

WIOA Planning Region: Michigan Works! Northeast
Consortium and Region 7B

Four-Year WIOA Regional Plan

July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2028



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Executive Summary

The Workforce Development System in Northeast Michigan is a network of services that prepare a skilled workforce to meet employer needs. The system is composed of multiple agencies providing services and programs from a variety of funding sources. Collectively, these partner agencies help both job seekers and employers to overcome barriers and improve outcomes.

The Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) is the primary federal workforce legislation for the United States. This legislation supports employer relationships that drive workforce preparation and is implemented through robust partnerships. It emphasizes regional collaboration and planning and, therefore, requires that a comprehensive plan be developed across regions, incorporating input from all stakeholders. This WIOA Regional Plan presents the current economic conditions, labor force characteristics, workforce development activities, and strategic collaborations within WIOA Planning Region 3. From this background, Regional Leadership developed goals and strategies to improve workforce development in WIOA Planning Region 3's 14 counties: Alcona, Alpena, Arenac, Cheboygan, Clare, Crawford, Gladwin, Iosco, Montmorency, Ogemaw, Oscoda, Otsego, Presque Isle, and Roscommon. These goals and strategies are aligned with the State of Michigan's primary focus areas for workforce development, as presented in its Statewide Workforce Plan.

Regional Challenges

Customers of the workforce system struggle to afford and access reliable transportation, available childcare, and housing. They can also face a stigma associated with being unemployed or under-employed, depending upon their situation, that acts as a barrier to employment. Data shows that the Region's workforce is aging, and there are fewer young people entering the workforce than retirees leaving. In addition, average wages are relatively low, with many lower-paying, seasonal, service-related jobs.

The workforce system struggles to maintain collaboration and connections amidst a rapidly changing environment. Funding sources vary in requirements, amounts, timescales, and eligible uses, creating an unpredictable foundation for working toward medium and long-term goals. In addition, the public generally lacks a thorough understanding of services and may not be aware of the breadth of programs available or how to access them.

Regional Strategies

Regional Leadership is well aware of these persistent challenges, but they are also motivated by the potential and pride in the region. There is an opportunity to make a significant impact here, overcoming barriers for employers and job seekers in an environment with structural challenges and improving the overall economic health and vibrancy of the region. To make progress in Region 3, leadership commits to strategies that move forward the following opportunities:

- Strengthen employer engagement and leadership within the system
- Leverage technology and increase connections and collaboration among partners
- Address the different needs of generations and make intergenerational connections
- Support progress in “the Big 3” challenges: housing, childcare, and transportation.
- Maintain strong partnerships and efforts for youth career exploration and planning

Specific strategies for achieving these goals as well as their alignment with the state’s priorities are detailed in the plan.

Description of the Regional Planning Process

A description of the planning process undertaken to produce the Regional Plan, including a description of how all local areas were afforded the opportunity to participate in the regional planning process.

This planning process sought representation from all WIOA partners. The two Michigan Works! Agencies in the region (Michigan Works! Northeast Consortium and Michigan Works! Region 7B) convened a strategy session in April, 2024. A facilitator conducted the half-day session to review data, analyze strengths and weaknesses across the region, and brainstorm opportunities. Attendees at this Strategy Session included the following:

- Leadership from both Michigan Works! Agencies
- Board members – both local elected officials and workforce development boards – representing each local area
- Representatives from the following WIOA Core and Required partners:
 - Veterans Services
 - Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Services
 - Michigan Industry Cluster Alliance
 - Adult education
 - State Vocational Rehabilitation
 - Department of Health and Human Services
 - Postsecondary Carl Perkins programs
 - Community Action Agency
 - Unemployment Insurance Agency
 - Local employers

The group reviewed data, assessed the workforce system, developed goals, and brainstormed strategies for the coming four years. The process also included a follow-up survey to review the key outcomes of the strategy session, review and approval by both workforce development boards, and a 30-day public comment period.

The Strategy Session resulted in a list of opportunities that the region could pursue to improve and expand services, develop partnerships, and collaboratively assist communities with overcoming barriers to economic growth. This input was used to formulate and prioritize potential strategies for regional workforce development activities.

A survey listing these key outcomes was developed and sent back to the group, in order to confirm and validate that the strategies accurately captured the opportunities identified and commitments made during the strategy session. It also allowed participants to offer feedback on the strategy process. The responses were used to shape the regional strategies seen throughout this plan.

In addition to the Strategy Session and survey, leadership from WIOA Core Partners met to discuss the regional plan and ensure that it truly represents the region's voice. The plan was presented to workforce development boards and local elected officials. Public comment was also sought for a 30-day period from July 2nd through August 2nd.

Analysis of Regional Labor Market Data and Economic Conditions

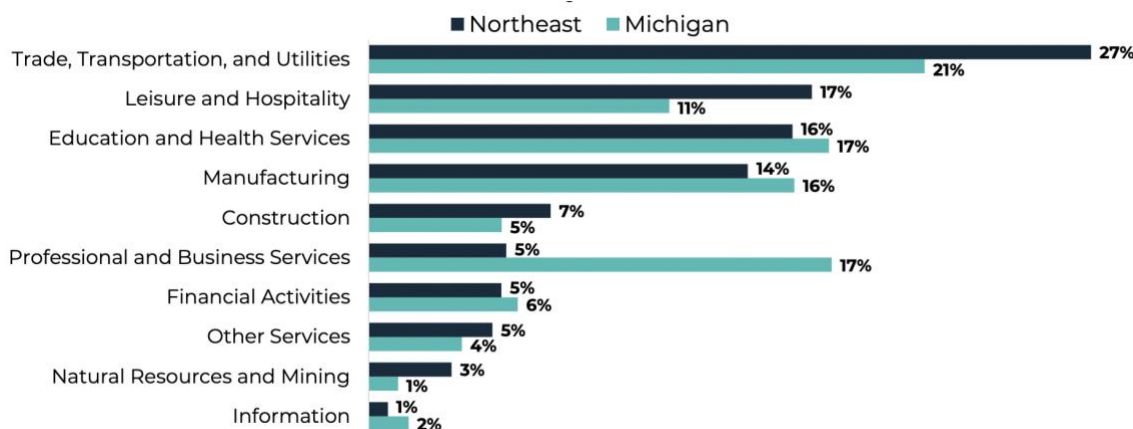
An updated and thorough analysis of regional labor market data and economic conditions for the WIOA Planning Region. This shall include an analysis of existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations, as well as the employment needs of employers in those existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

The labor market economic analysis that follows draws heavily on the data and assessment provided by the Michigan Center for Data and Analytics Annual Planning Information and Workforce Analysis Reports 2024 (MCDA 2024).¹ In these reports, the component 14 counties of WIOA Region 3 are split between 2 different reports: Michigan Works! Northeast Consortium (MW!NC) and Michigan Works! Region 7B (Region 7B). Below the charts for both MWs!NC and Region 7B are on the same page for ease of reference. This presentation shows how frequently the trends are very much the same in these two geographies, and we discuss where they differ significantly. Conveniently, MW!NC and Region 7B are areas of similar populations (136,000 and 142,000, respectively), making these comparisons of similar scale.

Existing and Emerging Industry Sectors and Occupations

The Region's employment is dominated by two sectors: Trade, Transportation, and Utilities and Leisure and Hospitality. Nearly half of all jobs are in these sectors, significantly greater than the statewide average. Most other sectors are on par with Michigan averages, while Professional and Business Services is significantly under-represented, comprising just 5% of employment, compared to 17% statewide. Distribution across all sectors is provided in Figures 1 and 2.

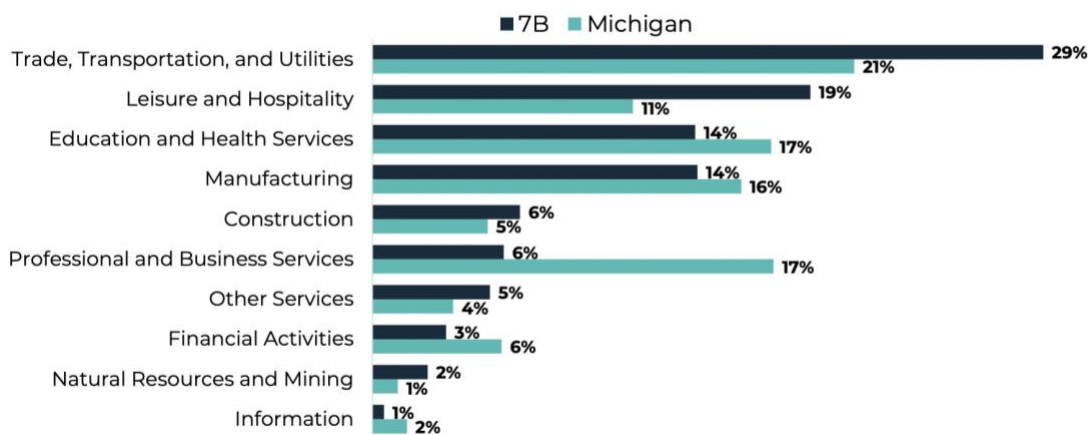
Figure 1: Distribution of Industry Jobs, Second Quarter 2023, MW!NC



Source: MCDA 2024 from Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Michigan Center for Data and Analytics.

¹ Available at <https://www.michigan.gov/mcda/reports/annual-planning-information-and-workforce-analysis-reports-2024>

Figure 2: Distribution of Industry Jobs, Second Quarter 2023, Region 7B



Source: MCDA 2024 from Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Michigan Center for Data and Analytics.

Figures 3 and 4 show employment trends from 2017-2023, reflecting some commonalities but also some opposite trends within the Region. We note that these six years compare before and after COVID employment. The previous Regional Plan Update contained data from during the pandemic and reflected COVID-related employment volatility, especially in the Leisure and Hospitality sector. These data reflect a more stable industry before and after the pandemic comparison.

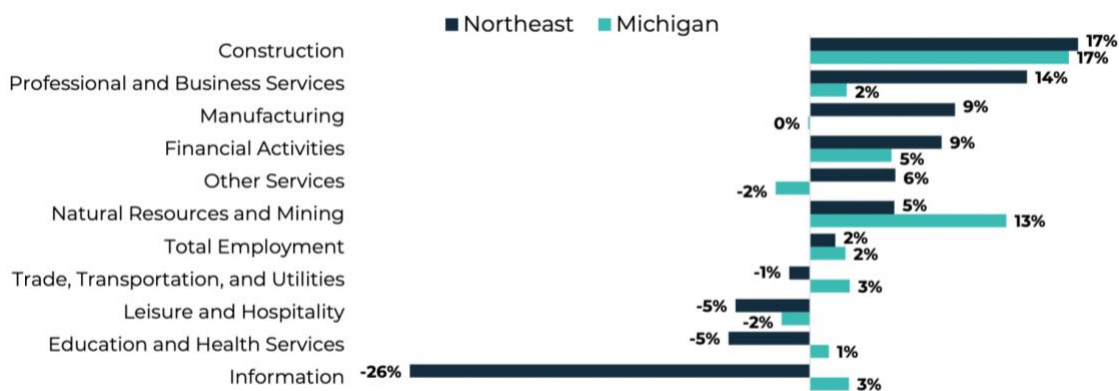
In both the MW!NC and Region 7B areas, total employment trended up a small amount (+2% and +5%, respectively) from 2017-2023. The Region's top sector, Trade Transportation and Utilities, held steady at -1% and +1% in MW!NC and 7B, respectively. The Information sector shows large declines here (down 26% and 36%, respectively), but it is important to note that this is only 1% of the Region's employment, so very small changes in the number of jobs show up as large percentage changes.

Many other sectors show opposing trends:

- **Leisure and Hospitality:** In this Region's prominent sector, Region 7B experienced 17% growth in employment, while MW!NC saw a 5% decline.
- **Construction:** In MW!NC, Construction is the top growth sector at 17%, on par with statewide trends. In Region 7B, Construction grew half as fast at 9%.
- **Professional and Business Services:** In MW!NC, this sector grew by 14%, significantly outpacing Michigan's average of 2%. Region 7B experienced an opposite trend, where Professional and Business Services declined by 14%.

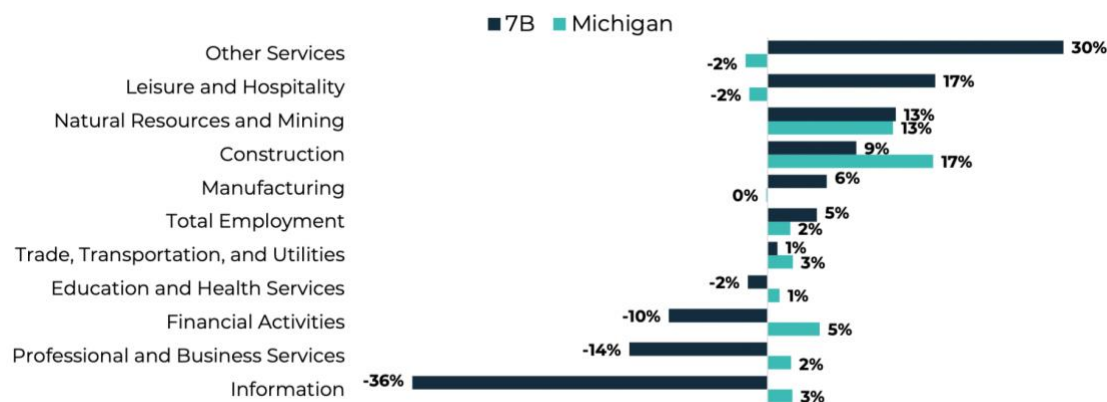
- **Other Services:** While Professional and Business Services declined in Region 7B, Other Services grew by 30%, significantly greater than MW!NC, where Other Services grew by 6%. This compares to a 2% decline statewide. The Other Services category includes personal care services (dry cleaning, laundry), home repair and maintenance, funeral homes and death care services, religious services, private household services, as well as other services.
- **Financial Activities:** The MW! NC area saw 9% growth in Financial Activities, while Region 7B experienced an opposite 10% decline.

Figure 3: Private Sector Job Trends, 2017-2023, MW!NC



Source: MCDA 2024 from Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Michigan Center for Data and Analytics.

Figure 4: Private Sector Job Trends, 2017-2023, Region 7B



Source: MCDA 2024 from Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Michigan Center for Data and Analytics.

Tables 1 and 2 show the most frequent online job postings in the region in 2023. There were 9,100 online job postings in the region: 5,200 in MW!NC, and 3,900 in Region 7B. Consistent with the prevalence of the Leisure and Hospitality sector, retail salespersons and supervisors are most frequent, with merchandise display and several food service roles also making the list. Registered Nurses and nursing assistants were also frequently posted.

Table 1: Online Advertised Job Postings in Michigan Works! MW!NC

Job Title	Postings
Retail Salespersons	394
Registered Nurses	336
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	334
Customer Service Representatives	177
Merchandise Displayers and Window Trimmers	168
Fast Food and Counter Workers	157
Nursing Assistants	136
Cashiers	101
Stockers and Order Fillers	95
Sales Reps., Goods, Nontechnical	92

Source: MCDA 2024 from Help Wanted OnLine, Lightcast Developer.

Table 2: Online Advertised Job Postings in Michigan Works! Region 7B

Job Title	Postings
Retail Salespersons	396
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	217
Registered Nurses	152
Merchandise Displayers and Window Trimmers	104
Fast Food and Counter Workers	100
Customer Service Representatives	88
Food Service Managers	81
Tree Trimmers and Pruners	71
Nursing Assistants	65
Cashiers	64

Source: MCDA 2024 from Help Wanted OnLine, Lightcast Developer

Employment needs of employers in those existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations

Tables 3-7 are from the Michigan Center for Data and Analytics Northeast Michigan Career Outlook through 2030 (MCDA 2030).² The region for this analysis covers Prosperity Region 3, which only includes 11 of the 14 WIOA Region 3 counties. We include this here as this is the best data indicative of the Region.

The tables highlight occupations likely to be in demand through 2030, estimating their expected annual opening rates, percentage growth, and average wages. The listings are by different levels of educational attainment and presented in alphabetical order, and there is also a separate listing for STEM jobs.

² Available at: <https://www.michigan.gov/mcda/reports/regional-career-outlooks-through-2030>.

Following the MCDA tables, we provide summary tables with rankings of top jobs in order by projected openings (Tables 8 and 9).

Table 3: Top High-Demand, Lower-Wage Occupations Requiring High School Diploma or Equivalent and Short-Term Training, Through 2030

OCCUPATION (JOB TITLE)	ANNUAL OPENINGS	GROWTH (%)	WAGE RANGE
Animal Caretakers	35	19.0	\$12–\$15
Childcare Workers	70	14.3	\$12–\$19
Construction Laborers	65	16.4	\$17–\$23
Cooks, Institution & Cafeteria	35	13.6	\$13–\$16
Counter & Rental Clerks	35	14.8	\$13–\$21
Customer Service Representatives	110	3.6	\$13–\$19
Dishwashers	55	12.5	\$11–\$14
Fast Food & Counter Workers	420	11.8	\$11–\$13
Home Health & Personal Care Aides	215	26.7	\$13–\$15
Janitors & Cleaners, Except Housekeepers	110	8.1	\$14–\$17
Laborers & Freight, Stock & Material Movers	85	5.0	\$14–\$18
Landscaping & Groundskeeping Workers	70	12.5	\$13–\$18
Light Truck Drivers	65	33.3	\$15–\$23
Passenger Vehicle Drivers, Except Bus	35	7.7	\$15–\$20
Receptionists & Information Clerks	55	7.3	\$13–\$17
Refuse & Recyclable Material Collectors	10	16.7	\$15–\$25
Retail Salespersons	275	5.3	\$12–\$17
Social & Human Service Assistants	25	25.0	\$13–\$17
Stockers & Order Fillers	310	9.4	\$14–\$17
Waiters & Waitresses	240	13.6	\$11–\$21

Source: MCDA 2030.

Table 4: Top High-Demand, High Wage STEM Occupations, Through 2030

OCCUPATION (JOB TITLE)	ANNUAL OPENINGS	GROWTH (%)	WAGE RANGE
Architectural & Engineering Managers	10	0.0	\$49–\$65
Biological Techs	10	-10.0	\$18–\$23
Civil Engineers	5	0.0	\$30–\$44
Computer & Information Systems Managers	<5	0.0	\$36–\$62
Computer User Support Specialists	10	9.1	\$19–\$31
Electrical Engineers	<5	0.0	\$38–\$53
Environ. Scientists & Specialists, Including Health	5	0.0	\$30–\$39
Forest & Conservation Techs	10	-11.1	\$17–\$24
Foresters	5	0.0	\$29–\$39
Industrial Engineers	10	23.1	\$31–\$46
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses ◇	25	9.7	\$23–\$27
Mechanical Engineers	20	16.7	\$29–\$42
Medical and Health Services Managers ◇	25	35.0	\$35–\$48
Nurse Practitioners ◇	5	66.7	\$47–\$59
Pharmacists ◇	10	8.7	\$52–\$65
Physician Assistants ◇	5	40.0	\$50–\$60
Radiologic Technologists and Technicians ◇	15	14.3	\$24–\$30
Registered Nurses ◇	70	11.3	\$31–\$38
Software Developers & Quality Assurance Analysts	5	20.0	\$29–\$49
Zoologists & Wildlife Biologists	<5	0.0	\$33–\$41

Source: MCDA 2030.

Table 5: Top High-Demand, High Wage Postsecondary Certificate or Moderate-Term Training Occupations Through 2030

OCCUPATION (JOB TITLE)	ANNUAL OPENINGS	GROWTH (%)	WAGE RANGE
Aircraft Mechanics & Service Techs	70	13.0	\$19–\$30
Billing & Posting Clerks	20	12.5	\$16–\$21
Captains, Mates, & Pilots of Water Vessels	5	25.0	\$32–\$62
Cement Masons & Concrete Finishers	10	9.1	\$19–\$26
Coating & Painting Machine Operators	5	16.7	\$19–\$29
Construction & Building Inspectors	5	0.0	\$23–\$69
Ctrl. & Valve Install. & Repairers, Ex. Mech. Door	5	33.3	\$30–\$43
Dental Assistants	15	10.0	\$17–\$21
Eligibility Interviewers, Government Programs	5	0.0	\$26–\$28
First-Line Supervisors of Police & Detectives	5	12.5	\$28–\$39
Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	125	0.9	\$21–\$25
Insurance Sales Agents	40	21.9	\$21–\$61
Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses	25	9.7	\$23–\$27
Logging Equipment Operators	25	6.2	\$17–\$21
Maintenance & Repair Workers, General	70	11.5	\$14–\$24
Operating Engineers	45	10.5	\$24–\$28
Police & Sheriff's Patrol Officers	35	2.3	\$25–\$34
Production, Planning, & Expediting Clerks	10	12.5	\$18–\$29
Sales Reps., Services	20	13.3	\$21–\$45
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, & Brazers	40	2.8	\$16–\$22

Source: MCDA 2030.

Table 6: Top High-Demand, High Wage Associate Degree/Long-Term Training/Apprenticeships Occupations Through 2030

OCCUPATION (JOB TITLE)	ANNUAL OPENINGS	GROWTH (%)	WAGE RANGE
Automotive Body & Related Repairers	10	0.0	\$18–\$25
Bus & Truck Mech. & Diesel Engine Specialists	15	6.7	\$21–\$26
Cardiovascular Technologists & Techs	<5	0.0	\$16–\$33
Carpenters	50	8.3	\$19–\$27
Claims Adjusters, Examiners, & Investigators	5	0.0	\$29–\$39
Court, Municipal, & License Clerks	30	7.4	\$17–\$22
Dental Hygienists	5	11.1	\$30–\$38
Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	5	33.3	\$29–\$37
Electrical Power-Line Installers & Repairers	10	42.9	\$47–\$51
Electricians	25	10.0	\$18–\$30
HVAC & Refrigeration Mechanics & Installers	10	10.0	\$19–\$27
Industrial Machinery Mechanics	35	30.0	\$21–\$29
Machinists	35	6.2	\$17–\$25
Mobile Heavy Equip. Mechanics, Except Engines	10	12.5	\$22–\$29
Motorboat Mechanics & Service Techs	10	0.0	\$20–\$23
Paralegals & Legal Assistants	10	0.0	\$19–\$26
Plumbers, Pipefitters, & Steamfitters	15	8.3	\$19–\$30
Radiologic Technologists & Techs	15	14.3	\$24–\$30
Respiratory Therapists	5	40.0	\$31–\$31
Tool & Die Makers	10	0.0	\$21–\$30

Source: MCDA 2030.

Table 7: Top High-Demand, High Wage Bachelor's Degree or Higher Occupations Through 2030

OCCUPATION (JOB TITLE)	ANNUAL OPENINGS	ANNUAL GROWTH (%)	WAGE RANGE
Accountants & Auditors	40	10.8	\$25–\$38
Buyers & Purchasing Agents	15	0.0	\$21–\$35
Child, Family, & School Social Workers	30	10.7	\$18–\$31
Compliance Officers	5	20.0	\$26–\$37
Elementary School Teachers	55	-2.5	\$23–\$35*
Financial Managers	15	21.4	\$36–\$63
General & Operations Managers	110	12.5	\$22–\$49
Human Resources Specialists	15	7.7	\$22–\$32
Industrial Engineers	10	23.1	\$31–\$46
Industrial Production Managers	10	7.1	\$39–\$61
Lawyers	5	0.0	\$34–\$53
Management Analysts	10	11.1	\$35–\$66
Mechanical Engineers	20	16.7	\$29–\$42
Medical & Health Services Managers	25	35.0	\$35–\$48
Pharmacists	10	8.7	\$52–\$65
Project Management & Business Oper. Specialists	30	2.7	\$28–\$41
Registered Nurses	70	11.3	\$31–\$38
Secondary School Teachers	15	0.0	\$23–\$32*
Social & Community Service Managers	10	9.1	\$30–\$41
Software Developers & Quality Assurance Analysts	5	20.0	\$29–\$49

Source: MCDA 2030.

Drawing from Tables 3-7 above, the top in-demand jobs are ranked in Tables 8 and 9 below. There are far more projected openings in occupations that require a high school diploma or equivalent and short-term training than those in other categories, but these occupations also pay lower hourly rates (Table 8). Table 19 ranks occupations with more educational requirements and higher wages.

Fast food and retail occupations dominate the top of this list, consistent with the Region’s extensive Leisure and Hospitality sector. Heavy tractor-trailer truck drivers top the list of high demand, high wage jobs, indicative of continuing growth in the Region’s transportation industry. The expanding healthcare sector is reflected in the number of openings for Registered Nurses and home health care aids. Childcare workers and elementary school teachers are also in high demand, consistent with stakeholder discussion during the Strategy Session.

Table 8: Occupations with the Most Projected Annual Openings Through 2030 - High Demand (Not High Wage), Require High School Diploma or Equivalent Short-Term Training

Occupation (Job Title)	Annual Openings	Wage Range (\$\$, hourly)
Fast Food & Counter Workers	420	11-13
Stockers & Order Fillers	310	14-17
Retail Salespersons	275	12-17
Waiters & Waitresses	240	11-21
Home Health & Personal Care Aids	215	13-15
Customer Service Representatives	110	13-19
Janitors & Cleaners, Except Housekeepers	110	14-17
Childcare Workers	70	12-19
Landscaping & Groundskeeping Workers	70	14-17

Source: Our own compilation from MCDA 2030.

Table 9: Occupations with the Most Projected Annual Openings through 2030 - High Demand and High Wage, Require Education/Training Beyond High School

Occupation (Job Title)	Annual Openings	Wage Range (\$s, hourly)	Education required
Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	125	21-25	Postsecondary Certificate or Moderate-Term Training
General & Operations Managers	110	22-49	Bachelors Degree or Higher
Registered Nurses	70	31-38	Bachelors Degree or Higher
Aircraft Mechanics & Service Techs	70	19-30	Postsecondary Certificate or Moderate-Term Training
Maintenance & Repair Workers, General	70	14-24	Postsecondary Certificate or Moderate-Term Training
Elementary School Teachers	55	23-35	Bachelors Degree or Higher
Carpenters	50	19-27	Associates Degree/Long-Term Apprenticeships
Operating Engineers	45	24-28	Postsecondary Certificate or Moderate-Term Training
Accountants	40	25-38	Bachelors Degree or Higher
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, & Brazers	40	16-22	Postsecondary Certificate or Moderate-Term Training
Insurance Sales Agents	40	21-61	Postsecondary Certificate or Moderate-Term Training

Source: Our own compilation from MCDA 2030.

Knowledge and Skills Needs

An analysis of the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the employment needs of the employers in the region, including employment needs of in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

The skill needs of employers with in-demand industries are determined through a combination of labor market data, job postings, and information directly from local businesses. Business Solutions Professionals (BSPs) within workforce programs (MWAs, Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS), Veterans Services) establish ongoing relationships with employers throughout the WIOA region, maintaining a high level of local intelligence regarding their needs.

Regardless of industry or occupation, all employers in the region cite the need for workplace skills. Also referred to as “essential” or “soft” skills, these skills are critical to success on any job. Those most often required include attendance and punctuality, a positive and professional attitude, respect for authority, and the ability and commitment to hard work.

Healthcare is a top growth area, with workers needed over a range of education and skill levels. Registered Nurses, nursing assistants, and home health aides rank high on the MCDA 2030 occupational growth tables. Regional Leadership also notes the need for medical secretaries, administrative assistants, and mental health counselors, as well as broader needs in healthcare practitioners and social and human services occupations. These occupations cover a broad range of education and training levels, from Registered Nurses (requiring a bachelor’s degree or associate’s degree) to home health aides and administrative assistants (requiring high school diploma and/or short-term training).

Manufacturing companies are in need of entry-level production workers, as well as machine operators and programmers requiring training ranging from on-the-job training to an associate’s degree. The manufacturing industry also needs mid-level skilled technicians with cross-training to address machine repair and operation, requiring knowledge in hydraulics, robotics, electrical, and more. In addition, welders need American Welding Society certification in multiple types of welding.

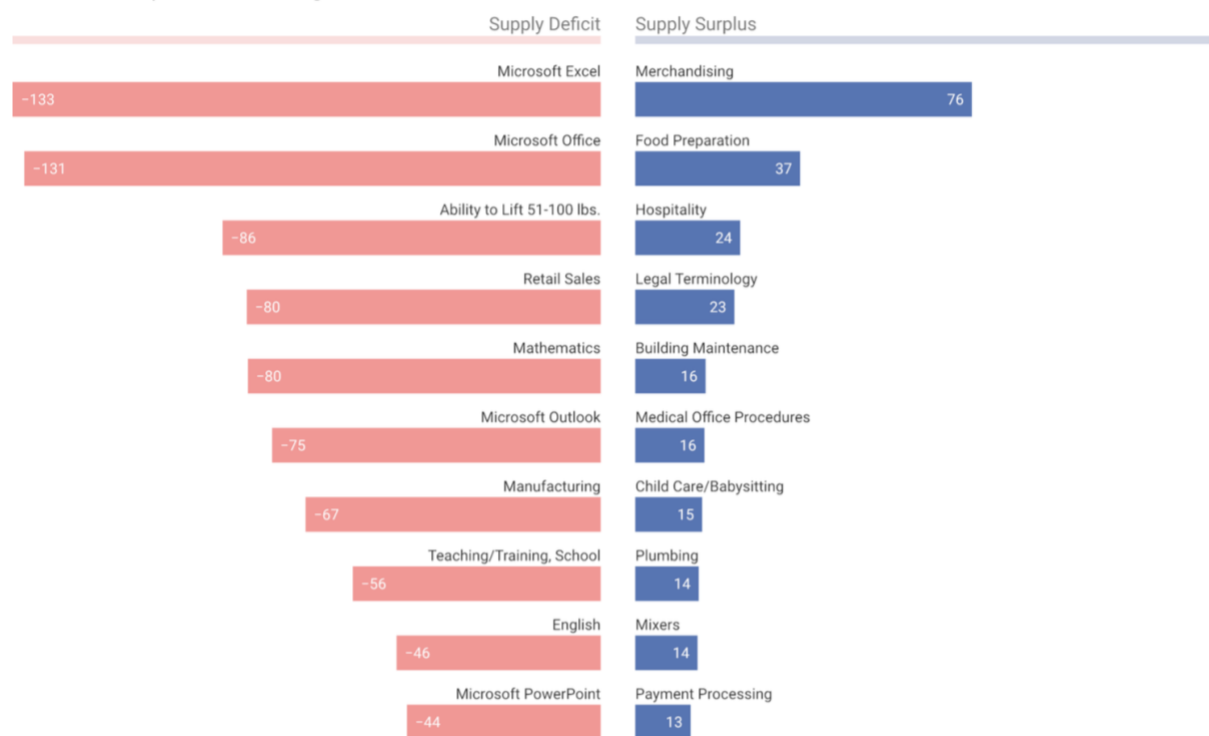
Manufacturing companies are also more in need of highly skilled positions than ever before, such as various types of engineers and designers. These positions are very difficult to find in the labor pool within the region, so companies are often forced to recruit from outside. Talent attraction continues to be a challenge because of the lack of broadband internet, large cities, and amenities. In addition, the lack of housing at a variety of price points is a barrier to attracting talent from outside the area. The lack of housing also presents an issue related to transportation, as workers have a higher cost for commuting to and from available homes.

The *Transportation and Warehousing* industry is in need of heavy and tractor-trailer drivers, which are estimated in the MCDA 2030 tables to be the most in-demand high-wage occupation through 2030. Specifically, more drivers with CDL certification are needed. This has been a consistent top employment need from the previous plan. Regional Leadership identifies light truck drivers, laborers, freight workers, stockers, and material movers as additional key needs in this sector. *Construction* companies need workers with the ability to install HVAC and electrical, measure and cut accurately, frame and finish carpentry (a top high-wage occupation in the MCDA 2030 forecast), and follow safety regulations. Although construction typically is seasonal, workers with cross-functional skill sets are highly sought after to work on outdoor projects in the summer and indoor projects in the winter.

The *Retail Trade* and *Accommodation and Food Service* industries traditionally hired individuals without much training, unless hiring for management or skilled positions, such as Executive Chef. Highly skilled positions in food service used to require an industry certification and/or associate's degree in the culinary arts. However, the severe need for workers in this industry has caused many employers to relax their requirement for credentials and offer on the job training. Most employers in these industries need employees with good customer service skills, but they will train them in-house on all other occupational skills.

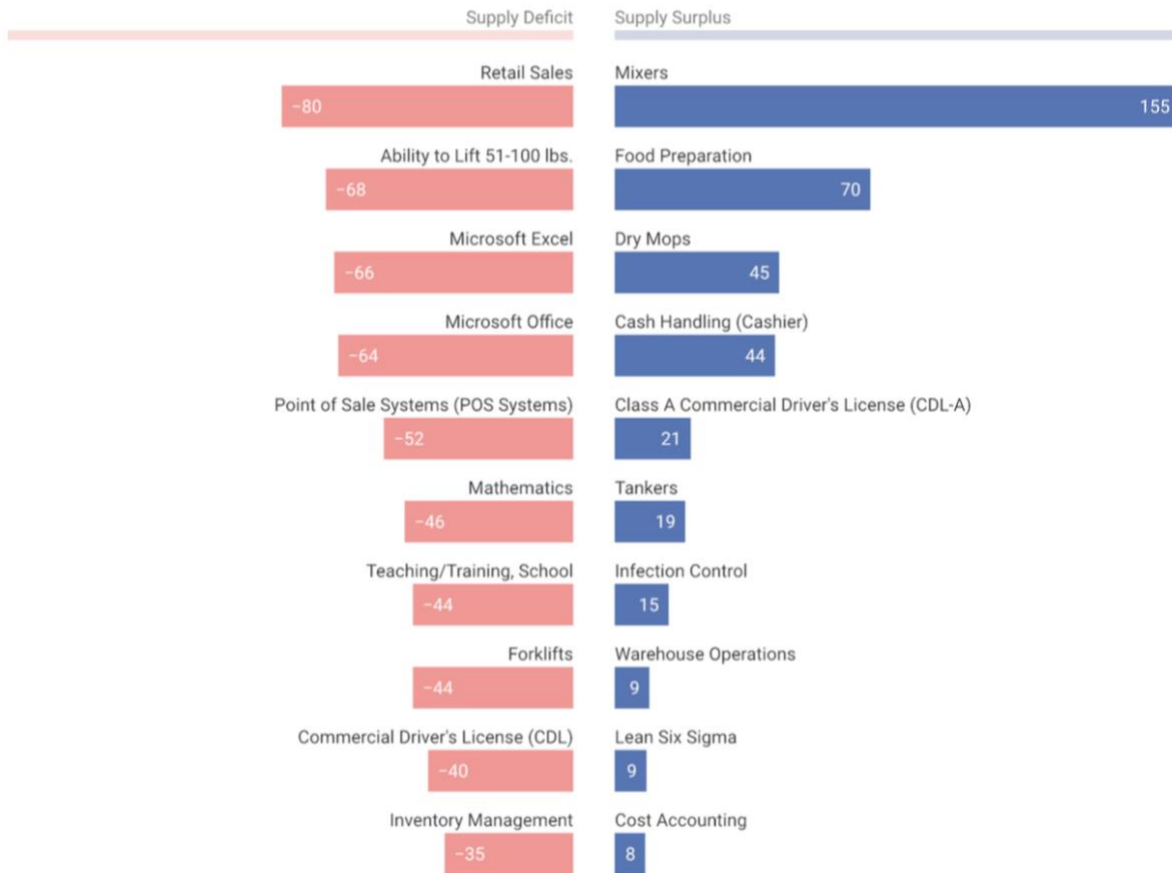
Figures 5 and 6 present skills gaps in the MW!NC and Region 7B across all occupations. Many of the skill needs are consistent with the sector-specific needs described previously: Commercial Drivers License, retail sales, and teaching. A notable recent change is the deficit of Microsoft Office and Excel skills. These were listed as a top skills surplus four years ago, and they now rank as a top deficit. Leadership confirm this new trend, that employers are consistently in need of more Microsoft Application skills.

Figure 5: Skills Gaps - 2023 Q4, All Occupations, MW!NC



Source: JobsEQ

Figure 6: Skills Gaps - 2023 Q4, All Occupations, Region 7B



Source: JobsEQ

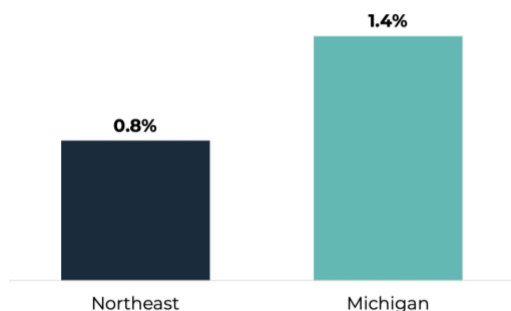
Workforce Analysis

An analysis of the current workforce in the region, including employment and unemployment data, labor market trends, and the educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment.

Background Demographic Trends in the Region: Population Change, Age Distribution, Race/Ethnic Mix

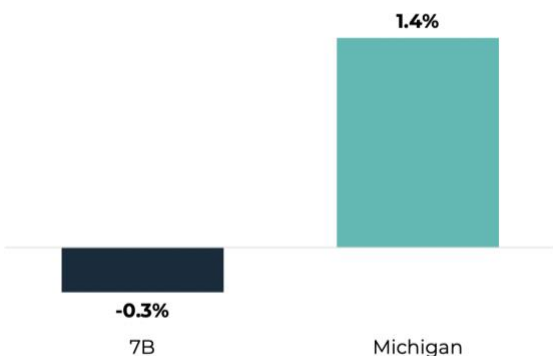
Region 3 is home to 273,000 residents, and this population is evenly split between MW!NC and Region 7B. As a whole, Region 3 is experiencing slow growth, less than half the statewide average over 2012-2022 (Figures 7 and 8).

Figure 7: Population Change, 2012-2022, MW!NC



Source: MCDA 2024 from Population Estimates Program, US Census Bureau.

Figure 8: Population Change, 2012-2022, Region 7B

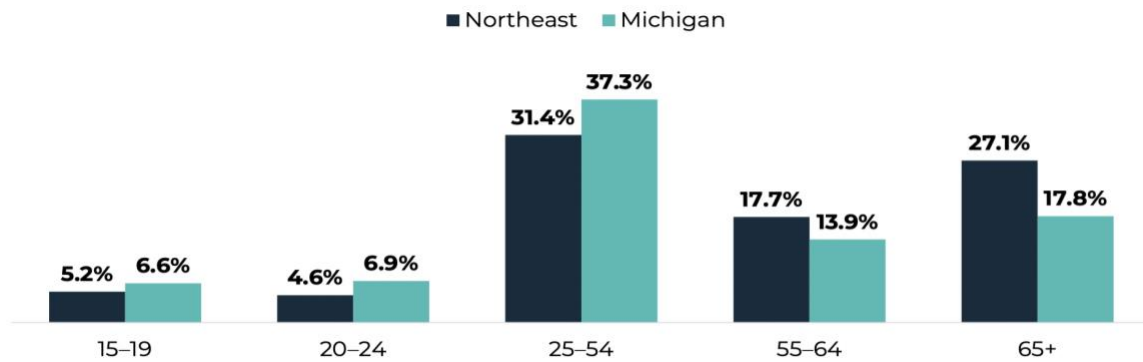


Source: MCDA 2024 from Population Estimates Program, US Census Bureau.

Region 3's population distribution is considerably older than statewide averages (Figures 9 and 10). Nearly 45% of the population is 55+. The Region's 65+ population makes up ten percentage points more of the total population than the state's average, and the higher-than-average proportion of the population 55-64 suggests the region will struggle with labor force participation and will have to work

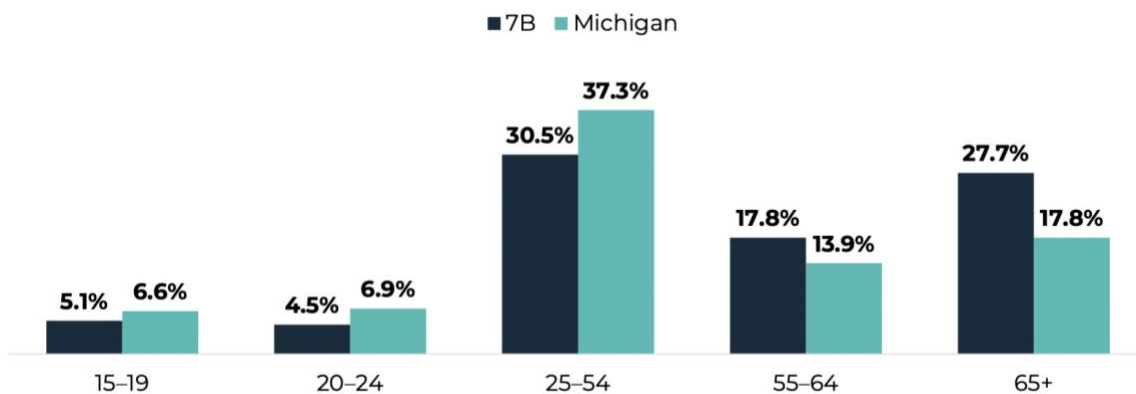
diligently to replace retiring workers in the coming years. This is a challenge, given that younger age groups are smaller in numbers.

Figure 9: Population by Age Group, MW!NC



Source: MCDA 2024 from 2018-2022 Five-Year Estimates, American Community Survey, US Census Bureau.

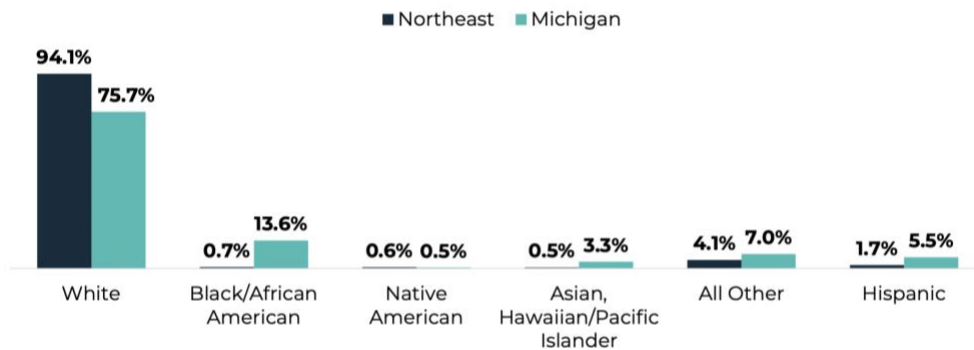
Figure 10: Population by Age Group, Region 7B



Source: MCDA 2024 from 2018-2022 Five-Year Estimates, American Community Survey, US Census Bureau.

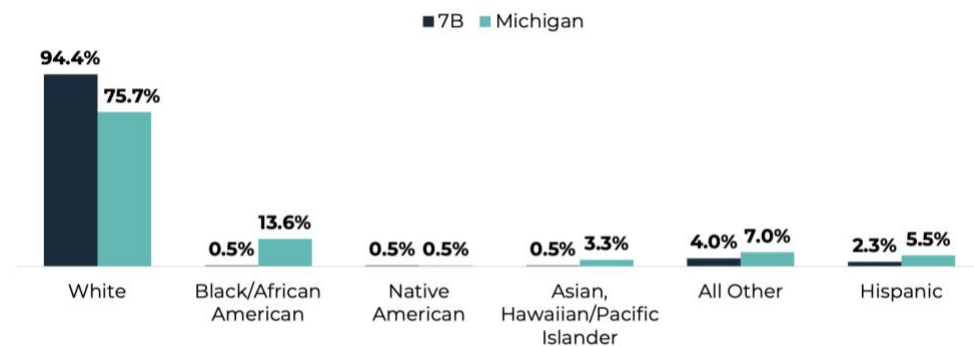
In terms of race and ethnicity, the Region is predominantly white (94%), compared to a statewide average of 76% (Figures 11 and 12).

Figure 11: Population by Race and Ethnicity, MW!NC



Source: MCDA 2024 from 2018-2022 Five-Year Estimates, American Community Survey, US Census Bureau.

Figure 12: Population by Race and Ethnicity, Region 7B



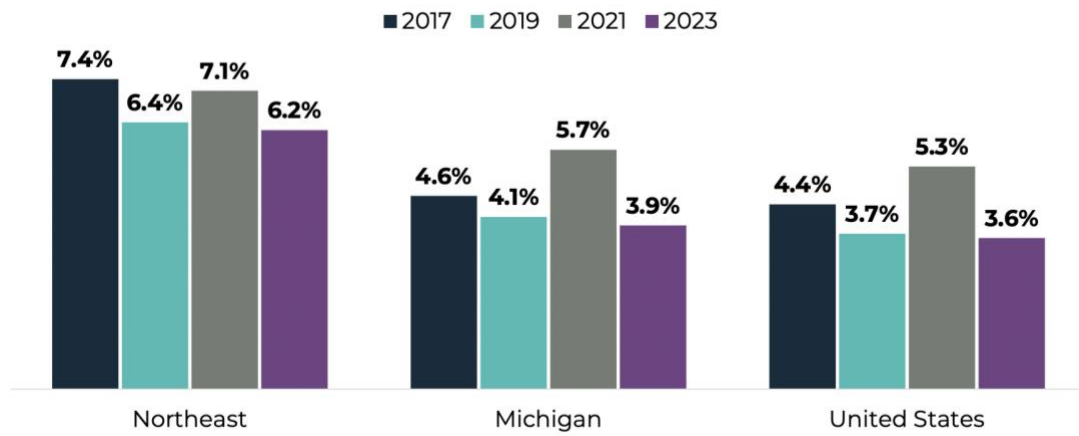
Source: MCDA 2024 from 2018-2022 Five-Year Estimates, American Community Survey, US Census Bureau.

Labor Market Trends: Employment/Unemployment Data & Labor Force Characteristics

Unemployment in 2023 returned to pre-pandemic levels, at 6.3%, though it remains elevated compared to statewide and national trends (Figures 13 and 14). Elevated unemployment in the Region is largely driven by higher unemployment among those 55+ and among males. Figures 15 and 16 show that the 55+ population is a greater share of the region's residents, and that this population has both lower rates of labor force participation and lower rates of employment than statewide averages. Unemployment among males is elevated (7% and 8.8%, compared to 6.2% in Michigan), while unemployment among females is level with Michigan at 5.8% (Figures 17 and 18).

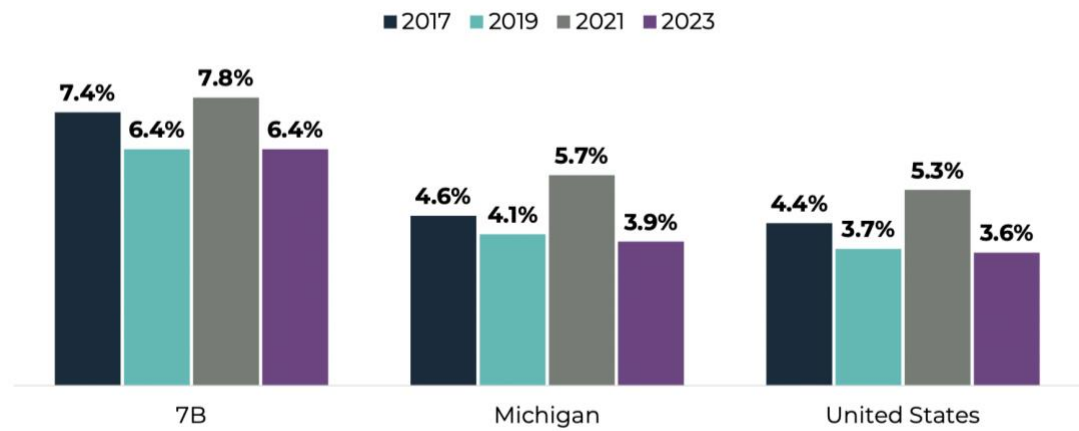
Figures 17 and 18 indicate slightly higher unemployment rates in Region 7B than in MW!NC (7.4% and 6.5%, respectively), looking at 2022 ACS data.

Figure 13: Unemployment Rates by Area and Year, MW!NC



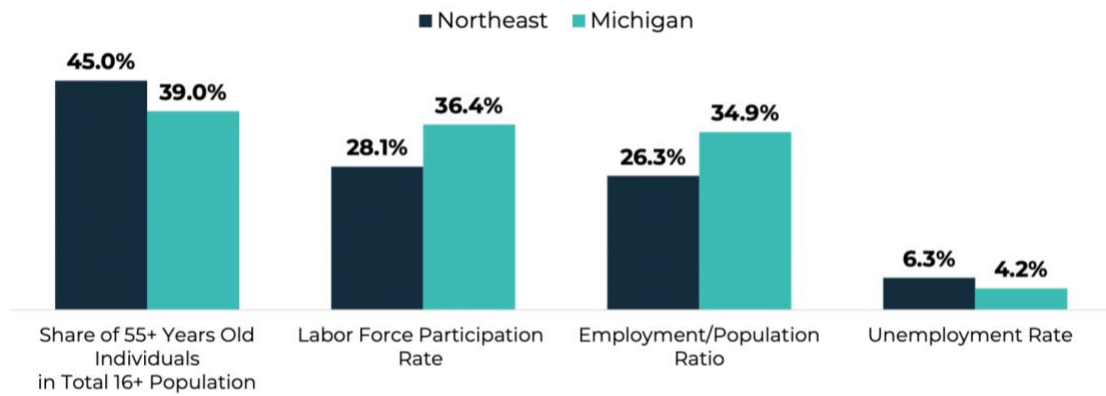
Source: MCDA 2024 from Local Area Unemployment Statistics.

Figure 14: Unemployment Rates by Area and Year, Region 7B



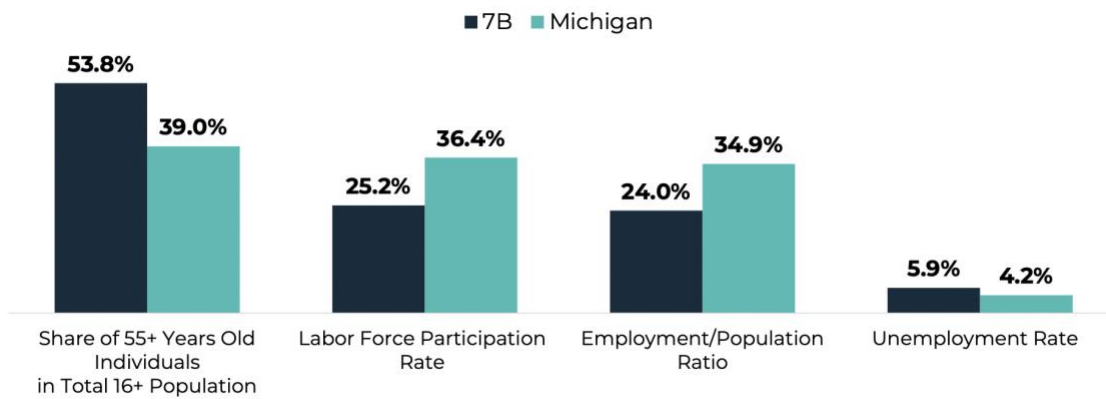
Source: MCDA 2024 from Local Area Unemployment Statistics.

Figure 15: Labor Force Status of Older Workers, MW!NC



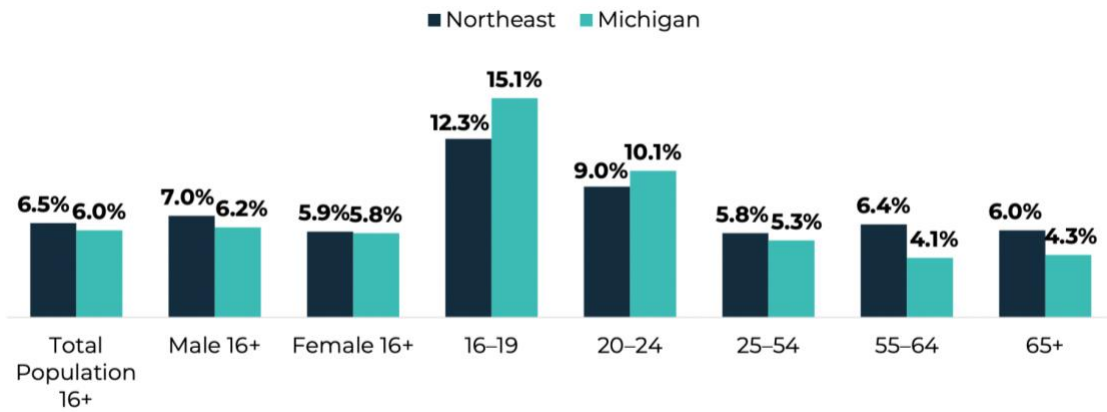
Source: MCDA 2024 from 2018-2022 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, US Census Bureau.

Figure 16: Labor Force Status of Older Workers, Region 7B



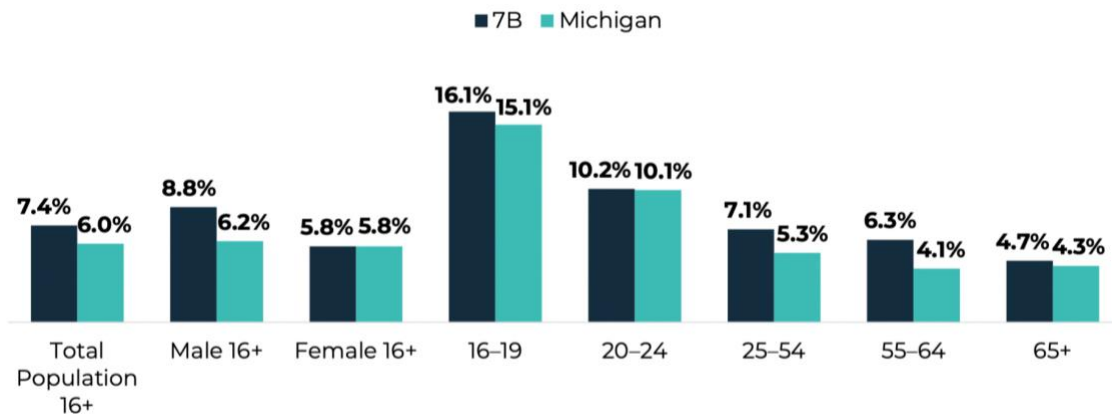
Source: MCDA 2024 from 2018-2022 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, US Census Bureau.

Figure 17: Unemployment Rates by Age and Gender, MW!NC



Source: MCDA 2024 from 2018-2022 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, US Census Bureau.

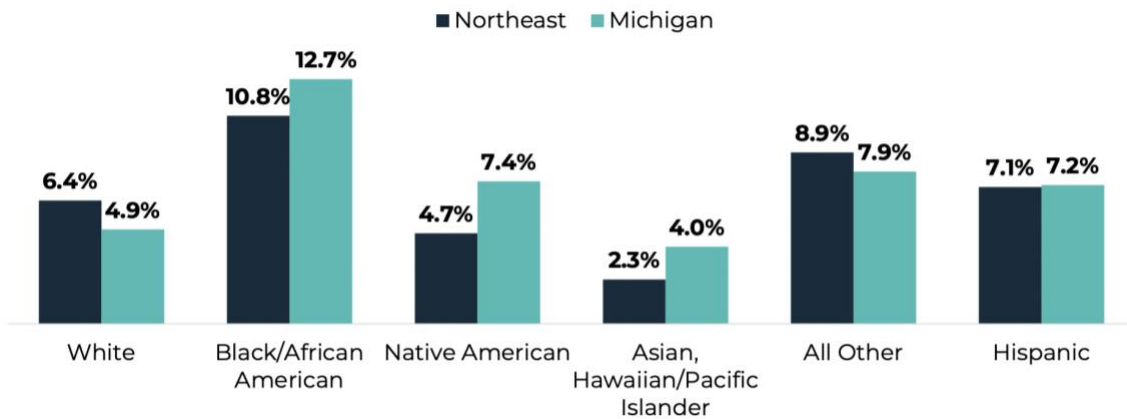
Figure 18: Unemployment Rates by Age and Gender, Region 7B



Source: MCDA 2024 from 2018-2022 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, US Census Bureau.

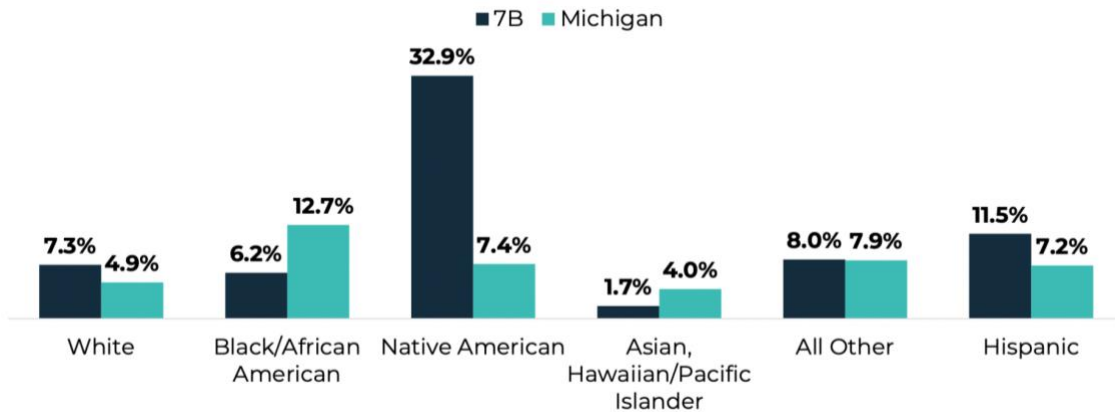
Unemployment by race and ethnicity is shown in Figures 19 and 20. The Region is predominantly white, so unemployment rates among very small groups can be difficult to interpret. We note a high 33% unemployment rate identified among Native Americans in 7B, though Native Americans comprise 0.5% of the population in 7B. This is likely attributable to a shift in business model for the area’s largest employer of the Native American population, Soaring Eagle Casino, where food service workers were laid off and transitioned to an outsourced company. Small changes such as this show up as large percentages for such a small group, but this could be something to watch over time.

Figure 19: Unemployment Rates by Race and Ethnicity, MW!NC



Source: MCDA 2024 from 2018-2022 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, US Census Bureau.

Figure 20: Unemployment Rates by Race and Ethnicity, Region 7B

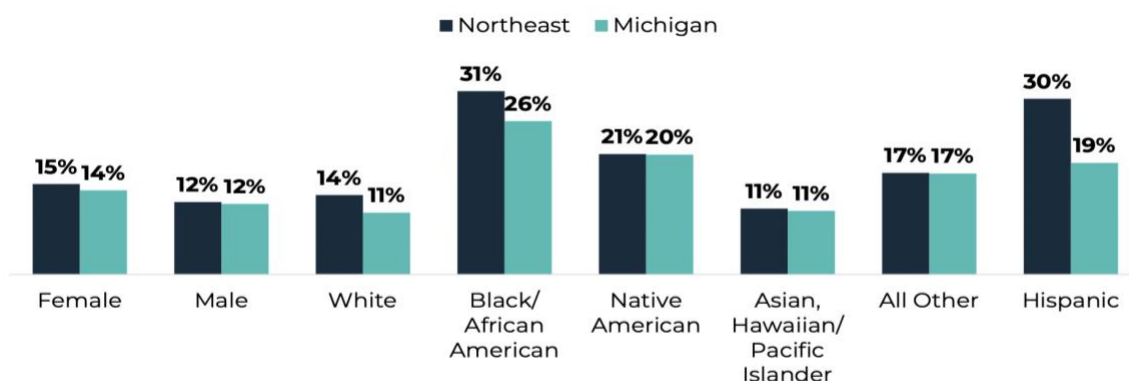


Source: MCDA 2024 from 2018-2022 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, US Census Bureau.

Individuals with Barriers to Employment

Poverty across the Region is elevated, largely driven by an elevated poverty rate in Region 7B (16.8%) compared to MW!NC (13.8%) and Michigan (13.1%) (Figures 21 and 22). Given the low populations among all non-white groups, percentages of poverty among non-white groups are likely to be noisy and are difficult to draw conclusions from in a single year data point.

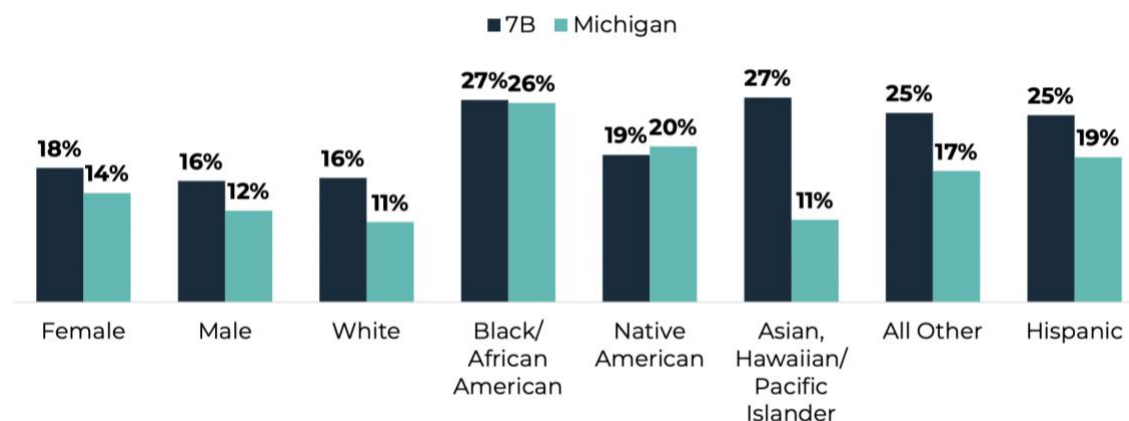
Figure 21: Poverty by Race and Ethnicity, MW!NC



Source: 2018-2022 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau (Table 14)

Source: MCDA 2024 from 2018-2022 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, US Census Bureau.

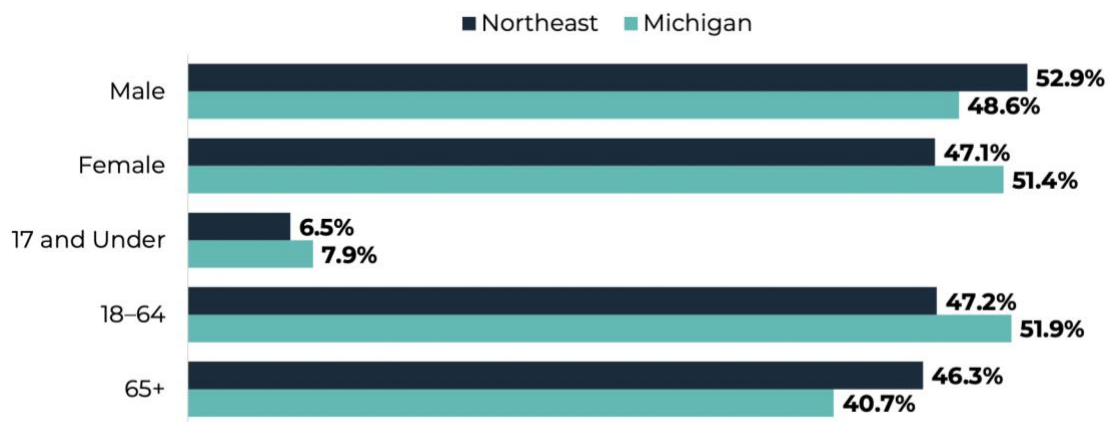
Figure 22: Poverty by Race and Ethnicity, Region 7B



Source: MCDA 2024 from 2018-2022 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, US Census Bureau.

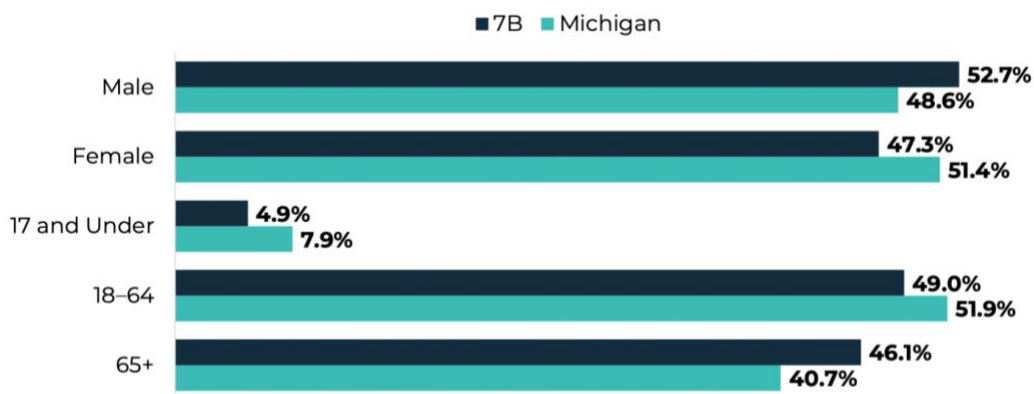
Disability rates across the Region were high among those 65+ but lower than state averages among those 64 and under (Figures 23 and 24). Notably, there are more males with disabilities than females, the opposite of the statewide trend.

Figure 23: Population with a Disability by Age and Gender, MW!NC



Source: MCDA 2024 from 2018-2022 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, US Census Bureau.

Figure 24: Population with a Disability by Age and Gender, Region 7B

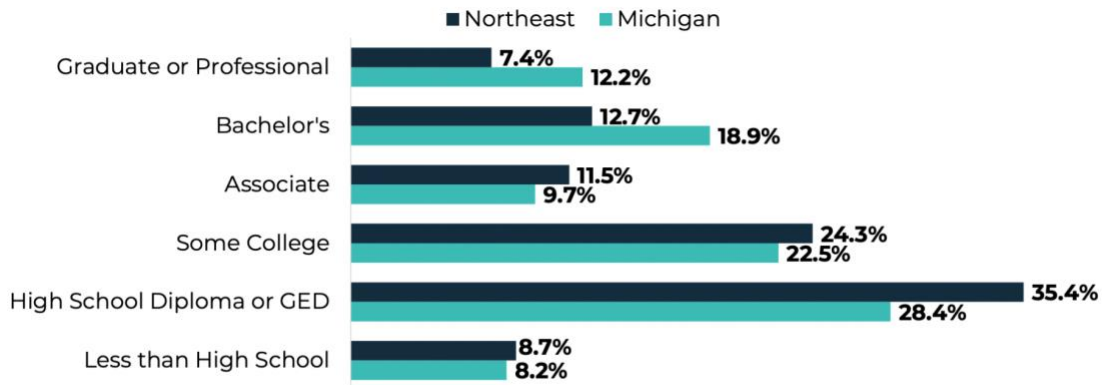


Source: MCDA 2024 from 2018-2022 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, US Census Bureau.

Educational and Skill Levels of the Workforce

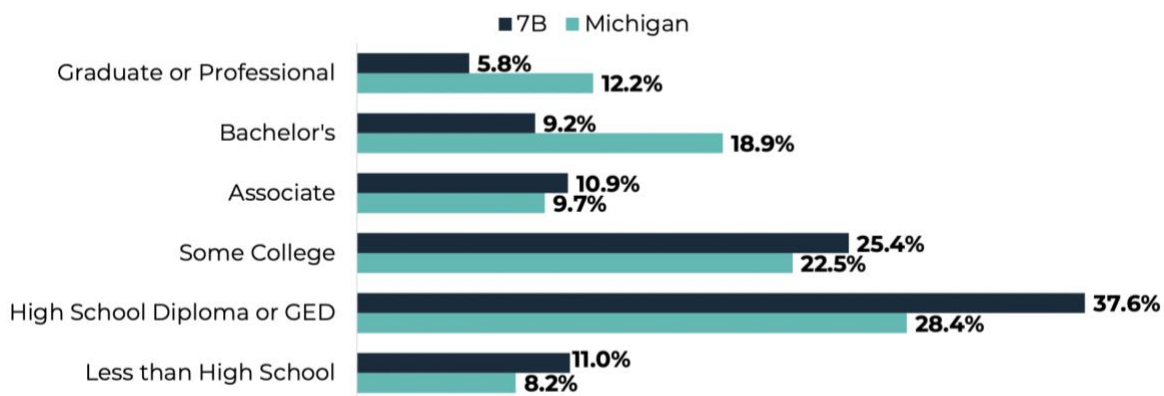
Educational attainment is relatively low in Region 3. The region has nearly half the rate of college and advanced degrees than the statewide average, and the proportion with a high school diploma or equivalency is around 30% more than the state average (Figures 25 and 26).

Figure 25: Educational Attainment (Ages 25+), MW!NC



Source: MCDA 2024 from 2018-2022 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, US Census Bureau.

Figure 26: Educational Attainment (Ages 25+), Region 7B



Source: MCDA 2024 from 2018-2022 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, US Census Bureau.

Workforce Development in the Region

An analysis of workforce development activities in the region, including available education and training opportunities. This analysis must include the strengths and weaknesses of workforce development activities in the region and the region's capacity to provide the workforce development activities necessary to address the education and skill needs of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment, and the employment needs of employers in the region.

Workforce Development Activities

The workforce development system in the region consists of multiple agencies and programs. Together, they form a network of services that prepare and maintain a skilled workforce to meet employer needs. The system consists of four domains of services:

- **Education**, including CTE, general K-12, adult education (GED/HSE), and postsecondary certificate and degree programs, as well as combinations thereof such as dual enrollment and middle college.
 - *Providers* in this domain include all K-12 school systems; four Independent School Districts (ISDs); Iosco-RESA Adult Education; Houghton Lake Alternative and Community Education; Alpena Community College; Kirtland Community College; Kirtland Gaylord M-TEC; North Central Michigan College; Mid-Michigan Community College; Industrial Arts Institute; and several private sector postsecondary training providers including Road Warriors Truck Driving School.
 - Kirtland Community College and Alpena Community College recently expanded partnerships with Saginaw Valley State University, increasing access to Bachelor of Science degrees in Nursing (BSN).
 - A Healthcare Career Pathway, funded by a grant that ended in December 2023, increased nursing training at Alpena Community College and fostered collaborations within the healthcare field in the Region.
- **Workforce Programs**, including career exploration and planning, case management, job search assistance, work-based training, funding for occupational training provided by the education sector, workplace readiness, training on self-advocacy, and connections to local employers. Specialized services are provided to opportunity youth, veterans, individuals and youth with disabilities, individuals on public assistance, justice-impacted individuals, migrant and seasonal farmworkers (MSFW), and more. Programs include, but are not limited to: WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth; Employment Services including Veterans Services and MSFW; PATH/TANF; State Vocational Rehabilitation; Trade Act (all acts); and Jobs for Michigan's Graduates.
 - *Providers* in this category include Michigan Works! Northeast Consortium (MW!NC); Michigan Works! Region 7B (Region 7B); and programs under the Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Opportunity (LEO): Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS), Bureau of Services for Blind Persons (BSBP), Veterans Services, and Migrant & Seasonal

Farmworker Program.

- **Supportive Services**, including public assistance for food, childcare, income, utilities, and more; unemployment compensation; transportation services; food pantries; domestic violence shelters; substance use disorder rehabilitation; and many other programs that assist individuals and employers to remove barriers to successful, long-term employment.
 - *Providers* in this domain include the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS); LEO-Unemployment Insurance Agency; Northeast Michigan Community Services Agency (NEMCSA); local transit authorities; Great Start to Quality Resource Center; United Way; Health Departments; 2-1-1; Northern Michigan Substance Abuse Services (NMSAS); faith-based organizations such as Catholic Human Services and Salvation Army; and more. Both Michigan Works! Agencies also directly provide supportive services that address barriers to employment through a variety of funding sources, including the Barrier Removal Employment Success program.
- **Business Services**, including hiring assistance, training programs, retention services, layoff aversion strategies, talent attraction services, labor market information, and wage data, are available through a variety of workforce development programs. In addition, business services across the ecosystem include economic development incentives and supports like site selection and growth; business planning and counseling; help with government contracting; access to overlooked talent pools (including justice-impacted individuals, veterans, and those with disabilities); coaching on accommodations for individuals with disabilities; retention services to reduce turnover; and work-based training programs, such as apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and incumbent worker training.
 - *Providers* in this domain include both Michigan Works! Agencies, economic development entities covering all counties; the Michigan Small Business Development Center; APEX Accelerator; MRS; BSBP; and The Network (BRN administered by Region 7B). In addition, providers in most other domains work closely with employers to better understand their needs and support their workforce, including MWAs, Veterans Services, MRS and BSBP, and Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. All community colleges in the region have capacity to customize training programs for local employers.

Education and Training Opportunities

Education and training activities are available for most in-demand industries and occupations. At the postsecondary level, the four community colleges, University Center, and private training providers offer the following programs for in-demand industries (this list is not all-inclusive):

Table 10: Education and Training Activities in the Region (not all-inclusive)

<i>Healthcare</i>	<i>Manufacturing</i>	<i>Construction and Trades</i>	<i>Information and Professional</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Certified Nurse Aide ● Registered Nurse ● Health Information Technology ● Surgical Tech ● Medical Assistant ● Critical Care Paramedic ● Community Paramedic ● Fast Track Healthcare Program (Clinical Medical Assistant; EKG Technician; Phlebotomy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Manufacturing Technology ● Mechatronics ● CNC Machining ● Automation and Robotics ● Programmable Logistics Control ● CAD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Welding ● Automotive ● HVAC ● Concrete Technology ● Utility Line Tech ● Electrical Systems ● Mobility Operators – ROV and UAV ● CDL - A ● Utility Arborist ● Diesel Technician ● EV Technician 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Computer Information Systems ● Management ● Computer Aided Design ● IT Fundamentals ● Cybersecurity ● Law Enforcement

Source: Our own compilation from Regional Leadership.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs are offered by eight ISDs and/or local districts. The programs prepare students for most in-demand industries, and are designed to respond to the needs of industry within each community. Several programs offer industry-recognized credentials and/or college credit, some through early or middle college. Many of the programs listed above at the postsecondary level are also available through CTE programs; the programs work together to offer a career pathway with increasing skill levels and access to local employers.

The primary Adult Education program offered throughout the region is administered by Iosco-RESA. Houghton Lake Alternative and Community Education is a partner for Adult Education in Crawford and Oscoda Counties. Adults can access services at any location to upgrade basic academic skills, improve computer and workplace literacy, and prepare for their GED, HiSET, or other high school equivalency exam.

The top 19 awards – certificates and credentials – earned during the 2021-2022 school year are presented in Table 11.

A number of high-demand occupations highlighted previously feature prominently here, including several health occupations, welding, CAD/CADD drafting, and HVAC technician. Notably, Registered Nurse Awards (122) are down a little from the previous Regional Plan (146 awards in 2019-2022). There

have been significant efforts in this space in 2023 with the Healthcare Career Pathways and BSN partnerships, hopefully increasing this number in the future.

Table 11: Top 19 Awards by Program, 2021-2022 Academic Year

	Total Awards
Liberal Arts and Sciences/Liberal Studies	160
Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse	122
Business Administration and Management, General	113
Lineworker	91
Criminal Justice/Police Science	53
Welding Technology/Welder	45
Medical/Clinical Assistant	43
Medical Radiologic Technology/Science - Radiation Therapist	29
Automobile/Automotive Mechanics Technology/Technician	22
Heating, Air Conditioning, Ventilation and Refrigeration Maintenance Technology/Technician	20
Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse Training	19
Cardiovascular Technology/Technologist	18
Surgical Technology/Technologist	18
Electrician	16
Electrical, Electronic, and Communications Engineering Technology/Technician	15
General Studies	14
Health Professions and Related Clinical Sciences, Other	13
CAD/CADD Drafting and/or Design Technology/Technician	13
Physical Therapy Assistant	10

Source: Our own compilation from JobsEQ data provided by MW!NC and Region 7B.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The region identified several strengths and weaknesses within the workforce development system. The Regional Service Strategies section below uses these strengths to mitigate weaknesses and turn disadvantages into opportunity.

Strengths

- *Make-It-Work Approach:* The region's service providers have a long history of strong partnerships, resulting in collaborative efforts that stretch limited resources.
- *Youth Engagement:* A range of programs are building awareness and opportunities for youth, such as Jobs for Michigan's Graduates, MW Youth programs – in-school and out-of-school, in-school navigators, CTE programs, school partnerships, and college access networks (OCAN). In addition to these programs, career exploration events are helping to expose youth to local options for career pathways, including MiCareerQuest, Talent Tours, Manufacturing Day, and Apprenticeship Week.
- *Jobs-Based Job Training:* The region successfully emphasizes apprenticeships, on-the-job training, Going PRO Talent Fund awards, and is collaborating to create meaningful training opportunities.
- *Broad Reach:* The region recognizes not everyone can or wants to attend college and cultivates opportunities for a variety of education/training levels, ensuring that there are multiple pathways to employment and economic opportunity.

Weaknesses

The labor market and economic conditions presented previously highlight a number of demographic challenges in this region:

- An older age distribution, with fewer young people aging into the workforce than seasoned workers reaching retirement age.
- Relatively high levels of unemployment and poverty.
- Lower than average educational attainment.
- A significant share of jobs (present and predicted future) are in lower-wage occupations.
- Relatively high long-term unemployment as those who exhaust unemployment benefits do not become re-employed.

In addition, the geography of the sparsely populated region creates challenges for the workforce development system. The population of slightly less than 278,000 people is spread across a large

expanse of 7,865 square miles.³ Together, the 14 counties are slightly larger than the state of Massachusetts.⁴ This causes several challenges to service delivery for all domains:

- *Transportation options* are very limited. County-based transit authorities exist only in some counties, with limited service. The low population density does not support the full range of transportation services. Therefore, individuals typically use their own vehicles for transportation to and from work. If their income does not support a reliable vehicle and ongoing maintenance, their ability to report regularly and on time is greatly reduced.
- *Lack of available and/or affordable childcare* and long drives to childcare opportunities constrain working opportunities for parents.
- *Lack of affordable housing*, which is also compounded by limited transportation services and a dispersed population, constrain employment and training opportunities.
- *Educational opportunities* are constrained, despite the relatively large number of programs and providers, due to geography. If a student lives too far from the program of their choice, they cannot attend because of the vast travel distance required.
- *Lack of broadband internet service* is a significant challenge for small businesses, entrepreneurs, and students. Though improvements are on the horizon, the lack of comprehensive broadband coverage in this rural region is a challenge.

Together, the “Big 3” structural challenges of transportation, available and affordable housing, and childcare were reiterated throughout the strategic planning process. We underscore the difficulties of workforce development amidst these challenges, though directly remedying them is largely beyond the scope of workforce development.

Capacity

The strengths and weaknesses discussed above illustrate both how well Regional Leadership are aware of the ongoing challenges and how dedicated they are to working on overcoming these barriers.

While services are excellent and well-connected to both employer and job seeker needs, this is a challenging task in a geographically dispersed region. Stretching program funds over a wider geographic area with transportation challenges inherently reduces capacity. Additional funding could improve capacity to provide more resources in more locations, improving accessibility. Additional funding would provide capacity to expand in underserved communities and assist more people with higher quality and targeted services. In a region with more persistent and structural barriers to employment, more individualized attention, longer-term relationships with staff, and more supportive services are

³ U.S. Census Bureau, data file from Geography Division based on the TIGER/Geographic Identification Code Scheme (TIGER/GICS), 2010

⁴ Land area in square miles, US Census Bureau Quick Facts, 2010

especially valuable. Additional funding could provide more of this resource-intensive support. Additional training dollars could support more individuals with work-based training such as work experience and apprenticeships.

Additional capacity can be achieved through enhanced partnerships. Although the region is very strong in collaboration and relationships across all providers, there is always room for improvement. This is a collaborative region, accustomed to making the most of the resources available. In the Strategy Session, leadership discussed ways to continue and enhance collaborations for more capacity to reach both job seekers and employers.

Regional Service Strategies

A description of regional service strategies that have been or will be established as a result of coordinated regional analysis and delivery of services, including the use of cooperative service delivery agreements, when appropriate.

New Opportunities and Strategies

During the strategy session, participants created aspirational statements to help envision the desired end-state of regional strategic approaches. Participants envisioned a Region 3 where:

- *The workforce development system uses efficient processes that offer easy access to programs and services, especially for those who are economically disadvantaged*
- *Partners within the workforce development system are well-connected and collaborative*
- *Services are well-recognized due to effective promotion and outreach*
- *Employers provide strong leadership and voice regarding their talent needs and strategic direction*
- *Youth engage in multiple career awareness activities starting at an early age and are therefore well-informed about local career pathways and available training options*
- *Youth have a clear pathway through education and employment to local opportunities*
- *The system is engaged with and contributing to efforts that reduce systemic barriers, such as affordable housing, available/affordable childcare, and effective transportation*

In addition, the State of Michigan's WIOA plan was released during the planning period. The Department of Labor & Economic Opportunity (LEO) summarized the plan into an easily accessible document and shared it with each WIOA planning region. The regional and local approaches are intended to align and support statewide goals, which include:

- Pillar 1: Skills → Help more Michiganders earn a skills certificate or degree
- Pillar 2: Opportunity → Increase access to opportunities that grow the middle class
- Pillar 3: Growth → Support business and entrepreneurial growth through talent solutions

To move the Region forward toward this vision, Regional Leadership identified the opportunities and strategies in Table 12. Alignment with each of the state's Pillars are identified as well.

Table 12: Region 3 Strategies

Opportunity	Strategies
<i>Strengthen employer engagement and leadership within the system</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Define the value proposition to employers and strengthen relationships to understand changing talent needs ● Identify employers that are succeeding with talent recruitment, development, and retention and promote their models, i.e. Exit interviews, Investment in addressing barriers such as available and affordable childcare ● Use sector strategies to increase collaboration across partners and companies (<i>Pillar 1</i>) ● Collaborate with economic development organizations to include regional priorities in wider economic strategies and to learn best practices from regions with similar priorities/challenges (<i>Pillar 3</i>)
<i>Leverage technology to increase connections and collaboration among partners (Pillar 1)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Customize services to a wide range of technology abilities (<i>Pillar 2</i>) ● Streamline onboarding with tech screening/microbadging <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Utilize existing tech skills screening to identify and fill skill gaps ○ Provide more extensive tech skills where needed ● Combine with face-to-face / hybrid for workplace skills ● Increase use of social media/technology for greater visibility in the community and collaboration among partners
<i>Address the different needs of generations and make intergenerational connections</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Facilitate educational opportunities on communication preferences for all generations ● Use technology to better reach younger generations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ More virtual options for programming ○ Increase social media outreach ● Increase intergenerational mentoring ● Support entrepreneurship opportunities for young people to take over businesses from retiring small business owners (<i>Pillar 3</i>) ● Increase financial literacy for younger and retiring generations (<i>Pillar 2</i>)

<p><i>Support progress in “The Big 3” challenges: housing, childcare, transportation (Pillar 2)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Focus on workforce issues related to these systemic barriers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Apprenticeships for childcare, construction workforce ○ Entrepreneurship, especially related to childcare ● Involve employers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Educate companies on the barriers ○ Help employers strategize retention and attraction strategies: Company cars, arranged carpooling / incentives, revolving loan fund for car repair/purchase ● Have a voice to represent the challenges that the workforce faces ● Maintain a workforce-focused effort here; avoid spreading too thin in this broad policy space
<p><i>Maintain strong partnerships and efforts for youth career exploration and planning (Pillars 1 and 2)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Connect with youth at a younger age <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ More schools involved in youth career exploration ○ More youth from each school participating ○ Elementary age career exploration ● Manage expectations of younger generations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Entry level progression in the workforce ○ In person vs. virtual opportunities

Existing Collaborations

The region benefits from a number of formal collaborations among sector-based groups, economic development agencies, youth service providers, apprenticeship providers, and other issue-focused groups.

The region has sector-focused collaborations in place for *Manufacturing, Transportation, Human Resources, Non-Profits, Healthcare, Construction, Emergency Services, and Childcare*. These groups meet regularly to identify common business needs, including workforce issues. The groups are leveraged extensively for multiple initiatives and programs, and will be instrumental in creating solutions for large-scale barriers to employment.

The Community Development Collaborative (CDC), run by the Northeast Michigan Council of Governments (NEMCOG) and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), is a working group intended to strengthen collaborative relationships, leverage assets, and improve the flow of communication between the MEDC and local partners to drive efficiency and eliminate the duplication of effort. It is similar in nature to a previous (now ended) collaboration, the Regional Prosperity Initiative.

Another set of collaborations involves serving youth within the region. Both MWAs, MRS, Michigan Career and Technical Institute (MCTI), and BSBP are actively working with youth in the region to provide valuable work experience opportunities, career planning, employment coaching, and transition services.

A recent collaboration among the healthcare industry, education, and workforce development created the MiCareerPathways program, which increased nursing training in the region. This program is described in more detail in the following section; we also list it here as a successful collaboration.

Collaboration with Kirtland Community College (KCC) on apprenticeships has grown. KCC has a team of workforce development staff who actively engage with private industry to develop apprenticeships. They maintain strong communication and partnership with Regional Leadership, and a member of the KCC team is on MW!NC's Board. In July of 2023, funds to support Apprenticeship Success Coordinators were received, and future funding for this would help to further build on this collaboration and resulting apprenticeship opportunities.

In addition to the above, the following existing collaborations will be leveraged and/or expanded in order to pursue the regional service strategies. Specifically, these efforts include the following:

- MW!NC and Region 7B worked together to provide services to dislocated workers from the retail industry through the State of Michigan's Trade and Economic Transition National Dislocated Worker Grant. The two MWAs have aligned their business services with shared policies and forms to better serve employers that cross their boundaries.
- WIOA Core partners and most other partners are involved in county-based human services collaboratives, working together to leverage resources, share information, and find opportunities for joint planning and improved coordination.
- MRS regularly provides training to various partners, so they are better educated about the needs of individuals with disabilities, as well as services available to them.
- Career and Education Advisory Councils are active in both local areas, and represent the full range of educational opportunities, along with the private sector and workforce.
- The MiSTEM regional networks are well-connected within the workforce system and participate in both Career and Educational Advisory Councils.
- Integrated Education and Training programs connect the MWAs with the Adult Education system, offering work-based learning to contextualize education.
- All workforce development professionals across WIOA Core Partners who primarily serve employers are trained in the Certified Business Solutions Professional approach. These include Business Solutions Professionals at both MWAs, Business Relations Consultant at MRS, and Veterans Employment Representatives at Veterans Services within LEO. These staff across the region communicate regularly in order to coordinate connections with businesses.
- The two Michigan Works! Agencies collaboratively secured a National Dislocated Worker Grant to address the opioid crisis. This grant ended in December 2023 and provided funding to support wrap-around services, life coaching, career coaching, and training for individuals impacted by opioid addiction. Many participants were able to move forward into employment. Sustainable systems to support life coaching were established, creating a resource beyond the time of the grant.

- Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) exist with all required WIOA Partners, and Infrastructure Funding Agreements (IFAs) reflect use of the American Job Centers (AJCs) and/or relative benefit to program customers.

Sector Initiatives for In-Demand Industries & Occupations

A description of plans for the development and implementation of, or the expansion of, sector initiatives for in-demand industry sectors or occupations for the region.

In the previous Regional Plan, the MiCareerPathways Program was in development. This program has recently completed, with significant impact on the nursing shortage in the Region. The grant supported a new CNA training opportunity at Alpena Community College (ACC) and grew the nursing program from 52 nursing students to 70 during FY23, with projected growth of another ten nurses in FY24. Collaboration was fostered among healthcare employers, MyMichigan Health System, Medilodge, Ascension, Alcona Health Center, and Thunder Bay Health. This also aligned with ACC's successful effort to partner with a four-year university to bring a 4-year Bachelor's of Science in Nursing (BSN) to the Alpena campus. A similar BSN partnership has recently been established at Kirtland Community College. The momentum and collaboration established from this program appear poised to have positive impacts well beyond the grant funding period.

Other sector strategies are currently in effect:

- *Existing Industry Associations:* both MWAs have representation and connection to existing industry associations. These include associations for the following sectors: *Manufacturing, Transportation, Human Resources, Non-Profits, Healthcare, and Construction.*
- *MiCareerQuest, Talent Tours, and Career Expos:* All career awareness and exploration events are conducted with a sector framework, allowing companies to work together to promote their industry to the future workforce.
- *Employer-Led Collaboratives:* The Going PRO Talent Fund (GPTF) provides support for groups of companies with similar training needs to collaborate on a training project. This approach to training brings together a sector to work with education providers and create a training that meets their needs and is also available through WIOA-funded Customized Training and Incumbent Worker Training. In Region 7B, the Central Michigan Manufacturing Association coordinates ELC applications in partnership with both Great Lakes Bay Michigan Works! and Region 7B. This collaboration results in 17-20 ELC programs with typically 400-500 participants.
- *Apprenticeships:* The region has increased its promotion of US Department of Labor (USDOL) Registered apprenticeships and will continue to work with employers within a sector to access this highly effective workforce training mechanism. Region 7B is currently an intermediary for the USDOL for apprenticeship programs.

Administrative Cost Arrangements

A description of any administrative cost arrangements that currently exist or that will be established within the region, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate.

Current administrative cost arrangements in the region include:

- MRS has inter-agency cash transfer agreements with most ISDs in the region, to ensure ready access to supports for students in Pre-Employment Transition Services.
- Michigan Works! Region 7B and MW!NC have formal agreements with the economic development entities in specific counties for a shared position providing workforce and economic development services. These counties include Arenac, Gladwin, Ogemaw, Roscommon, and Oscoda.
- Several American Job Centers offer rental space for other agencies in the region. In some cases, there is an agreement with the other agency of shared responsibility when assisting clients. For instance, the United Way is located in Roscommon's AJC, a representative from Disabled American Veterans has office space in Clare and Gladwin AJCs, the Women's Aid program is offered at the Clare AJC, and Adult Education services are provided in most AJCs. The APEX Accelerator and AARP for the MW!NC region are hosted in Onaway.
- Infrastructure Funding Agreements (IFAs) are in place for all WIOA required partners, based on co-location or relative benefit, using the agreed-upon methodology across all MWAs. Region 7B pays MW!NC infrastructure costs based on IFA methodology for its use of their centers in providing OS Reentry services.
- The two MWAs have a history of sharing administrative costs for specific projects. Current examples include the development of this regional plan.

Coordination of Transportation and Other Supportive Services

A description of how transportation and other supportive services, as appropriate, currently are coordinated or will be coordinated within the region.

During the process of developing this plan, stakeholders identified a lack of transportation as one of the most significant challenges facing the workforce today. The large geography of the region makes access to reliable and affordable transportation an absolute necessity, but the low population volume does not meet critical mass for large-scale transit systems. The vast majority of workers use personal vehicles to get to work, but with lower-wage jobs, it can be difficult to maintain a functioning vehicle. Furthermore, driver's education is more difficult to attain since it is no longer provided in K-12 schools. The cost of privately provided driver's education is another barrier to transportation and employment, especially among seasonally-employed youth.

The lack of transportation results in substantial losses for both the workforce and local employers. Job seekers are limited in how far from home they can look for job opportunities. Potential youth participants may not be able to participate in work experience programs because the household has only one functioning vehicle, to be used by the working adult. Businesses have difficulty recruiting from farther distances where they may be able to find a skilled employee. Once employed, workers may experience car trouble, which causes tardiness, poor attendance, and financial stress, reducing productivity for the business.

Currently, all partners in the workforce system recognize the severity of this issue and work collaboratively to provide as much support as possible. This support typically consists of mileage reimbursements, gas cards, bus tokens, car repair, and sometimes auto or bicycle purchase. Youth Program delivered by both Michigan Works! Agencies offer assistance with the cost of driver training to help remove this barrier to work.

In addition, workforce programs supply information to participants about public transit, where it is available, including routes and schedules. All transit providers ensure that their buses and pick-up service vehicles are accessible to individuals with disabilities. Coordination by frontline staff across numerous agencies is achieved through human services collaborative councils, where the issue is discussed, and resources are shared and leveraged wherever feasible.

During the Strategy Session, Regional Leadership discussed encouraging employers to provide a revolving loan fund for car repair or purchase as a support to help employees when unexpected car problems arise. This is still an early idea, and an example of how the Region continues to work on new solutions to persistent challenges.

Coordination of transportation and other supportive services occurs at multiple levels. As discussed above, leadership is regularly assessing transportation options and creating strategies to address it. On the frontline, staff are working together every day to coordinate resources. Staff at MRS, BSBP and both Michigan Works! Agencies must seek comparable benefits from other agencies before using workforce program funds to provide any kind of supportive service. Provision of supportive services is always based on an individual's need to overcome barriers. This customized, coordinated approach not only

stretches limited resources; it also ensures that staff are maintaining high levels of communication and program knowledge across many partners.

Although transportation is one of the highest used supportive services, others are provided - when needed - to reduce barriers to participation in workforce programs and activities. Job seekers experience a variety of barriers, such as lack of available and affordable childcare; physical, mental or emotional disabilities; lack of workplace skills; poverty that results in limited or substandard food supply, housing, clothing, and medical care; domestic violence; and many more. Assistance for all of these issues is available throughout the region, but is more available in population centers, which makes access difficult for those in very rural areas.

Numerous partners provide supportive services across the region. These partners include, but are not limited to: MW!NC, Region 7B, MRS, BSBP, Department of Health and Human Services, Goodwill, Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency (NEMCSA), Mid-Michigan Community Action Agency, United Way, Salvation Army, food pantries, churches, and more.

Examples of coordinated supportive service efforts at various levels include:

- Representation of many partners on the two Workforce Development Boards.
- MW!NC staff are trained as MiBridges Navigators to better assist individuals with the public assistance application process.
- Staff at most partner organizations are trained on available community resources and maintain this knowledge through regular research and communication.
- The 211 service is available throughout the Region and is extensively utilized by frontline staff.
- Participation in resource fairs and other programs, such as Project Connect, that highlight community services.
- Inclusion of supportive services in applications for new funding, where allowable.
- Utilization of new Barrier Removal and Employment Success (BRES) funding to address gaps in supportive services not covered by WIOA funds.
- Both MWAs actively seek additional funding from sources such as local community foundations to enhance the provision of supportive services.

Coordination of Workforce Development and Economic Development

A description of how workforce development services currently are, or could be, coordinated with economic development services and providers within the region, and a description of the strategies that have been or will be established to enhance service delivery as a result of the coordinated regional analysis of such services.

Economic development entities work both regionally and locally to support companies. They offer incentives, connections, advocacy, and various kinds of assistance for business success. In WIOA Region 3, economic development entities include:

- Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC);
- Otsego County Economic Alliance (OCEA);
- Northern Lakes Economic Alliance (NLEA);
- Crawford County Economic Development Partnership;
- Ogemaw County Economic Development Corporation;
- Economic Development Alliance for Oscoda County;
- Develop Iosco;
- Target Alpena;
- Middle Michigan Economic Development Corporation (Clare and Gladwin Counties); and Roscommon and Arenac County economic development organizations.

Workforce and economic development activities are enhanced when working in coordination. While each domain has its own focus, strategies, and toolbox of services, there are important synergies that lead to mutual success. These synergies provide an opportunity for streamlining services and increasing reach to local employers. As such, the following activities, partnerships, and strategies are currently in place for coordination of workforce and economic development services:

- *Business Solutions Professionals:* Workforce staff who work primarily with employers obtain certification as a Business Solutions Professional (BSP). The training for this certification focuses heavily on the full network of services to employers, emphasizing connections across domains. As part of the process of certification, staff must create a local asset list to ensure knowledge of economic development and other resources for employers. The BSP certification creates a professional network of people who commit to working collaboratively for the good of local employers.
- *Retention Visits:* Both MWAs, the MEDC, and local economic development entities participate in Retention Visits. Others may participate as well, including MRS and Veterans Services, business and industry training providers, and more. These visits allow partners to connect with leadership of local companies. The partners use a fact-finding process (via the BSP model) to determine the needs of the business. Then, relevant services can be shared with the company, and additional

referrals and connections can be made.

- *East Michigan Council of Governments (EMCOG) and Northeast Michigan Council of Governments (NEMCOG)* provide regional perspectives for economic development, and support local entities with access to funding from various programs. Both MW!NC and Region 7B are actively involved with these agencies and have representation on their boards. There is also regular engagement with NEMCOG and MEDC through the Community Development Collaborative described previously.
- *Sector Strategies:* Engaging with local employers using a sector-based approach is a proven way of mobilizing action that benefits an entire industry. This has been done successfully in the region with the *Wood Products sector*, engaging MEDC for incentives and other supports, local economic development, and workforce training services. In addition, the *Manufacturing sector* connects with both economic and workforce development via its associations. This is also a way that education connects with economic development. In the coming four years, the *Healthcare sector* will be a primary focus for the region. Another new focus will be the electric vehicles/mobility sector, following the state of Michigan's lead in catalyzing this industry by utilizing the existing strengths of our longstanding transportation history.
- *Day-to-Day Collaboration:* Business Solutions Professionals (BSPs) across the workforce system connect with economic developers on a local level. They regularly work together to support local companies with expansion projects, new hires, relocation, and more. The regular communication across domains also serves as an early warning network to help companies who may be struggling and heading toward layoffs or closure. Partners can intervene early and help the company succeed. When layoffs are necessary, the network is the first step in activating Rapid Response activities, educating workers on available resources to help them quickly transition to new employment.

Because the synergies between workforce services to businesses and economic development are so clear, collaborations within the Region include shared positions between Michigan Works! and county-based economic development entities. This collaboration has been in existence in Region 7B and now is also taking place in Northeast in Oscoda County. Shared positions currently exist between Region 7B and Gladwin, Roscommon, Ogemaw, and Arenac Counties.

Collective Negotiation

A description of how the region will collectively negotiate and reach agreement with the Governor on local levels of performance for, and report on, the performance accountability measures described in WIOA Section 116(c), for the local areas or the planning region.

The two Michigan Works! agencies negotiate local performance individually with the State of Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity. Although their performance measures may vary, both agencies are very cognizant of the need to collaborate, and respect the impact of achieving performance on the entire region. In addition, Vocational Rehabilitation entities are held to performance measures set by the state, and Adult Education providers abide by performance measures set by the grant sources.