road replacement jobs for displaced refinery workers, and create new job opportunities for the communities that have been disproportionately impacted due to their proximity to heavy industrial areas.

The vision for developing a clean energy manufacturing cluster was first adopted in 2019 as part of Contra Costa County's Northern Waterfront Economic Development Initiative Strategic Plan. The Northern Waterfront Economic Development Initiative Strategic Action Plan was adopted by Contra Costa County and the seven cities along the Northern Waterfront after a decade-long, community-driven effort. The Northern Waterfront Economic Development Initiative is a regional cluster-based economic development strategy with a goal of creating 18,000 new jobs by 2035. The Initiative leverages existing competitive advantages and assets by focusing on five targeted clusters (advanced transportation, advanced manufacturing, biomedical/biotech, agricultural technology and food processing, and clean technology). The hallmark of this initiative is the collaboration among the County and seven partner cities to enhance the economic vitality of the region.

One of the catalysts for this transition on Contra Costa County's Northern Waterfront is a global market assessment for next-generation batteries (the cheaper, safer, and more energy-dense alternative to Li-ion batteries, which is critical to energy transition and decarbonization) that projects the global market at \$400 billion by 2030 (Source: McKinsey). Only a handful of next-generation battery technology research and manufacturing hubs will emerge around the world over the next 5 years to meet this demand, and many believe in the potential for the Northern Waterfront to be in position to become one of these hubs. The Northern Waterfront benefits from its industrial corridor and closeness to a dense goods movement network, including seaports, airports, rail and highways, that create access to global markets. The Bay Area region already hosts the research heft, a growing network of energy startups, an established venture capital ecosystem, and a large market. All these assets give the Northern Waterfront a head start in creating a durable next-generation battery technology research and manufacturing hub in the Bay Area, and exporting products to both overseas and U.S based markets.

In 2022, complementing Contra Costa County's Northern Waterfront Economic Development Initiative, the California Legislature established a Green Empowerment Zone (GEZ) for the Northern Waterfront area focused on the attraction and development of a clean energy industry ecosystem. Both Contra Costa County and the City of Richmond Workforce Development Boards are GEZ Board members ensuring inclusion of high road jobs strategies in planning and implementation efforts.

As discussed below, EBRPU participates in The Bay Area Jobs First Collaborative, under the California Jobs First Initiative, whose goal is to create quality jobs and bolster California's 13 regions' resilience to climate and global challenges. Through the Collaborative's Catalyst Program, Alameda Contra Costa, Santa Clara, Solano, and San

Mateo Counties plans to implement the Bay Area High Road Manufacturing Initiative. The project will develop a high-road manufacturing ecosystem by combining landscape analysis with three high-impact pilot projects and a stakeholder-developed code of conduct. It will test new strategies, build consensus around workforce and community standards, and marshal new resources to grow a Bay Area manufacturing sector centered on job quality, equity, and sustainability that drives the state toward achieving climate goals. Contra Costa's Northern Waterfront is being targeted to host one of the project sites focused on next generation battery manufacturing.

Uncertainty Around Federal Investments in Climate and Infrastructure

In the backdrop of the aforementioned aspirations and concurrent with the development of this report, California has experienced the largest and most expensive natural disaster in the history of the United States. Although the devastating wildfires in Los Angeles County have not had many direct or immediate impacts on the East Bay and broader Northern California region, the approach, scale, and scope of this disaster, and the way local, regional, state, and federal agencies and organizations will work together around recovery and resiliency efforts, remains an open question.

III. REGIONAL INDICATORS

The California Workforce Development Board has established “regional indicators” to assess coordination and measure progress within California’s 15 RPUs. The indicators serve to track processes and activities utilized by regions, providing a foundation for regional approaches that align with the needs of businesses in key sectors, as well as those of job seekers.

Regions must choose at least two of the following indicators:

Indicator A: The region has a process to communicate industry workforce needs to supply-side partners.

Indicator B: The region has policies supporting equity and strives to improve job quality.

Indicator C: The region has shared target populations of emphasis.

Indicator D: The region deploys shared/pooled resources to provide services, training, and education to meet the target population's needs.

A. Regional Indicators and Associated Outcomes and Metrics

The EBRPU has selected the following indicators:

Indicator A: The region has a process to communicate industry workforce needs to supply-side partners.

Indicator D: The region deploys shared/pooled resources to provide services, training, and education to meet the target population's needs.

Indicator A is new and was selected due to the recognition by local boards that one of their primary roles is to communicate labor market and other demand side information to their contracted service providers and other supply-side partners. This function is critical to aligning supply-side resources with labor market demand and emerging industry trends.

Given the long history of collaboration among the four local workforce development areas that operate under the EASTBAYWorks brand, Indicator D was a natural choice. This indicator is continued from the EBRPU’s 2023 Biennial Modification to the PY 2021-24 Regional Plan. Leadership of the four local boards believe that it remains important to invest in service provider capacity and staff professional development to meet the needs of workforce system clients.

Outcomes

Planned outcomes for Indicator A (communicating industry workforce needs) are expressed through the following two-part goal:

The East Bay region has systems in place to:

1. Regularly communicate industry workforce needs to supply-side partners.
2. Evaluate utility, relevance, and applicability of shared content.

Planned outcomes for Indicator D (shared/pooled resources) are expressed through the following three-part goal:

1. Deliver on-going professional development and capacity building training to funded service providers
2. Track funded service providers' participation in regional professional development and capacity building training
3. Evaluate effectiveness, relevance, and applicability of professional development and capacity building training

Metrics

Regional leadership has approved the following metrics, which focus on five benchmarks for each of the two chosen indicators. The region will use these to measure and track its progress on outcomes.

Metrics for Indicator A (communicating industry workforce needs) include:

1. Number of Informational Bulletins Disseminated: As a measure of access, the number of messaging notices disseminated to a defined group of system partners and stakeholders.
2. Utility of Content Shared: As a measure of effectiveness, seventy-five percent (75%) of survey respondents will rate content as relevant and applicable to their work.
3. Increased Understanding of Priority and Emerging Industries: As a measure of capacity and effectiveness, 75% of survey respondents will indicate an increased understanding of priority and emerging industries,
4. Increased Understanding of In-Demand Skills: As a measure of capacity and effectiveness, 75% of survey respondents will indicate an increased understanding of in-demand skills.
5. Increased Understanding of In-Demand Occupations: As a measure of capacity and effectiveness, 75% of survey respondents will indicate an increased understanding of in-demand occupations.

Metrics for Indicator D (shared/pooled resources) include:

1. Number of Training Events: As a measure of availability and access, the number of annual sessions during which staff can participate in training, whether in-person or through other modalities.

2. Number of Training Attendees: As a measure of impact on overall system capacity, the total number of contracted service providers' and workforce system partners' direct services staff who annually participate in training.
3. Percentage of Contracted Service Providers Represented: As a measure of engagement, the percentage of service providers who staff attend annual training.
4. Training Participant Evaluation of "Overall Effectiveness of Training:" As a measure of customer satisfaction concerning training effectiveness, seventy-five percent (75%) of participants will rate training as effective.
5. Training Participant Evaluation on "Ability to Apply Information Learned:" As a measure of customer satisfaction regarding training relevance and utility of information provided, 75% of participants will indicate that they can apply information learned to their work.

B. Impact of Indicators and Metrics on Service Delivery

Local workforce system leaders chose to concentrate their joint efforts on sharing resources for staff training, as this outcome holds significant promise to increase the effectiveness of local boards, service providers, partners, and their frontline staff who deal directly with customers. Outcomes and impacts resulting from activities associated with Regional Indicator D (shared/pooled resources) chosen during the last planning cycle include the following:

Processes Established to Track and Evaluate Progress

The Regional Organizer (RO) managed a state-funded Regional Plan Implementation 5.0 grant. Processes and activities included:

- Development of a regional capacity building and professional development program for WIOA-funded service providers and other supply side partners (e.g., community-based organizations, adult education, community colleges, regional occupational programs, other public service agencies); and
- Centralized administration of vendor procurement; proposal evaluation and selection; contracting, fiscal oversight; marketing and promotion; and collection of participant evaluations. The latter was instrumental in tracking and evaluating the selected metrics.

Identified Results

The region met all performance metrics for the selected indicator. The training program was broadly appreciated and relevant, with most participants indicating they would recommend the training to colleagues.

Impacts and Lessons Learned

The effects of the training were practical, as were lessons learned about the primary target audience for professional development and training.

- Attendees were overwhelmingly appreciative of the opportunity to learn from subject matter experts on topics directly related to their day-to-day work with clients.
- Workforce system leaders and RPU representatives learned that it can be challenging to directly contact front-line staff, as the volume of communication they receive and their workloads can be overwhelming. System leaders also learned that it was insufficient for Program Managers to convey invitations to front-line staff or to expect WIOA-funded service providers' Site Managers to do the same. Despite turnover in service providers through procurement cycles and staff turnover, it became clear that building and maintaining an up-to-date email contact list of frontline staff was imperative.
- Through the project, it was also learned that it is important to make attendance mandatory. Unfortunately, many staff were resistant to attending due to being overwhelmed by their workload.
- It also became clear that it is insufficient to simply deliver training on trauma-informed case management when staff themselves are burdened by multiple traumas that can be triggered in a training that is not designed to support individuals to process trauma.

As activities linked to Indicator A (communicating industry workforce needs) are new and have not yet been implemented, an assessment of impacts linked to this indicator will be summarized in the next iteration of this Plan.

IV. FOSTERING DEMAND-DRIVEN SKILLS ATTAINMENT

The EBRPU has played a key role in the development of sector initiatives aligned with growth and other significant industries in the East Bay region and elsewhere in the Greater Bay Area. Regional representatives have facilitated dialog among industry leaders, while also fostering communication between employers and the workforce development system. As a result, stronger linkages between workforce and training agencies have been developed with businesses in key sectors and new career pathway programs have been developed to prepare job seekers for careers in the region's most promising sectors.

A. Targeted and Strategic Industries

The four workforce development boards in the East Bay have identified the following eight industries positioned for priority and strategic focus over the four-year cycle represented by this Regional Plan:

- Construction (NAICS 23)
- Healthcare (NAICS 62)
- Manufacturing (NAICS 31-33)
- Maritime (NAICS 3366 and NAICS 4883)
- Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (NAICS 54)
- Information (NAICS 51)
- Government (NAICS 90)
- Transportation & Warehousing (NAICS 48-49)

In addition to being among the largest industry sectors in the East Bay economy, these driving industries provide jobs and stimulate economic activity in other sectors. By prioritizing strategic investments and focus on these industries, the workforce system helps to maintain existing jobs and creates new employment opportunities, reducing unemployment and improving economic opportunities for East Bay residents. The variety of target industries also ensures a diverse economic base, which reduces economic vulnerability to downturns and increases long-term resilience. The following information highlights opportunities in each target sector.

Construction

- The construction industry contributes significantly to the East Bay economy, accounting for 89,600 jobs, or 7 percent of the East Bay's total employment.
- Major construction employers (250+ workers) include specialty trade contractors as well as residential developers. Construction employers are distributed evenly throughout East Bay communities.
- The construction industry provides a wide range of occupations, with over 60 percent associated with construction (with median hourly earnings of \$35/hour), followed by

management (\$70/hour) and office/administrative support (\$26/hour), and installation, maintenance, and repair occupations (\$32/hour).

- Growth is expected to remain stable due to strong housing demand, despite high costs for labor and construction materials in the Bay Area. However, there is a noticeable shortage of skilled labor in trades, and strong demand persists for project managers, green energy installers, maintenance technicians, and business development professionals.

Healthcare and Social Assistance

- In terms of employment, healthcare and social assistance is the largest industry in the East Bay economy, accounting for 201,100 jobs or 15 percent of the region's employment.
- Major general medical and hospitals, which typically employ over 1,000 workers, are distributed evenly throughout East Bay communities.
- The health care industry provides a wide range of occupations and wage levels, with one-third of all occupations in home health/personal care (\$17/hour), which is experiencing great demand over the next five years. Jobs in healthcare diagnosing (\$80/hour), as well as health technologists and technicians (\$36/hour), are also expected to increase. Counselors, social workers, and other social service specialists (\$30/hour) also remain high in demand.

Manufacturing

- In terms of employment, manufacturing is the fourth largest industry in the East Bay economy, accounting for 113,400 jobs or 9 percent of the region's employment. The East Bay's dominance in advanced manufacturing is driven by the region's specialized talent, research and development capabilities, and highly dynamic and complex innovation ecosystem.
- Major manufacturing employers are concentrated in Alameda County, with the highest density of auto, biomedical, and semiconductor manufacturing companies located in Fremont which is located in Southern Alameda County, adjacent to Silicon Valley. The proximity to the Bay Area's technology hubs in Silicon Valley and San Francisco make the East Bay an ideal location for co-locating manufacturing headquarters and production facilities.
- The manufacturing industry provides a wide range of occupations and wage levels, with 15 percent employed as assemblers and fabricators (\$24/hour), which is experiencing great demand over the next five years. Software and programming occupations (\$73/hour) are also expected to grow rapidly.

Maritime

- Direct jobs within the maritime industry represent a very small portion of the East Bay labor market, although the presence of two major seaports (Port of Oakland & Port of Richmond) and several other ancillary waterfront geographies in the East Bay region make it an important regional industry.

- Maritime employers mostly include navigational services, with some shipbuilding and marine cargo handling companies.
- The maritime industry includes many occupations related to goods movement, logistics, and transportation. Ship engineers (\$89/hour) have the highest wage, followed by general and operational managers (\$62/hour), Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers.

Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services

- In terms of employment, Professional, scientific, and technical services (PSTS) constitute the third largest industry in the East Bay economy, accounting for 122,700 jobs, or 9 percent of the East Bay's total employment.
- Major PSTS employers (300+ workers) include a range of testing laboratories, consulting services, and computer systems services. PSTS employers are distributed evenly throughout East Bay communities.
- The PSTS industry provides a wide range of occupations and wage levels. The top three occupations are computer occupations (\$69/hour), business operations specialists (\$46/hour), and engineers (\$62/hour). Over the next five years, growth of these occupations is projected to remain relatively stable in this industry.

Information

- As of 2023, the information industry accounts for 26,100 jobs, or 2 percent of the East Bay's total employment.
- Major employers (250+ workers) include software companies located in Walnut Creek, Oakland, Emeryville, San Ramon, and Pleasanton.
- The information industry provides a wide range of occupations and wage levels, with the top three constituting software and web developers (\$73/hour), sales representatives (\$41/hour), and computer and information system managers (\$95/hour). This industry is projected to see a slight decline over the next five years, though the numbers will be small. This is partly because the industry is not as large in the East Bay compared to other parts of the Bay Area.

Public Administration and Education

- In terms of employment, government is the second largest industry in the East Bay economy, accounting for 166,409 jobs or 13 percent of the region's employment which includes public sector employment at the local, state, and federal levels, including public education.
- Major employers include public administration offices, higher education institutions, and local school districts and public utilities.
- The industry provides a wide range of occupations and wage levels, with the top three in educational instruction and library occupations (\$34/hour), office and administrative support (\$26/hour), and management occupations (\$70/hour). Over the next five years, public sector employment is projected to remain stable or increase slightly.

Transportation and Warehousing

- In 2023, the transportation and warehousing industry accounted for 55,200 jobs or 4 percent of the region’s employment.
- Major employers include the regional transportation systems as well as postal/goods movement handlers.
- The transportation and warehousing industry employs a wide range of occupations and wage levels. The top three occupations are driver/sales workers and truck drivers (\$24/hour), laborers and material movers (\$20/hour) and passenger vehicle drivers (\$26/hour). Over the next five years, occupations in this industry are projected to grow.

Local Board Priorities

Each of the four local workforce development boards further prioritizes target industries on two levels: priority sectors and other strategic sectors. Local WDBs emphasize these industries in terms of training and pilot training programs to address the workforce needs of these sectors.

Local Board	Local Priority Sectors		Other Strategic Sectors
ACWDB	Manufacturing	Green Sector	Maritime
	Healthcare/ Social Assistance	Professional Scientific Technical Services	
	Public/ Government	Transportation/ Logistics	
WDBCCC	Construction	Healthcare/ Social Assistance	Advanced Transportation
	Transportation/ Logistics	Professional/ Business Services	
	Manufacturing	Childcare/ Early Childhood Education	
OWDB	Healthcare/ Social Assistance	Energy/Climate	Manufacturing
	Information Technology	Transportation/ Logistics	Childcare
	Public/ Government	Construction	
RWDB	Construction	Transportation/ Logistics	Manufacturing
	Healthcare/ Social Assistance	Public/ Government	Information Technology
			Green Sector

B. Sector and Other Industry-Focused Initiatives

The EBRPU is currently working closely with two mature partnerships in the manufacturing and health sectors: the Association of Manufacturers Bay Area (AMBayArea) and the Bay Area Health Workforce Partnership (BAHWP). As described

below, the EBRPU has an extensive history of engagement with both of these partnerships, providing financial and infrastructure support, networking, and thought leadership as the partnerships have convened industry and developed programs.

Key contributions of the regional workforce system to sector initiatives in manufacturing and healthcare include the development of career navigation tools and support for creation of training programs for in-demand occupations. In addition, the EBRPU helps to advance sector initiatives in the region by facilitating communication between directors of these partnerships and career centers staff to share LMI data, answer questions, discuss training opportunities, and build providers' and partners' knowledge about the region's priority sectors and capacity to prepare and refer competitive client applicants.

Manufacturing Sector Partnership

The Association of Manufacturers Bay Area (AMBAYArea) includes approximately 60 dues-paying employer partners from the nine county Bay Area, with many more businesses being engaged through events and communications. The primary focus of the collaborative is to ensure that manufacturing thrives in the Bay Area. The EBRPU has been engaged with and actively supported AMBAYArea since its inception. AMBAYArea has pursued an array of strategies and activities focused on increasing awareness of and expanding access to career opportunities in advanced manufacturing, aligning available training activities with employer demand, and linking manufacturing employers with prospective employees.

Healthcare Sector Partnership

The Bay Area Health Workforce Partnership (BAHWP) is an employer-led initiative carried out with the support of community and education leaders, which seeks to meet current and future workforce needs of healthcare employers, expand employment opportunities for local workers, and strengthen the regional economy. The BAHWP employs a range of strategies to achieve these goals, including: increasing and diversifying the pool of qualified healthcare workers; helping trained individuals to secure jobs to meet regional demands; aligning the needs and priorities of employers in health profession education and training programs; systematically increasing work-based learning opportunities for K-16 and health professions students; building a data-driven rationale for changing current systems, infrastructure development, and sustaining healthcare workforce initiatives; and developing and advocating for policy solutions that eliminate barriers to increasing workforce and education capacity, investment, and sustainability.

Other Industry-Focused Initiatives

Other specialized and industry-focused projects in the East Bay region, include, but are not limited to the following:

Regional Equity and Recovery Partnership (RERP): This project, which supports three of East Bay's target sectors, has been implemented through a state-funded grant. Under this grant program, the region's local boards collaborate with community college systems to develop and enhance curricula. Two of the East Bay boards are focusing on healthcare occupations, two on advanced manufacturing, and one on building and construction trades. The Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County serves as the fiscal agent for the project, which includes all four EBRPU partner Boards.

Prison to Employment (P2E): A state level Corrections-Workforce Partnership Agreement is intended to strengthen linkages between the state workforce and corrections systems in order to improve the process by which the formerly incarcerated and justice-involved individuals reenter society and the labor force. The partnership's goal is to improve labor market outcomes for justice-involved individuals by creating a systemic and ongoing partnership between rehabilitative programs within California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and the state workforce system by bringing CDCR under the policy umbrella of the State Workforce Plan. In the East Bay, all four local boards are participating in this project, working closely with a network of partners to prepare justice-involved individuals for employment in key sectors, including construction, manufacturing, and logistics.

California Jobs First Initiative: In 2021, California launched this \$600 million initiative to support economic regions throughout the state in creating quality jobs and bolstering their resilience to climate and global challenges impacting the state's diverse regional economies. The Bay Area Jobs First Collaborative includes participation of economic development, education, workforce development, labor, and business. The target sectors identified by the collaborative are generally aligned with those represented in this Regional Plan. Coordination with this initiative is described in Section VIII of this Plan.

Residential Decarbonization Project: The Bay Area Residential Building Decarbonization project is a state-funded High Road Training Partnership (H RTP) initiative. It was formed to bring together local government agencies, community-based organizations, unions, and contractors to consider the impacts of new public investment and improve job quality across the industry. Residential decarbonization involves converting gas appliances and HVAC systems to all-electric versions and weatherizing homes to improve energy efficiency by upgrading insulation, weather sealing, windows, and doors. Increasing demand for residential decarbonization projects will likely create more employment opportunities in this industry. Additionally, this work is being enhanced with Bay Area Jobs First Catalyst Program funding.

Next Generation Battery Manufacturing: There are multiple efforts underway to develop next generation battery manufacturing capacity in the Northern Waterfront area of Contra Costa County. This multi-stakeholder effort intends to harness resources including technology transfer from local federal labs (Lawrence Berkeley and Lawrence Livermore National Labs), business attraction from local and regional economic development, the Bay Area Jobs First Catalyst project and activation plan, regional WDBs, community colleges, organized labor, and community organizations.

Maritime Trades and Water Transportation Careers Program: This High Roads Training Partnership program was conceived as an inclusive sector partnership and aims to increase access to high-road jobs in the marine trades and water transportation industries. It will establish linkages to post-secondary education, including the California State University Maritime Academy. In addition, the project will increase access for underserved populations, including but not limited to, English language learners, immigrants, re-entry job seekers, and youth. Alameda County WDB serves as the fiscal agent for the project, which includes both the Oakland Workforce Development Board and Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa. The project also includes roles for community-based organizations, organized labor, and industry partners.

Childcare and Early Childhood Education: Funded by a local parcel tax, Contra Costa County is addressing the high demand for childcare and early childhood education programs. WDB of Contra Costa County is a leading partner on the community engagement, strategy, and program design of multiple new youth centers sited throughout the county and career pathway programs that include new apprenticeships and other work-based learning strategies, as well as, supporting increased wages to enhance the quality of these critical jobs.

Civil Engineering Degree Apprenticeship Pathway: The Civil Engineering Degree Apprenticeship Pathway is a part of a statewide expansion in partnership with Caltrans, regional public transit agencies, Workforce Development Boards and community colleges. The 5-year, high-road aligned, articulated training program starts with Bridge programming to lay a strong foundation in math, followed by civil engineering classes offered at multiple community colleges; transfer to 4-year degree programs; and entry into a registered apprenticeship. Program elements include Student Support Specialists, who are embedded in the classroom; a Bridge Program; stipends for Bridge students; paid summer internships (e.g., university research projects and employer-based activities); and the opportunity to enter a registered apprenticeship with an employer partner.

Advanced Transportation: WDB of Contra Costa County is partnering with the Contra Costa Transit Authority on numerous advanced transportation projects to advance next generation mobility strategies using autonomous and electric vehicles including the roll out of charging infrastructure and the development and enhancement of vehicle and charging station maintenance training programs. Partners include the regional transit authority, local transit agencies, local K-12 districts and community colleges, Contra Costa County and Richmond WDBs, private sector research and development firms and GoMentum Station, the nation's largest secure facility dedicated to connected and automated vehicle testing is at the center of cutting-edge transportation research. The innovative technology being explored and tested at GoMentum Station will redefine the next generation of transportation, bring unprecedented mobility options to people, and help advance traffic safety towards zero fatalities and reduce carbon emissions.

Bay Tech Career Initiative: The CWDB grant to the Oakland WDB project offers training in Cybersecurity, Salesforce Administration, and Data Science for in and out of school youth. It also provides participants paid work experience and/or OJT training. The project will develop an employer advisory council and create opportunities for employment in entry-level positions with the City of Oakland.

RichmondBUILD: Richmond WDB has a YouthBuild grant that includes MC3 certification and leads participants to the adult-serving RichmondBUILD program. RichmondBUILD has direct entry agreements with the carpenters' union, including open admissions for five individuals, one of whom must be female. The program also has an agreement with the East Bay's electricians' union for participants to forego the testing requirement (a perennial barrier to entry), and proceed directly to the interview phase.

Brownfield Environmental Remediation Training: Richmond WDB has received numerous grants to train and equip workers with the skills necessary for the remediation of local EPA-designated brownfields. Programs focus on environmental clean-up and restoration projects and address critical workforce shortages for environmental services.

C. Strategies to Communicate with Regional Employers

While the East Bay region spans two sizable, densely populated counties, overall, it is compact by California standards. The local boards within the region, therefore, share many businesses, which are actual or potential workforce system customers. Many workers commute across municipal and county boundaries, further highlighting the fact that businesses in the East Bay are regional employers.

When multiple workforce boards attempt to work together to promote their services to businesses that may need support in various locations, a common problem is disparate messaging and branding, which creates recognition problems and may cause confusion among business customers. The local boards of the East Bay recognized this problem many years ago and implemented a strategy that continues to support their efforts to communicate with regional employers. This strategy starts with the common *EASTBAYWorks* branding used by all four boards as the face of the local workforce development delivery system, along with co-branding as America's Job Centers of California, which link the regional system to the larger statewide network of workforce assistance centers. Business can access the *EASTBAYWorks* website to review services available for businesses and secure contact information for local business services representatives. Services provided to businesses served by multiple boards may be funded through WIOA Title I formula programs, regional grants, partner programs, or a combination of these resources.

Specific strategies that boards utilize to communicate with businesses throughout the region include:

- Participation in and collaboration with sector partnerships, such as the Association of Manufacturers Bay Area (AMBayArea) and the Bay Area Health Pathways Partnership.
- Engagement with an array of chambers of commerce, economic development agencies, and industry associations.
- Participation in business- and industry-specific projects, including those described in the preceding narrative.

The local boards are considering leveraging Blutdot.io, which is a customer relationship management tool used by numerous local economic development entities to coordinate messaging to businesses.

V. ENABLING UPWARD MOBILITY FOR ALL CALIFORNIANS

Providing job seekers and workers in the East Bay opportunities to improve their economic status and achieve long-term financial stability is a driving principle for the EBRPU's local boards. All four WDBs, along with service providers, workforce system partners, and training organizations are committed to creating a regional workforce system that promotes equity. Following are descriptions of workforce development programs, initiatives, and strategies that empower individuals, families, and communities.

A. Working with Businesses that Provide Quality Jobs

East Bay workforce boards will continue to prioritize business customers based on several key factors, including whether the company is within one of the region's priority sectors; wages and wage progress potential; and opportunities for job and career advancement. While specific employer selection criteria are a matter of policy and, therefore, are determined at the local board level, it is central to the region's economic justice-based mission to align job seekers with organizations that will allow them to obtain their long-term career and financial goals.

Regional leadership is also aware that the CWDB has adopted the following definition of job quality and strives to meet these criteria whenever possible:

“Quality jobs provide family-sustaining wages, health benefits, a pension, worker advancement opportunities, and collective worker input and are stable, predictable, safe and free of discrimination. Quality jobs have the potential to transform workers’ lives and create resilient, thriving firms and communities and a more just and equitable economy.”

While the local boards are generally using the state definition as a guideline for “good jobs,” specific actions concerning quality jobs include:

- Limiting the use of training funds to programs that prepare job seekers for well paid jobs that pay living wages in priority sectors.
- For on-the-job (OJT) training programs, ensuring that jobs pay a living wage and have additional quality features, such as good working conditions, paid health insurance, and opportunities for advancement.
- Increasing wages paid in work-based learning programs, including work experience programs for youth.
- Working with local first source hiring programs, which generally connect job seekers to employment where they are represented and wages are subject to negotiated terms of a collective bargaining agreement.

In addition, using an Irvine Foundation Grant, Alameda County WDB is engaged in a unique project under which they are studying businesses that offer “quality jobs.” Such businesses prioritize job factors, such as career advancement, worker voice, benefits, and safe environments. The goals of the project are to identify strategies for engaging with businesses that offer quality jobs, adoption of quality jobs principles, development of a list of businesses offering quality jobs, and the development of partnerships with identified employers. Ultimately, strategies identified through the project should be used by staff to inform job development activities. The project also includes mental wellness workshops for participants.

B. Shared Target Populations and Targeted Service Strategies

The local boards prioritize services to a wide range of vulnerable and underserved populations, including, but not limited to, people with disabilities, justice involved individuals, opportunity youth, English language learners, foreign born individuals, refugees, non-custodial parents, CalFresh recipients, veterans, displaced workers, and others. Strategies to support individuals from these groups in preparing for work, securing employment, and succeeding on the job include a variety of traditional and innovative approaches and programs, including the following:

Co-enrollment in Two or More Programs: Many individuals with little exposure to work or barriers to employment will need a range of services that are not available through one program. Such job seekers may be enrolled into two or more programs to address their needs. Co-enrollment of individuals with disabilities in WIOA Title I programs for training and in services provided by the California Department of Rehabilitation for specialized support would be an example of accessing two funding sources to meet the unique needs of a customer.

On-going Case Management: Continued advisement, coaching, and support from experienced case managers is a crucial element in the success of many job seekers. Frequent contacts and supportive follow-up are instrumental in ensuring that participants stay on track, have access to alternatives as needs arise, and feel supported throughout their preparation for employment.

Securing Supportive Services to Address Barriers: Direct services staff have established and work within large networks of allied organizations and programs that offer a range of supportive services to address barriers faced by participants. Such services include, but are not limited to transportation, child care, health services, housing, legal services, and specialized counseling.

Foundational Skills Training: Participants build a set of job readiness and retention skills that are vital to their success in the workplace. These include skills such as critical thinking, working as part of a team, accepting supervision, and punctuality, along with many more.

Work-Based Learning Programs Offering Wages and Stipends: For individuals needing to work while preparing for employment, work-based learning models, such as OJT, work

experience, and internships provide a method to train for work while receiving training or stipends.

Registered Apprenticeships: Among the strategies that lead workforce system participants to jobs with the best opportunities and working conditions are registered apprenticeships in careers that are well paid, stable, represented, and offer clear pathways for advancement.

Working with Service Networks: Local boards and their service providers connect to networks that concentrate on serving unique populations. For example, staff working in programs serving justice-involved individuals are active in the Probation Department's Community Corrections Partnership, which provides access to many individuals and groups that can support participants.

VI. CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The PY 2025-28 planning period marks the first time the four local boards that comprise the EBRPU are addressing environmental sustainability and climate resilience within the Regional Plan. However, the WDBs and their workforce system partners are not unfamiliar with these challenges and their impact of the regional economy and local labor markets. Within the region, issues such as pollution, a movement away from fossil fuels, and air quality have already affected the focus and content of workforce programs. Strategies have been developed to address the workforce needs associated with these and other issues that impact the environment. What is needed to gain momentum in these efforts is an overarching plan and structure to shape workforce programs into effective models to support a climate neutral transition. Such strategies will be developed during the four-year period represented by this Regional Plan.

Opportunities for Building a Climate Resilient Economy and Workforce

As part of the process of developing the Regional Plan, local boards examined research and looked to existing efforts dealing with environmental sustainability in the East Bay. The Bay Area Regional Climate Action Initiative stood out as uniquely pertinent to the interests of the local boards with respect to climate and the environment. The associated *Priority Climate Action Plan for the Northern and Central Bay Area Metropolitan Region* is characterized by features that may provide a model for the EBRPU agencies in developing a regional workforce development approach to environmental sustainability.

The Priority Climate Action Plan builds upon the region's climate leadership and rich foundation of existing climate-related plans, programs, projects, and policies to identify and support core policies, practices, and technologies in the transportation and building sectors that will help accelerate the Bay Area's transition to a more equitable and zero-carbon future. Implementation of the plan will reduce emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs), criteria air pollutants, and hazardous air pollutants; create high-quality jobs; spur economic growth; and enhance the quality of life for Bay Area residents, particularly those in frontline communities. While the plan's workforce planning focuses almost exclusively on green jobs in the construction industry, its approach to linking workforce preparation to environmental issues could be replicated across other industries.

Utilizing Local Climate Initiatives as a Launchpad for Workforce Development

As suggested above, development of a comprehensive regional workforce development strategy is pending. However, each of the jurisdictions represented by workforce development boards in the East Bay has adopted a climate action plan and all four boards are working on climate-related workforce programs and strategies. Current initiatives hold promise for expansion and being scaled throughout the region.

RWDB: The City of Richmond has developed a climate action plan that is intended to serve as a roadmap to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, create jobs, and prepare for

the impacts of climate change on public health, infrastructure, the economy, ecosystems, and public spaces in the community. Supporting green business and industry is one of the key objectives of the plan. This objective seeks to reduce and mitigate carbon dioxide and other GHG emissions from large commercial and industrial sources. The plan seeks to promote “green” industries, while providing jobs and training to Richmond residents. It encourages existing businesses and industries to become environmentally advanced and to continue making positive contributions to the community. Richmond will work with businesses and industry, residents, and regulatory agencies to reduce the impact of direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of pollution from industry, the Port, railroads, diesel trucks, and busy roadways.

RWDB supports climate resilience through grants to support environmental remediation that train environmental service workers to remediate local EPA-designated brownfields, as well as, grants to build out electric vehicle charging stations and grants to enhance training programs in both electric vehicle and electric vehicle charging station maintenance.

The plan highlights efforts of the workforce development system and seeks to expand existing initiatives in tandem with efforts to green existing businesses and attract sustainable jobs. The WDB supports training in the construction trades that are focused on green processes and is poised to develop programs that support a burgeoning blue-green economy in connection with the city’s shoreline.

OWDB: The City of Oakland’s 2030 Equitable Climate Action Plan is rooted in a deep community engagement process. It identifies ambitious actions to combat climate change while also ensuring that frontline communities, those that have been harmed by environmental issues and that are likely affected most by the impacts of climate change, will benefit from climate action. The City is focusing attention on actions that will result in cleaner air, improved economic security, good green jobs, and more resilient communities, while also minimizing the local contribution to climate change. The plan highlights the fact that green jobs underpin a sustainable, low-carbon economy. As an industry category, the green jobs sector includes clean energy development and installation, carbon reduction technology, advanced materials, food science, and applied technology.

The WDB’s environmental and climate-related projects include plans to support new green jobs at a revitalized Port of Oakland, ties to construction-related training that incorporate green processes, and efforts to support hiring in public sector jobs that focus on climate resilience and sustainability.

ACWDB: Adopted in May 2023, the Alameda County Climate Action Plan for Government Services and Operations through 2026 recognizes the threats that climate change makes to quality of life, health, and economic vitality in Alameda County. The plan identifies priorities for the County that will benefit individuals and communities. The plan is divided into six action areas, each of which plays a key role in sustainability goals: Built Environment, Community Resilience, Green Economy and Prosperity, Sustainable

Materials Management, Transportation, and Climate Leadership and Governance. The Green Economy focus area recognizes the capacity of the WDB to support jobs tied to environmental sustainability.

Current efforts of the workforce system aligned with environmental sustainability involve high road manufacturing, where there is an emphasis on green processes. In addition, the WDB supports jobs in the skilled trades that are focused on residential decarbonization, and the board is connected with a regenerative jobs program.

WDCCC: The County's Climate Action Plan is its strategic approach to reduce GHG emissions. The plan reflects the County's programs and actions to improve energy efficiency, develop renewable energy, reduce vehicle miles traveled, increase multi-modal travel options, expand green infrastructure, reduce waste, and improve the efficiency of government operations. The plan also forecasts the County's GHG emissions and sets reduction targets and strategies.

The Board is also engaged in numerous advanced transportation strategies, as detailed in Section IV.B., above, that address environmental sustainability through people mobility and goods movement strategies, electric and autonomous vehicle research and development and infrastructure deployment, and workforce training programs aligned with emerging occupational demand in advanced transportation fields.

A collaboration with the John Muir Land Trust Family Harvest Farm engages transition-age foster youth in workforce training while investing in environmental awareness and climate resiliency. Through sustainable agriculture apprenticeships and community service programs, integrating hands-on learning with supportive career coaching the project enhances community and food security while advancing environmental stewardship through open space protection, regenerative farming, and healthy food distribution to vulnerable communities.

Among the various efforts of the WDB linked to environmental sustainability and climate resilience are a Dislocated Worker Oil and Gas project where workers facing business closure are being retrained to utilize existing and new skills in alternative industries. Other projects include one focused on jobs linked to urban forestry, a residential decarbonization project, and a high road training project that is focused on battery manufacturing.

Additional information on the connection between climate resilience and workforce development in the East Bay is described in Section II-D of this Plan, which addresses trends for the future workforce.

Regional: All four EBRPU Workforce Development Boards are engaged in the Bay Area Jobs First Initiative through a regional partnership of stakeholders in education, economic development, labor, and environmental groups. The state program strives to advance a carbon neutral transition anchored in quality job creation and aligned with regional economic landscapes. The WDBs are partners on and supporters of several

Catalyst Programs addressing environmental sustainability through a variety of strategies including high-road manufacturing, residential building decarbonization, clean transportation, environmental education, and regenerative careers.

VII. ACCESS AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

The East Bay workforce development boards are engaged in a range of structural and systemic efforts intended to promote greater access to the region's workforce system. For example, Alameda County WDB has conducted extensive data analysis, which has revealed underrepresentation of key target groups in various programs. These results have led to an outreach strategy at the zip code level to reach individuals in targeted communities. Based on initiatives of this type, local level best practices have the potential to be scaled regionally. EBRPU's local boards have a number of promising local level initiatives to draw upon. The Oakland Workforce Development Board has developed policies and practices promoting greater access to the local workforce system. OJT training is being used by a number of local boards as a strategy for enabling training participants with limited income and assets to support themselves while they engage in training. State ETP funds have been used to create unique programs, offer a wider range of support, and expand access. The local boards in Alameda County, Oakland, and Richmond have developed strategies around First Source and Local Hire agreements in their jurisdictions. All four of the Local Boards are engaged in the P2E project, which builds upon AB109 realignment in both counties to bring paid work experience and customized supportive services to justice-involved individuals returning to the community. Other projects, including those funded by specialized grants, are being used to expand access for job seekers from groups such as English language learners, justice-involved individuals, homeless and housing insecure individuals, persons with disabilities, BIPOC individuals, and first generation college students.

Regional Strategies to Increase Access

Across the four local workforce development areas of the East Bay, a wide range of effective workforce strategies have been promoted to increase access and opportunity for all individuals and communities. As outlined within the analytical overview section of this Plan, a focus on educational attainment, skills development, and job-specific training for occupations providing good wages and strong advancement potential are part of a sound approach to income mobility and creating paths to the middle class. The following approaches exemplify strong companion strategies to a focus on high wage, high demand jobs.

Work/Wage-Based Training Models

Participation in unpaid training and education is often not an option for many individuals with barriers to employment. Low wages in comparison to the high cost of living in the East Bay region means that workers cannot forego income and sustain themselves during their participation in extended education and training programs. Providing workers with wages while they are training enables them to focus on learning new skills while not having to sacrifice income for themselves and their families. While there are numerous work-based training models allowable under WIOA and partner programs that offer earn-and-learn opportunities, the East Bay boards are focusing on two strategies offering both short- and long-term benefits to trainees: OJT training and apprenticeships.

OJT training allows for employers to be reimbursed for a portion of a worker's wages while they are engaged in training. The training period generally lasts about three months, but is based on skills to be acquired and a dollar cap that varies by local board. Employers may be reimbursed up to fifty percent of hourly wages. When workers participate in OJT training, they have the opportunity to earn wages, acquire skills, and learn job-specific functions at their new place of employment. Under the OJT model, workers are guaranteed a minimum of 32 hours per week and must be paid wages at least reflecting the current industry standard. Employers hire the trainee as a regular employee.

Apprenticeship offers substantial opportunities to advance access to quality, family-sustaining jobs, and income mobility. It can allow individuals who are unable to forego income to continue to earn a salary while they learn a new profession, or to advance in their existing field. Apprenticeships can also offer women and persons of color the chance to overcome barriers by demonstrating their skills in the workplace, enabling them to be evaluated and hired on their merits, rather than being excluded based on their identification as part of a particular group.

Working with a wide range of partners, local workforce boards throughout California, including those in the East Bay, are beginning to accelerate their participation in the development and implementation of registered apprenticeships programs. For example, WDBCCC has implemented and is in the process of developing apprenticeship programs in healthcare, sustainable agriculture, early childhood education and civil engineering. They are also seeking to expand pre-apprenticeship training models in new sectors based on the successful multi-core craft curriculum utilized nationally but building and construction apprenticeship programs.

Where allowable, local boards are using stipends as a means of support for job seekers involved in training and preparation for employment. Needs-based payments are being utilized under projects such as those funded by the California Employment Training Panel.

First Source and Local Hiring

Three of the local boards in the region have supported the development of, and are engaged with, local hire ordinances in their communities, which leverage the economic power of local government to expand opportunities for local residents to obtain employment with contractors on city-funded projects. The RichmondBuild pre-apprenticeship construction training program has worked closely with businesses that are subject to this ordinance to provide a pathway to construction employment for program graduates. Also in the construction sector, the all EBRPU collaborate with providers of the Multi-Core Construction Curriculum (MC3) pre-apprenticeship training, which offers on-ramps into skilled trades in the building and construction sector.

The City of Richmond, the Port of Oakland, and Alameda County as a whole have local hiring policies which mandate a certain percentage of those employed on government-

funded construction projects be filled by qualified local residents. In Richmond, local hiring policies impact not only construction employment, but also retail, office, administrative, and other employment.

Wrap-Around Support

A key to ensuring that services are as accessible as possible to support those who need them most is to provide them in communities in proportion to need. The Contra Costa Workforce Collaborative (CCWC) model is an innovative approach to the no-wrong-door model of service. OWDB has also worked to identify the city's most impacted communities and has aligned resources to meet support needs.

Regional workforce development efforts in the East Bay are predicated around an understanding that all workers have unique challenges and needs. Without vital services and resources, workers will not be successful in training, in their job search, and on the job. The following supportive services are some of the strategies that the region utilizes to empower job seekers and workers to participate in and successfully complete training and other workforce services: childcare; transportation; uniforms and work appropriate clothing; tools required for work; books; health and mental health services; costs to cover required medical tests (e.g., TB tests); legal services; emergency food; shelter; costs associated with obtaining required documentation or licensing (e.g., California state ID card, state testing, licensing fees); and parking permit fees for training purposes at community colleges or other training sites.

Financial Literacy

Financial literacy education supports participants moving toward financial self-sufficiency. The Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County provides financial literacy services to enable workforce system participants to learn how to improve their income, increase their savings, build assets, and strengthen their credit rating. Because financial literacy is fundamental to the success of so many program participants, other boards within the region are scaling this model to help their participants improve financial literacy skills.

VIII. ALIGNING, COORDINATING, AND INTEGRATING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The East Bay's local workforce development boards' establishment of a structure to support program alignment precedes WIOA and California's implementation of the RPU framework for regional coordination. This long history of collaboration is the basis for the region's adoption of "regional indicators" that focus on resource coordination. The information that follows highlights both examples of collaboration and opportunities for cost sharing.

A. Regional Coordination Strategies

The four local workforce boards continue to build on past and current successes in aligning and integrating programs, services, and strategies. Below are approaches utilized to achieve coordination.

EASTBAYWorks Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

While each local board has distinct MOUs with core, required, and other local partners, the EASTBAYWorks partnership operates under a regional workforce MOU. This MOU among the counties of Alameda and Contra Costa, as well as the municipalities of Oakland and Richmond, enables the implementation of regional initiatives that are supported, primarily, by specialized grants from the CWDB and the state Employment Development Department.

The EASTBAYWorks MOU outlines goals and core objectives for the partnership, including:

- Streamlining processes, reducing duplication, and managing similar services;
- Receiving grants or other funding for regional planning, plan implementation, staff, workforce system training, and expansion of regional initiatives;
- Coordinating execution of regional projects through sharing in regional funding;
- Agreeing that the lead subgrantee (local board) will contract with the other local boards in separate services agreements for each WIOA subgrant to allocate funds and implement EBRPU programs more efficiently; and
- Establishing a "lead agent" framework for other regional projects to efficiently implement programs on behalf of the EBRPU.

Discussions among the local WDBs are ongoing regarding opportunities to achieve alignment and efficiency through the use of the EASTBAYWorks structure.

America's Job Centers of California (AJCCs)

The AJCCs of the East Bay Region operate as independent entities, but contribute to regional strategies by sharing their information on the EASTBAYWorks website, which

enables job seekers across the region to locate the services that are most accessible to them and access a regional events calendar that promotes workshops and training opportunities, as well as, hiring events. The geographic distribution of the centers in both Alameda and Contra Costa counties unifies the region by providing access to one-stop services for all of East Bay's residents.

Coordination with Regional Economic Development

The East Bay WDBs recognize economic development as an essential partner within the workforce development ecosystem of the region. An important component of the EBRPU's coordination with regional economic development efforts is the representation of the Business Services Manager of each of the four East Bay local workforce boards on the East Bay Economic Development Alliance (EDA) Economic Development Directors' table. This relationship allows for cooperative conversations about regional business climate, business openings and closings, and other collaborative opportunities between economic development and workforce development. A key service of the EDA is its development of annual economic outlook reports that provide data and analysis on the current and emerging trends impacting the region's economy and its workforce.

Each local board within the region has its own relationships with economic development organizations and functions. The efforts of one board to coordinate workforce and economic development often inform strategies used by other boards. The Oakland Workforce Development Board is uniquely located for collaboration with local economic development initiatives, as it is situated inside the City of Oakland's Office of Workforce and Economic Development. This structure enables the OWDB to closely align its policies and programs with the economic development agenda of the city and to influence city policy related to workforce training and development.

In addition to collaboration with the EDA and local economic development in Oakland, the EBRPU benefits from a strong relationship between the WDBCCC and the East Bay Leadership Council (EBLC), as well as the Contra Costa Economic Partnership (CCEP), both of which are based in Contra Costa County. The EBLC is a public policy advocacy organization that has as its mission to increase the economic vitality and quality of life in the East Bay. Membership includes many of the region's largest employers. The WDBCCC collaborates with the CCEP in leading the Equitable Economic Recovery Task Force, which has been focused on creating a strong recovery and opportunities for those who were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic-induced recession.

The region's participation in a Bay Area grant funded by the California Jobs First initiative (formerly the Community Economic Resiliency Fund or "CERF") is a current example of collaboration with economic development to achieve the goals it shares with the workforce development system. The Bay Area Jobs First Collaborative, which includes representation by EBRPU leadership, has led the planning phase of the grant. Collaborative members work together to re-envision regional economic development planning in ways that are centered around the values of access, high-road employment, and sustainability and climate resilience, that are shaped by workers and impacted

community/members themselves. Goals established for the planning phase included several efforts that correspond with strategies represented in this Plan, including, but not limited to, investments in high road training partnerships that create economic mobility opportunities for local workers. The four East Bay boards continue to be actively engaged in all aspects of the California Jobs First initiative.

Promising Models for Strengthening Collaboration

Among the promising practices for cooperative service delivery that have been implemented in the region is the Contra Costa Workforce Collaborative (CCWC). The CCWC is an innovative public-nonprofit partnership of twelve Contra Costa County education and workforce development organizations that currently operate within the county. The CCWC was developed in response to an identified need for regional collaboration and system alignment to move beyond strategies that prioritize low-wage, immediate employment opportunities and work toward development of pathways to sustainable, well-paid employment for diverse job seekers.

The CCWC leverages WIOA dollars and resources already available in the County to provide services that connect participants to education and training opportunities. These services attempt to enhance essential employability skills and assist in the development and pursuit of educational and career goals that lead to income mobility and quality jobs.

B. Regional Administrative Cost Arrangements

Regional grants and other funding have created opportunities for the local boards within the region to share and leverage resources that benefit all local workforce areas and the region as a whole.

Budgeting for Coordination

An annual budget for the EBRPU supports regional communications and functions, including a website with a virtual service locator and a regional events calendar populated by all of the EBRPU's funded partners. The budget contains line items for resource development, strategic planning, and other items that are determined necessary when the annual budget is created. In addition, the EBRPU administers the HOTJOBS email listserv that links more than 350 workforce, education, and training professionals and provides a conduit for information sharing in the field. The four local boards may also share costs of regional research and planning efforts, and the EBRPU continues to explore opportunities for administrative cost sharing.

The regional budget also supports the RO position. The RO is key to managing regional initiatives, resource development, and grant reporting, and serves as a central point of contact between the workforce development system and regional industry partnerships. The RO facilitates meetings at various levels for local boards in the region (e.g., directors; service network; adult and youth programs; career center managers, frontline staff) to

identify best practices, troubleshoot obstacles, support the EASTBAYWorks brand, and identify opportunities for collaboration and innovation.

Strategic Initiatives

Activities carried out under specialized grant programs provide the clearest examples of strategic initiatives under which local boards share costs and participate in centralized administration. Such programs have included a Regional Equity and Recovery Partnership (RERP) grant program; state-funded Prison to Employment (P2E) grants; and a series of Regional Plan Implementation (RPI) grants. Other discretionary grant programs in which two or more East Bay WDBs participate also benefit from centralized administration and sharing of costs to support service delivery across multiple local workforce development areas.

Apart from participation in grant programs, strategic initiatives, such as comprehensive training that is planned for direct services staff of contracted providers and partners, exemplify the benefits of cost sharing across the region.

IX. PROGRAM YEAR 2025-28 REGIONAL SYSTEM PRIORITIES

Based on input that regional workforce leaders and stakeholders provided during discussions held throughout the process used to develop the PY 2025-28 Plan, the following issues were identified as priorities for further examination, exploration, development, and/or enhancement over the four-year period covered by the Regional Plan. The Directors of the EBRPU's four local boards will work with their WDB members, elected officials, business leaders, and local partners and stakeholders to set the agenda for review of these priorities and, following such review, determine where, when, and how action should be taken.

The themes represented by the priorities that follow were identified through input from WDB leaders, system partners, and regional stakeholders during a series of discussions, including the three community forums that are described in Attachment I.

1. **Develop Strategies to Reach Businesses of All Types and Sizes**

While the Regional Plan identifies priority sectors for the East Bay and the four local workforce development areas that comprise the region, workforce leaders, system partners, and regional stakeholders all recognize that the economy of the East Bay is varied and that businesses in many industries are critical to the economic vitality, prosperity, and opportunity in the region. The public workforce system, educational institutions, training providers, and the network of employment and career focused organizations operating the East Bay must develop strategies to support businesses of all types and sizes and ensure that these enterprises have access to a wide range of recruitment, hiring, retention, and training tools to support their employees.

2. **Enter into Partnerships with Businesses**

Throughout discussions with workforce system stakeholders, a common theme emerged time and time again: the most successful workforce programs are those that have developed structured partnerships with businesses. Among these partnerships, those that produce the best results for job seekers are ones where businesses communicate in advance the types of jobs for which they are hiring, the skills they are looking for in new workers, and the numbers of workers they are planning to hire within a prescribed timeframe.

While businesses are a clear end-user of the full range of workforce development services provided by local boards and many system partners, too often career services, training, and even direct services for businesses are designed without their input. Business leaders should be the "managing partners" in the design of workforce services and, especially, programs that train candidates for employment in the skills companies need most. WDBs and system partners should consider

opportunities to expand existing sector partnerships and to develop new ones as a structure for securing business intelligence and direction on services and training. At the same time, system partners should develop strategies that encourage businesses to become more active as trainers of new and current workers, using models such as customized training, OJT training, and apprenticeships.

3. Define Job Quality and What Constitutes a Good Job in the East Bay

The workforce system's focus on placement of participants in jobs is appropriate. Most individuals seeking services do so based on their need to work and earn a living. However, workforce system services should be viewed as investments in job seekers. Therefore, all customers, even those who are simply looking for work, should be provided services that prepare them for advancement along a career pathway. In support of these objectives, local workforce boards, the WIOA-mandated local system partners, and other key stakeholders should confer on strategies to define job quality and what qualifies as a good job in the East Bay. The stakeholders should consider widely accepted definitions, such as those established by the California Workforce Development Board and various federal agencies, while recognizing unique features of the East Bay, including, but not limited to, cost of living, commute patterns, local industries, emerging sectors, and the changing nature of work.

4. Advise on Strategies for Managing New Generations of Workers

Business leaders, educators, workforce development professionals, social services providers, and other stakeholders continue to describe shifts in attitudes, behaviors, preferences, and priorities among workers and candidates for employment. Many indicate that, while these changes have been evolving over the last decade or even longer, such shifts were accelerated by circumstances surrounding the pandemic. For many individuals, particularly younger workers with less experience in and attachment to the workforce, work-life balance, "meaningful" or "purpose-driven" work, flexibility, and opportunity to be part of decision-making are more important than factors such as pay, stability, and promotional opportunities. Many businesses describe workers' lack of punctuality, adherence to work schedules, and short tenure as challenges to business operations. System partners need to recognize and respond to changes in worker priorities by developing corresponding career services and training. Such services may acknowledge that employment and career decisions are individual choices, but highlight advantages of employment retention, including stability, wage increases, and opportunities for advancement. Support for businesses may include strategies that encourage worker retention.

5. Identify and Implement Effective Strategies to Connect Under-Served Populations with Services Leading to Employment

With the need for talent continuing to outstrip supply, local boards and system partners must develop strategies to expand the pool of available workers. Stakeholders cite individuals from various under-resourced populations as strong candidates for jobs, even in positions for which they have not traditionally been hired in large numbers. These populations include, but are not limited to, immigrants, refugees, individuals with disabilities, homeless and housing insecure individuals, older workers, justice-involved individuals, and young workers. Business and workforce leaders should work together to identify the training and services that will best prepare such individuals to be strong candidates for in-demand jobs.

6. Implement Programs that Provide Income Support During Skills Training and Career Preparation

Too many job seekers who could benefit from training opt out of this opportunity based on their need to earn a living. They are simply unable to devote months of their lives to sitting in classrooms all day, as they have family and financial obligations. There are, however, options that could make training possible for these individuals. Work-based training models (e.g. work experience, transitional jobs, OJT training, customized training, apprenticeships) enable those in need of training to earn wages while they are engaged in activities to acquire skills that businesses need. Another option to support these individuals would be the use of stipends, which are funds provided to a student to help cover living expenses while they are actively engaged in training. While WIOA limits the use of stipends, other fund sources may provide options for implementing this form of support.

7. Identify Core Employability Skills and Incorporate Them into Career Services and Training

There are skills that are widely desired by businesses across many industries, and some skills are often considered universally needed for all jobs. System stakeholders call out foundational skills (i.e., so-called “soft skills,” such as promptness, team work, acceptance of supervision, critical thinking, problem solving); basic skills (English and math skills); communication skills (verbal, written, and appropriate to the workplace); digital literacy (ability to use basic technology tools and system); financial literacy; and job retention skills as among the general skills most valued by companies of all types and sizes. Business and industry leaders continue to stress that individuals with these skills are the most desirable, are the easiest to train, and are, generally, the best fit. Workforce system partners throughout the region should work to identify a full complement of core employability skills and devise strategies for assessing and training in these skills areas.

8. Examine Opportunities to Contextualize Basic Skills and Other Core Skills into Instruction

As indicated above, the need for basic education skills and other core employment skills is significant among many job seekers utilizing the services of local workforce development boards, their services providers, and partners. However, stakeholders acknowledge that in many cases individuals may be hesitant to enroll in ESL, mathematics, or other remedial education courses as they need to work and cannot fit school into their schedules. Stakeholders suggest that a greater use of contextualized instruction may help such individuals. Contextual learning is a student-centered teaching method. Instead of memorization, it actively engages learners by exploring curriculum topics through real-world scenarios, and subjects like math and communication and built into occupational skills instruction.

9. Improve Strategies to Expose Current and Future Generations of Workers to Careers

An array of strategies and approaches are needed to prepare youth and adults for a lifetime of employment and for career advancement that enables self-sufficiency, provides a family-supporting income, and creates opportunities for stability and prosperity. Information on jobs and careers should be available to children at an early age and more detailed information should be available to them as they progress through grade school, middle schools, and high school. WDBs and system partners should work closely with schools to provide information that supports career exploration and students' decisions on career-related programs and content available at the middle and high school levels. Opportunities for youth employment are critical, as first jobs, whether subsidized or not, provide important hands-on learning experiences that will stay with workers throughout their careers. Workforce programs should also continue to provide opportunities for disconnected youth and young adults to re-engage with education, training, and work.

10. Build a Coalition of Workforce Development System Stakeholders

WIOA prescribes specific partner relationships for the public workforce system that include complementary federally funded programs. Local boards throughout the East Bay have expanded their partnerships to include many state and locally funded programs and organizations, as well as community partners. Local workforce systems benefit from collaborations with a wide range of organizations that have not traditionally been viewed as partners. Stakeholders suggest that further expanding partnerships could enhance the system and add significant value for customers. Possible additional partnerships include public health and behavioral health agencies, early childhood education providers, industry associations, organized labor, and various population-based service providers.

As workforce development professionals, educators, representatives of community agencies and others gathered to provide input on the development of the Regional Plan, significant interest was expressed in the establishment of a structure that would serve as a platform for communication and the sharing of

ideas among a broad regional coalition of stakeholders. The existing EASTBAY *Works* structure holds promise for meeting this objective. Local boards will determine how to address this matter in the best way possible within their local workforce areas and throughout the region.

11. Develop Resilience Strategies to Minimize Impacts of Disruptions to the Labor Market

While Regional Plan guidelines published by the state require the local workforce boards of the East Bay region to describe approaches they plan to undertake to address environmental sustainability and climate resiliency, engagement with stakeholders about workforce strategies raised questions about the potential preparedness of businesses and workers in the event of a major disruption, which could include natural disasters, another pandemic, a deep economic recession, climate impact, or other significant effects on the labor market and, consequently, the workforce. The sudden, profound, and enduring impact of COVID-19 has made a lasting impression on the network of workforce stakeholders. Some see opportunities to better prepare for major events, by developing contingency strategies that will help workers, businesses, and communities cope with significant changes to the labor market and employment.

12. Align Strategies Across Plans

The EBRPU Regional Plan is aligned with the PY 2025-28 Local Plans of the four local workforce development boards in the region. It also supports priorities established within the PY 2024-27 California's Unified Workforce Development Plan, which describes overarching goals, objectives, and strategies across the core workforce programs identified in WIOA Titles I through IV. Within the East Bay, the Greater Bay Area, and statewide, there are many other plans published in response to requirements embedded in public program and funding, along with plans developed by private organizations that reflect a wide range of topics and needs. These plans address the economy, education, broadband accessibility, the environment, child development, public health, urban planning, housing, and much more. Stakeholders recognize that there are both commonalities and shared priorities across many of these plans and that the goals of various plans intersect with those of local and regional workforce development programs. As such, regional leadership will identify where plans and associated programs and activities should be coordinated and aligned.

X. ATTACHMENTS

- A. Stakeholder and Community Engagement Summary (Attachment 1)
- B. Public comments received that disagree with the Local Plan (Attachment 2)
- C. Signature Page (Attachment 3)

STAKEHOLDER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

To facilitate the engagement of stakeholders in regional planning for the workforce development delivery system and the development of the PY 2025-28 Regional Plan, the EBRPU hosted a series of three community and stakeholder forums focused on topics affecting strategies and services across the system. These forums included:

Opportunities and Challenges for the Workforce Development System:

Questions/topics addressed include, but were not limited to:

- Considering the regional economy and industries that are contributing to growth and prosperity, what opportunities exist to help workers develop necessary skills and otherwise prepare for jobs with current and projected demand?
- What strategies should workforce system agencies employ to better understand generational and evolving needs of workers?
- What are the greatest obstacles for individuals looking to prepare for “good jobs?” Are there strategies that the workforce system could use to minimize or eliminate these obstacles?
- As businesses continue to face recruitment and hiring challenges, are there strategies that the workforce system could implement to lessen these difficulties?
- Other input on workforce development opportunities and challenges.

This forum was held in-person on two occasions

- January 8, 2025 – 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. for Alameda County and City of Oakland WDBs
- January 8, 2025 – 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. for Contra Costa County and City of Richmond WDBs

The Changing landscape of Jobs and the Economy:

Questions/topics addressed include, but were not limited to:

- Compared to a decade ago or even more recently, what changes are most prevalent in the regional economy?
- How are changes in local industries and businesses affecting the types and availability of jobs?
- What impact are economic changes having on workers and individuals looking for work?
- What changes do economic trends suggest for workforce development and skills training programs?

- Other input on workforce development opportunities and challenges.