

**EAST TENNESSEE
WORKFORCE REGION
PY16
TRANSITIONAL PLAN**

Prepared By

EAST TENNESSEE REGIONAL WORKFORCE COUNCIL



*Anderson – Bledsoe – Blount –
Bradley – Campbell – Carter –
Claiborne – Cocke – Cumberland –
Grainger – Greene – Hamblen –
Hamilton – Hancock – Hawkins –
Jefferson – Johnson – Knox –
Loudon – McMinn – Marion –
Meigs – Monroe – Morgan – Polk –
Rhea – Roane – Scott – Sequatchie –
Sevier – Sullivan – Unicoi – Union –
Washington*

BUILDING TOMORROW'S WORKFORCE TODAY

LOCAL WORKFORCE AREAS 1, 2, 3, 4 AND 5

March 1, 2017

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INTRODUCTION

The East Tennessee region is well-known for the beauty of its mountains, forests and lakes, as well as its people. The 34 counties in the East Tennessee workforce region contain both advanced industries and technology, and major tourism sites such as the Bristol Motor Speedway, the Tennessee Aquarium, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and even the University of Tennessee's football stadium. Tourism is a very important component of the East Tennessee economy.

The major natural resource that draws millions of tourists to the region each year, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, is the most visited national park in the nation. The park has faced challenges, including dealing with the many tourists, but none like the wildfires that started in the Chimney Tops area of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park on November 28, 2016. The wildfires resulted in 14 deaths of residents and tourists, numerous injuries, and almost 2,500 damaged or destroyed businesses and homes at an estimated cost of \$1 billion. The wildfires had an immediate impact on employment and unemployment in Sevier County. Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development staff, with the support of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I staff from the region's local areas and staff from many other agencies, responded quickly to the emergency.

Recovery is underway and the positive attitude of the local area residents earned them a nickname, "Smokies Strong." While some businesses have already been able to reopen, and re-employ their staff, it is clear that the entire region, not just Sevier County, will be affected. In Local Area 2 the towns of Gatlinburg, Pigeon Forge, Sevierville and surrounding areas contribute significantly to tourism, a major target industry in the region. According to the *Knoxville News-Sentinel* on December 31, 2016, "Anywhere from 500 to 1,500 volunteers continue to work around the clock in Gatlinburg on a daily basis, and officials say that their workload shows no signs of slowing down." Full recovery is expected to take at least three years.

The impact of the wildfires on the region's workforce – and this plan- is not yet fully understood. According to reports from other affected areas, a full recovery is expected to take up to three years. Tourists who cancelled reservations during the fires are now beginning to return to the hotels, restaurants and attractions in Sevier County.

This regional workforce plan attempts to incorporate the impact of the disaster in the responses to the planning questions. However, we acknowledge that the disaster may have some unanticipated consequences affecting not only the food, drink and accommodation businesses, but it will also likely result in more employment in a more robust construction sector for a period of time. This transition plan, developed with the active participation of 60 workforce leaders in the region, is designed as a resource that will support the efforts of WIOA Title I, II, III and IV core partners, as well as other workforce agencies in the region. It will serve as guidance for the East Tennessee Regional Workforce Council and will provide a framework for local plans and subsequent regional plans. It is designed to allow local workforce area plans to accommodate local conditions, including differences in funding levels, economies, demographics and other factors affecting workforce development.

The five local workforce boards and the chief elected officials in the region are actively involved in planning and implementing workforce development strategies, including reviewing and approving the regional plan. Any successful local plan must not only align with the regional plan, it must be flexible enough for the boards and chief elected officials to respond both known and unanticipated local area needs and conditions.

I.0 General Information

- 1.1. A reference name for the planning region: East Tennessee Workforce Region
- 1.2. Identification of the local workforce development areas that comprise the planning region:
Local Workforce Development Areas 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.
- 1.3. Identification of the county/counties each local workforce development area serves:
 - Area 1: Carter, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi and Washington
 - Area 2: Claiborne, Cocke, Grainger, Greene, Hamblen, Hancock, Hawkins, Jefferson, Sevier and Union
 - Area 3: Knox
 - Area 4: Anderson, Blount, Campbell, Cumberland, Loudon, Monroe, Morgan, Roane, and Scott
 - Area 5: Bledsoe, Bradley, Hamilton, McMinn, Marion, Meigs, Polk, Rhea and Sequatchie
- 1.4. Identification of the key planning region council members charged with drafting the regional plan, and
- 1.5. Indication of the local workforce development area each council member is associated with (number in parentheses):

Adult Ed/NESCS (1, 2)	Debi Tabor	LWDA3/CAC (3)	Winnie Wilson
Adult Ed/TCAT-Athens (5)	Leslie Travis	LWDA3/CAC (3)	Bill Walker
Adult Ed/TCAT-Knox (2, 3, 4)	Pam Stubbs	LWDA3/CAC/AJC (3)	Ray Abbas
CAC-OOA (3)	Kayleen Weaver	Knox Chamber (3)	Sharon Shanks
CTE/Area 2 (2)	Mike Watson	LWDA4 Board (4)	Wayne Smith
CTE/Area 3 (3)	Christy Seals	LWDA4/ETHRA (4)	April Beaty
CTE/Area 5 (5)	Arlette Robinson	LWDA4/ETHRA (4)	Chris Tiller
DHS FA (1)	Shaun Perkins	LWDA4/SCCEP (4)	Kelly Cox
DHS VR (2, 3, 4)	Amy Rader	LWDA4/ETHRA (4)	Pat Taylor
DHS VR (3, 4)	Angie Respass	LWDA4/ETHRA (4)	Randy Brown
DHS VR (5)	Tiffany Ramsey	LWDA5/SETDD (5)	Anna Smith
DHS (3)	Irene Williams	LWDA5/SETDD (5)	Autumn Derrick
DHS (5)	Ruble Conatser	LWDA5/SETDD (5)	Stephen Dunn
DHS (2)	Dearl Henard	LWDA5/SETDD (5)	Susan Cowden
ETDD (2, 3)	Terry Bobrowski	TCAT-Elizabethton (1)	Dean Blevins
ETHRA (2, 3, 4)	Arleta Brisbin	TCAT-Jacksboro (4)	Dr. Debbie Petree
DHS/TANF/ETSU (1, 2)	Dr. Jerry Leger	TCAT-Jacksboro (4)	Sarah Sexton
DHS/TANF/ETSU (1, 2)	Dr. Scott Beck	TCAT-Knox/Oneida (3, 4)	Dwight Murphy
DHS/TANF/ETSU (3)	Dr. Jennifer Eppley	TCAT-Morristown (2)	Susanne Cox
DHS/TANF/Maximus (5)	Joyce Jackson	TDLWD/Vets (5)	Merril Niswonger
LWDA1 Board (1)	Jay Richardson	TDLWD (1)	Steven Vinsant
LWDA1 CEO Chair (1)	Sullivan Co Mayor Richard Venable	TDLWD (2)	Darlene Ely
LWDA1/AB-T (1)	Cindy Martin-Hensley	TDLWD (3, 4)	Tim Witt
LWDA1/AB-T (1)	Ginger Lyons	TDLWD (5)	Virginia Housley
LWDA1/AB-T (1)	Kathy Pierce	TLDWD/AJC (3)	Ginger Armstrong
LWDA1/AB-T/SCSEP	Jackie Sensabaugh	TDLWD/AJC (4)	Elaine Shank
LWDA2/WSCC (2)	Dr. B.J. Lowe	TDLWD/AJC (4)	Viki Weeks
LWDA2/WSCC (2)	Don Shadow	TNECD (1, 2)	Iliiff McMahan
LWDA2/WSCC (2)	Donna Stansberry	TNECD (2, 3, 4)	Gary Human
LWDA2/WSCC (2)	Melissa Reynolds	TNECD (5)	Anissa Ingram
LWDA2/WSCC (2)	Dr. Nancy Brown	PSTCC (3, 4)	Teri Brahams
LWDA3 Board (3)	Martha Axford	WSCC (2)	Bob Dixon

- 1.6. A list of key planning region committee meeting dates. [WIOA Sec. 106(a) and (c)]:

November 29, 2016 (Initial East Tennessee Regional Workforce Council (ETRC) meeting at Knoxville AJC)

December 21, 2016 (ETRC videoconference – facilitated planning session)

January 17, 2017 (ETRC videoconference – review of draft plan prior to posting for public comments)

February 21, 2017 (ETRC videoconference – review and resolution of public comments)

- 1.7. A description of the planning process undertaken to produce the transitional regional plan, including a description of how all local areas were afforded the opportunity to participate in the transitional regional planning process.

The workforce development partners in East Tennessee have a strong history of working together to further the goals of workforce and economic development. As evidenced by the active involvement of the members of the East Tennessee Regional Workforce Council (ETRWC) membership in the planning process, the time is right to develop a regional workforce plan. The council includes representatives of local workforce boards, chief elected officials, community colleges, Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCATs), Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development (TNCED), Department of Human Services (DHS)-Families First, Adult Education, Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD), Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I (WIOA) staff, Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), and chamber of commerce/local economic development organizations.

The East Tennessee Workforce Region was very fortunate to have a recent economic and workforce analysis, *Strengthening the East Tennessee Region 2020: Building a Vital Workforce to Sustain Economic Growth and Expand Opportunity*, prepared by the Nashville Chamber of Commerce Research Center (Research Center). The study was funded by WIOA transition funds provided by the state TDLWD office. Transition funds were also used to retain Thomas P. Miller and Associates to help initiate the development of a regional workforce planning strategy. A workshop in June 2016 began the process, including identifying a vision and mission for workforce development in East Tennessee.

The council members took an active role in gathering information from employers, as well as participating in meetings. The initial meeting of the entire ETRWC was held at the American Job Center (AJC) in Knoxville on November 29, 2016. The agenda included an overview of regional planning and TDLWD Workforce Services Policy 22, the proposed regional planning process, a discussion of the ETRWC's role, and breakout discussions. The workforce economic analysis by the Research Center and the planning workshop with Thomas P. Miller and Associates in June 2016 were also reviewed.

The first videoconference was held on December 21, 2016, at the comprehensive centers in Chattanooga, Knoxville, Morristown and Johnson City, using TDLWD videoconferencing technology. It required a major effort to coordinate and facilitate the discussions of the majority of Sections 2 and 3. Facilitators/recorders at each of the sites held discussions with the council members, recorded the responses, shared them with the larger group, and submitted the responses to be combined with the other responses.

1.8 Description of how all local areas were afforded the opportunity to participate in the regional planning process.

As indicated by the list in 1.5, all five local areas were actively involved in the planning process. Multiple partners in workforce and economic development in East Tennessee were invited to participate. The use of videoconferences at sites in each local area was one of the factors in the active involvement of over 60, including LWDA board members and a chair of the Local Elected Officials (LEOs).

2.0 Labor Market and Economic Analysis

Please provide a labor market and economic analysis of the workforce development planning region. This shall include an analysis of existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations, and shall include the employment needs of employers in those existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations. All core partners (WIOA Titles I-IV) should be involved in both providing and analyzing the data. This regional analysis shall include:

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

As a part of its economic analysis, the Research Center conducted interviews with employers in the region, and the ETRWC followed up with a survey of employers in December 2016. Over 75 employers in the region's target industries, plus several other industry groups provided responses to the two surveys. In those surveys, employers indicated that, although they were generally able to hire qualified applicants, many applicants lacked a wide variety of skills and had other drawbacks to being hired. Those mentioned most often include: soft skills, clean background checks and work records; math and science knowledge; customer service skills; CNC skills; and computer skills, including basic skills.

Employers also responded to questions about skills that current employees need. A total of 45 skills were listed by the respondents, ranging from critical thinking to specific technical skills. Communication and computer skills were mentioned the most often. The range of skills listed indicates that workforce development agencies need to be as flexible as possible in tailoring solutions for employers. The wide variety also makes it a challenge to develop training programs which require sufficient consistent classroom enrollment to be offered by training providers.

Appendix A includes a list of the skills that employers listed in response to the questions about the skills applicants or employees lack. Most of the employers that were surveyed used in-house training more than any other method. In-house training offered by the employers ranged from teaching specific job skills to providing advanced skills and financial support for academic degrees. Employers also mentioned using training available through Adult Education and the AJCs.

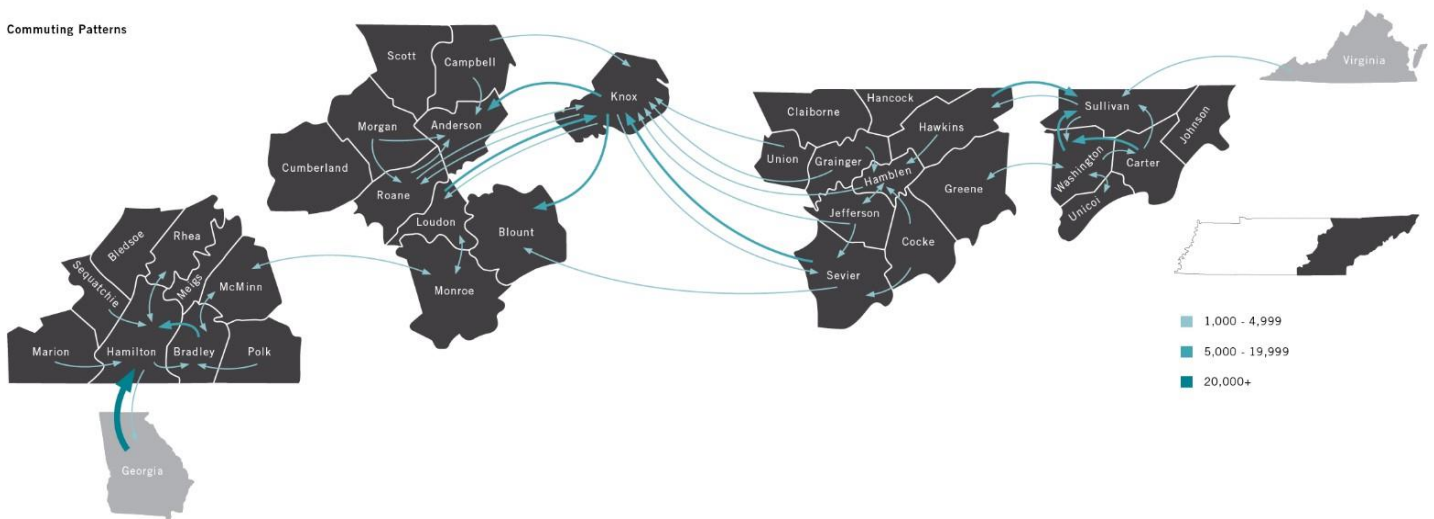
According to a study published in the *Harvard Business Review*, “nearly half of the new job openings from 2015 through 2020 will be in middle-skill occupations in areas such as computer technology, nursing and advanced manufacturing.” Workforce development agencies and training providers need to be prepared for this trend. As noted in the July 2016 regional economic analysis, a key concern is whether the workforce pipeline can supply the needed talent.

Currently, one in five middle-skill workers in the area is age 55 or over. A large number of middle-skill occupations are in short supply of workers. Jobs that are chronically difficult to fill include many in manufacturing, logistics, and healthcare. Technical roles in manufacturing, such as computer controlled machinery operation, commercial machinery repair, and advanced assembling and setting will be vital to the region’s manufacturing backbone. Implications of shortages in middle-skill occupations include pressure on wages, loss or delay of business activity or delivery, or impacts on work quality or productivity within existing staffing (pp. 65-66).

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

According to the state’s *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Combined State Plan (July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2020)*, the fastest growing occupations in East Tennessee include Office and Administrative Support Occupations (15.7%), Sales and Related Occupations (9.6%), Production Occupations (9.4%), Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations (9.1%), and Healthcare Occupations (6.1%).

The labor force is highly mobile, with many individuals moving between counties and local areas. As indicated in Figure 1, the major metropolitan areas tend to pull the greatest number of commuters. This is particularly true in areas such as LWDA3 where unemployment has been very low. Jobs are being filled by individuals commuting from outside the area. Large employers, such as Volkswagen, are also a strong draw for those willing and able to commute. Four interstates provide an infrastructure for commuting: I-24, I-26, I-40, I-75 and I-81.



The availability of jobs in some areas does not provide an equal opportunity for all residents in the region, as indicated by unemployment figures. According to Jobs4TN.gov, in November 2016, the East TN workforce areas had an unemployment rate

ranging from a low of 3.9% in LWDA3 to a high of 5.1% in LWDA1 and LWDA5, compared to an unemployment rate of 4.6% for the state and 4.4% for the nation. The East Tennessee counties outside the metropolitan areas had an unemployment rate of 5.2% during the same time period. The hardest hit counties were in the rural areas: Rhea (7.8%) in LWDA5, Hancock (7.1%) in LWDA2, Unicoi (6.7%) in LWDA1, and Bledsoe (6.7%) in LWDA5. The unemployment in LWDA2 is expected to increase significantly in Sevier County in December 2016 and in early 2017 because of rebuilding efforts after the wildfires.

While educational attainment is increasing, the region is expected to still lag behind the average educational attainment of the state and nation. Overall, 35% of residents over 25 years of age have only a high school diplomas, 20% have some college, 7% have associate's degrees and 22% have bachelor's degree or higher. To compound the issue, educational attainment is uneven, with many rural and inner city areas lagging behind. Fortunately, all areas are benefitting from Drive to 55 and TN Reconnect.

- 2.3 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.

According to the LMI in the state plan, short-term on-the-job training is the most common method of training (29%) for the fastest growing occupations in the ETRWC region, although 37% of these occupations receive no training. Moderate-term on-the-job training is the next most common training method (26%). One of the most promising methods, apprenticeships, is used to train only 2% of those in the fastest growing occupations.

The region benefits from a wide variety of workforce resources, including:

- 21 American Job Centers
- 2 Career Coaches
- 6 community colleges
- 8 colleges of applied technology
- 3 Economic and Community Development Jobs Base Camps
- 5 local workforce boards
- 5 WIOA Title I administrative and fiscal offices
- 12 Vocational Rehabilitation offices
- Department of Human Services offices in 33 counties

One of the major strengths of workforce development in the East Tennessee region is the strong relationships between agencies and individual staff. For example, the core partners in the comprehensive centers are co-located, some even before June 2000. The area directors of the different agencies meet together on a regular basis, share training and network with other workforce development agencies. However, closure of a number of TDLWD offices during the last few years and a lack of internet access in the region have affected the capacity of the AJC system to deliver services. The Career Coaches enable underserved areas to receive AJC services on an interim basis, including high speed internet access.

The workforce partners in the region have a "can do" attitude and tackle challenges together. This is clearly evidenced by the coordinated agency response in the aftermath of the wildfires in Sevier County; the high level of participation in the council members in the development of the regional plan; and the cooperative efforts with the TCATs, community colleges and P-12 school systems in the region. In addition, the workforce and economic development agencies began pursuing a regional partnership in 2014, which was further strengthened by Workforce 360.

Some of the major weaknesses include funding uncertainties, especially with the new federal administration; geographic challenges in serving populations in rural counties with very limited transportation or high speed internet access; lack of flexibility and equipment to launch new credit or noncredit programs tailored to the needs of employers; lack of instructors in some high demand fields, including nursing and welding; lack of public support and funds to improve educational attainment; and closure of offices in areas that were formerly served.

3.0 Vision and Strategic Goals

- 3.1 Describe regional strategies used to facilitate engagement of businesses and other employers, including small businesses and in-demand industry sector occupations. Describe methods and services to support the regional workforce system in meeting employer needs. [WIOA Sec. 106(c)].

The ETRWC agreed on nine key strategies for engaging employers. Action steps to implement these strategies were also developed. They are included in Appendix B.

1. Determine employer needs, including the needs of emerging businesses and businesses facing closures or layoffs. Disseminate the results to workforce agencies, training providers, secondary and postsecondary schools and community leaders to refine/develop programs to meet employer needs
 2. Develop regional approaches for defining and implementing/funding work-based learning and career pathways, including youth-focused programs, as well as pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships for adults and youth.
 3. Develop a regional strategy to work with employers and training providers to develop/update needed training and equipment, especially targeted short-term training, pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships.
 4. Foster communication and cooperative efforts between partners and agencies
 5. Extend the reach of the AJCs by utilizing technology and the Career Coaches to connect with individuals throughout the region via public libraries, schools, partner agencies, and by offering workshops in locations without AJCs.
 6. Market workforce development services and resources, including the Career Coaches and Labor Market Information (LMI), which are available to employers through the AJCs.
 7. Work with transportation planning agencies such as TDOT and MPO's to identify and develop expanded transportation options.
 8. Work with school systems and training providers to provide resources.
 9. Develop regional staff training to better serve employers and jobseekers.
- 3.2 Describe how the planning region will define and establish regional workforce development service strategies. Describe how the planning region will develop and use cooperative workforce development service delivery agreements. [WIOA Sec. 106(c)].

In June, 2016, the workforce organizations in East Tennessee participated in a workforce planning session led by Thomas P. Miller and Associates, in preparation for the regional plan. In October TDLWD and WIOA directors began forming a regional council. The first meeting was held on November 29, 2016, at the Knoxville AJC. On December 21, 2016, the ETRWC held its second meeting, an all-day planning session via videoconference. The hosted sites included the AJCs in Chattanooga, Crossville, Johnson City and Knoxville. Attendance was excellent, with over 90% of the members of the ETRWC participating. The council members addressed all of the questions focusing on strategies in Section 3.0. Following the meeting, the responses from all of the sites were combined and common themes were identified. The council then agreed on priorities and action steps for the region (3.1 and Appendix B).

3.2.a Existing service delivery strategies that will be expanded, streamlined, or eliminated.

The council will meet on a quarterly basis to revisit existing service delivery activities that implement the strategies and to track progress on expanding, streamlining or eliminating services. Activities include:

- Hosting job fairs/hiring events
- Providing employer services and coordinated Business Services Teams that meet employer needs
- Improving communication through website links and coordination teams
- Improving services to targeted populations
- Offering effective staff training
- Participating in economic development activities, including recruiting
- Marketing, including a coordinated marketing strategy, marketing materials, and regional website/links
- Meeting with workforce development partners, employers and training providers to understand employer needs
- Working with secondary education systems to develop career pathways and work-based learning
- Supporting regional efforts to promote economic and workforce development, including Workforce 360
- Integrating partner services and pursuing efforts to eliminate duplication

3.2.b New service strategies necessary to address regional education and training needs.

The ETRWC members focused on the following strategies to improve regional education and training:

- Develop a better understanding of employers' needs by a coordinated regional outreach, including hosting feedback sessions, holding one-on-one conversations, using local board task forces, and communicate these needs to training providers
- Bring together employers and training providers to develop an understanding of the opportunities and challenges that each one faces in educating employees and having applicants job ready.
- Support new approaches to training, such as a regional work-based learning summit for workforce agencies and organizations and employers, determine the gaps in training across the region and develop a regional strategy to fill the gaps, develop career pathways on a regional basis, as well as apprenticeships, work-based learning and other new methods, including delivery of training via technology
- Use resources effectively by agreeing on regional priorities for using the two mobile Career Coaches and by developing a regional plan to market the coaches

3.2.c Strategies to address geographic advantages/disadvantages.

The East Tennessee counties possess a number of advantages that help attract new businesses and industries:

- Location – The region has great resources for industries such as tourism and transportation/logistics. With its four interstates (23, 26, 40, 75 and 81), the region is within a day's drive of 75% of the nation's population. Major tourism sites include the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the most visited national park in the United States.
- Climate – The climate is an advantage, especially for tourism and attracting retirees.
- Economy – The cost of living in the 34 counties is relatively low and housing is a good value. Many factors, including the availability of mega sites, encourage the location of major industries and growth spurs more growth.
- Education – Although educational attainment is low in some areas, Governor Bill Haslam has spearheaded efforts to improve postsecondary credentials through the Drive to 55 and TN Reconnect. Senator Mark Norris authored the Labor and Educational Alignment Program (LEAP) grants, which have been highly successful.
- Balance – The region has major metropolitan areas in sections of the region, providing residents with access to employment, healthcare, training providers, high speed internet and other services.

The region does face challenges. As Dr. Matt Murray with UT Center for Business and Education indicated in his presentation to the LWDA3 board on January 11, 2017, there is a "rural divide" between metropolitan and rural areas. Education, income and access are some of the areas where the rural divide is clearly shown. The lack of high speed internet access limits recruitment of new businesses and industries, opportunities for online education and promoting a county's attractions. TNECD and the legislature are currently trying to address this problem.

3.2.d Strategies to connect the unemployed with work-based learning opportunities.

The ETRWC discussed 34 suggestions for connection the unemployed to work-based learning opportunities at their planning session of December 21, 2016. They included:

- Encourage RESEA and SNAP participants to participate in work-based learning opportunities
- Cultivate more work-based opportunities with employers, including pre- and regular apprenticeships
- Better assess applicants to determine if work-based learning would be more beneficial than classroom training
- Expand relationships with law enforcement agencies to enhance work-based learning placements for ex-offenders
- Agree on a regional definition of work-based learning and use common procedures
- Use technology, such as Work Day, to introduce work-based learning to the unemployed and others
- Market work-based learning opportunities to the unemployed, including using short-term work experience, and use multiple media to ensure the unemployed without computers know about work-based learning
- Work with training providers on referrals to the AJCs for students who are unable to obtain employment, even after they complete their degrees
- Use VOS as a tool to identify unemployed that comprise the target market
- Increase funding for work-based learning through the AJCs
- Introduce work-based learning region-wide in participant workshops
- Offer convenient testing for diploma equivalent testing (HiSet) so the unemployed are job-ready as soon as they are ready to take the test

3.2.e Strategies to integrate existing regional planning efforts among core partners.

Strategies to improve integration include: enhancing communication between partners, including establishing regional and local coordinating teams with partners and workforce development organizations and agencies; developing a regional website; continuing to share regional staff training and cross training; selecting some members of the ETRWC who will be able to serve as a type of Executive Committee and who will be able to interact more frequently than the quarterly meetings; undertaking regional asset mapping; and developing a regional emergency plan to respond to disasters such as the recent wildfires in Sevier County, that require a coordinated approach, especially to obtain and implement National Emergency Grants (NEGs).

3.3 Describe how the planning region will define and establish administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate, for the region. [WIOA Sec. 106(c)] Regions may consider:

3.3.a Current or proposed resource sharing agreements.

3.3.b Establishing a process to evaluate cost sharing arrangements.

The AJC partners will follow the guidance in WIOA TEGL No. 17-16 released on January 18, 2017, and instructions from TDLWD to establish administrative cost arrangements.

3.4 Describe how the planning region will determine and coordinate supportive services for the region. [WIOA Sec. 106(c)] Regions may consider:

3.4.a Whether the provision of supportive services could be enhanced, and if so, how.

The members of the ETRWC emphasized that providing supportive services is determined by two important factors: the needs of the client and available funding. While a survey of WIOA and support services across the region showed a variety of services can be utilized to support participants that need them to participate in each agency's activities, WIOA services in particular are not an entitlement. Responses to this question include:

- Consider the range of support services across the region and identify a basic menu of services to be provided, as funding allows.
- Develop a regional resource guide and links on the website(s)
- Utilize the council meetings to maintain contacts in each agency that can facilitate coordination of support services with all of the partners across the region
- Develop a regional asset map

3.4.b What organizations currently provide or could provide supportive services.

Support services are provided by WIOA, Labor-TAA; Vocational Rehabilitation, TN Department of Human Services programs, including TANF and SNAP; non-profit organizations such as local homeless shelters, food banks, and others; and housing authorities. One strategy to increase support services is to include them in grant applications, when possible.

3.4.c Establishing a process to promote coordination of supportive services delivery.

The ETRWC will establish a process to coordinate support services, such as:

- Hold quarterly meetings with core partners and other agencies and organizations providing support services
- Develop a list of regional resources for providers to utilize
- Develop a general resource guide for the community and employers
- Explore options to share customer data for potential co-enrollment

3.5 Outline regional transportation issues related to workforce development and ways the region will address identified needs. Include a description and/or map of the regional commuting patterns. [WIOA Sec. 106(c)] Regions may consider:

3.5.a Whether the provision of transportation services could be enhanced, and if so, how.

The commuting map is included on page 4. The council discussed the available public transportation options, including vans operated by the human resource agencies, public agencies (RideShare) and private operators (taxis, Uber, and others).

- Provide links to transportation options on the website(s)
- Work with the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and the Tennessee Department of Transportation on an ongoing basis to learn about transportation plans and to understand the impact of transportation, including the interstates, on workforce development.
- Apply for regional transportation grants
- Investigate opportunities for alternatives to public transportation, including carpooling, Lyft, Uber and RideShare, being careful to provide clients with information about how to have a “safe ride”
- Work with regional agencies to enhance transportation options for individuals with disabilities and other factors that limit their mobility, including lack of an automobile

3.5.b What organizations currently provide or could provide transportation services.

The council members discussed the possibility of expanding transportation services. However, funding is a significant barrier for public transportation unless the region can obtain additional grant funds. Some private services are available in the metropolitan areas, such as taxis, Uber, Lyft and RideShare. The goal would be to expand these services to areas outside the major cities. Current public transportation providers are:

• Bristol Transit System	Urban	1	• Johnson City Transit	Urban	1
• Chattanooga Area Regional Transit Authority	Urban	5	• Kingsport Area Transit Services	Urban	1
• City of Morristown	Urban	2	• Knoxville Area Transit	Urban	3
• Cleveland Urban Transit System	Urban	5	• Knoxville-Knox Co Community Action Committee	Mixed	
• Human Resource Agency Vans	Rural	All			

3.5.c Establishing a process to promote coordination of transportation supportive services delivery.

The ETRWC will develop a regional process to coordinate the delivery of transportation supportive services, based on available funding in the local areas. Suggestions include:

- Use regional and local websites to link to transportation services in the local area
- Explore the development of an Approved Transportation Provider list for the region
- Implement a regional transportation support services policy that outlines a process

3.6 Describe strategies and services the planning region will employ to coordinate workforce development programs/services with regional economic development services and providers. [WIOA Sec. 106(c)] Regions may consider:

3.6.a Current economic development organizations engaged in regional planning.

In East Tennessee these include: Appalachian Regional Commission, area chambers/economic development organizations, development districts: East, First, Southeast East Tennessee Economic Development Association, Innovation Valley, Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development, Tennessee Valley Authority and Tennessee Valley Corridor.

Other organizations that are involved in regional planning as part of their mission:

The following organizations are involved in regional planning on a more limited basis: human resource agencies, trade unions, Community Action agencies, and the UT Institute for Public Service.

3.6.b Education and training providers involved with economic development.

- Community colleges
- Non-credit and for-profit education providers
- Public 4-year institutions

- K-12 school systems
- Private colleges
- Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology

3.6.c Current businesses involved with economic development organizations.

Various economic development organizations serve different economic sectors and employers. Chambers of commerce serve a wide variety of businesses, ranging from individual businesspeople to large manufacturing plants. Tourism organizations serve large and small employers, such as Dollywood, Bristol Motor Speedway, the Tennessee Aquarium, operators of tourist destinations and individual hotel owners. Many large employers work with workforce and economic development organizations, in advanced manufacturing (e.g., Denso, Eastman, LaZyBoy, Volkswagen,), healthcare (Erlanger, home health agencies); trucking and distribution businesses (Land Air, FedEx, Amazon fulfillment center) and IT (e.g., Blue-Cross Blue Shield operations center).

In addition to the traditional economic development organizations, utilities often work with chambers to recruit new businesses. Banks, credit unions, and nonprofits, such as Goodwill and United Way, may also support economic development efforts.

3.6.d Targeted businesses from emerging sectors/industries.

Targeted businesses in the East Tennessee workforce region include: advanced manufacturing, healthcare, transportation, distribution/logistic and smaller but growing businesses in specialty foods and drink. Examples are the following small but growing types of businesses and industries using cutting edge technology:

- Additive manufacturing, such as 3D printing
- Advanced automotive/automotive parts manufacturing
- Advanced fiber production and installation
- Advanced materials manufacturing – carbon fiber, aluminum
- Advanced medical technology, such as Provision
- Artisan entrepreneurs
- Biomedical equipment manufacturing
- Craft breweries/moonshine/winemaking
- Diamond manufacturing
- Updated molding technology used in manufacturing

Some employers in these emerging industries include:

- Cirrus Aircraft
- Denso
- FabriTech
- High speed internet providers including utilities
- Hospitals
- HTSC
- Huber
- La-Z-Boy
- Lifetime Products
- Local Motors
- Lodge
- Oak Ridge National Labs
- Provision
- Resolute
- Teledoc
- Volkswagen

3.7 Describe how the planning region will establish an agreement concerning how the planning region will collectively achieve and report on the established performance accountability measures described in WIOA Section 116(c), for local areas and the planning region. [WIOA Sec. 106(c)]*. Regions may consider:

3.7.a The process to be used for determining regional performance goals.

The AJC partners will work cooperatively to determine regional performance goals. VOS will be the central reporting tool, but additional information may be needed. The goals will be set using a combination of methods, including consideration of performance goals already set for several programs, and the number of participants in each program and their impact on regional workforce development. If possible, interim numbers will be obtained from VOS for the partners that do not have goals for this PY. The final goals will be reviewed with the ETRWC and the local area boards.

The goal-setting process will be completed by the deadline set by TDLWD, preferably after both the regional plan and AJC certification have been submitted to TDLWD for approval by the State Workforce Board. The ETRWC will establish a meeting schedule on or before February 21, 2017, at the final videoconference before submitting the PY16 transition plan.

- 3.8 Describe how the planning region will coordinate with area secondary education, community colleges and universities to align strategies, enhance services and avoid duplication of services. [20 CFR 679.540(b)]
- Assist in preparing and implementing LEAP grants
 - Work with Career and Technical Education to align secondary and post-secondary programs
 - Provide information to schools, especially school counselors, and institutions about career pathways and sector strategies
 - Support a regional effort to encourage teacher externships (industry visits designed to align curriculum with industry needs) and employers in the classroom (presentations by employers on their businesses)
 - Participate in training providers' Advisory Councils
 - Participate in P-16 regional councils or similar organizations that include elementary, secondary and post-secondary partners
 - Support the Common Curriculum initiative
- 3.9 Describe how the planning region will address workforce development issues specifically related to its: cities and/or towns, suburban areas, and rural areas. [20 CFR 679.540(b)]
- Use Community Conversations to develop relationships in underserved counties
 - Expand the reach of AJC services by placing staff in offices of other workforce agencies and use the Career Coaches effectively in rural and underserved urban and suburban areas
 - Use regional organizations in rural areas, such as the E TN Regional Agribusiness Marketing Association (ETRAMA) to identify issues and determine priorities.
 - Use social media and websites to communicate
 - Involve the areas in asset mapping
 - "Mobilize" the AJC staff, using iPads as a tool in underserved areas
 - Use the Work Ready Communities program to insure a pool of prepared applicants for businesses and industries
 - Encourage local business growth and entrepreneurship, especially in rural areas, with festivals and local tourism attractions
- 3.10 Describe how the planning region will connect any regional targeted populations to occupational demands including individuals with barriers to employment. [20 CFR 679.540(b)] This should include but is not limited to at-risk youth, TANF recipients, SNAP E&T participants, Vocational Rehabilitation participants, and ex-offenders.
- Develop a regional approach to provide services in correctional facilities, including those that incarcerate youth
 - Conduct regular meetings with stakeholder groups, as well as with agencies that serve them, that are coordinated across the region
 - Work regionally with partners and training providers to develop boot camps and other short-term certification programs that are employer-driven and result in employment in in-demand sectors
 - Develop a targeted referral system and consider how to meet each individual's needs that are barriers to employment
 - Coordinate with regional representatives of YouthBuild, Job Corps, ESL and other programs for targeted individuals, as well as community-based and nonprofit organizations, on ways to serve populations with barriers to employment.
 - Apply for regional grants to serve target populations

APPENDIX A: Skills in Demand by Employers

The two employer surveys conducted with 76 employers in 2016 indicated that employers need applicants with certain knowledge and specific technical skills and soft skills, including:

- One year of work history
- Basic computer skills/improved computer skills
- Training in specific skills: industrial sewing, automation mechanics
- Experience in general and in specific skills in: IIT, Mechanical/Machinist, Programming CNC machines, Allen-Brady programmable controllers, machine design familiar with Solid Works CAD program
- Workplace math and science
- F endorsement on their driver's license
- Drug free
- Clean background check
- Work ethic
- Customer service skills
- Empathy
- Able to work second shift

The employers felt that their current employees need better hard and soft skills, such as:

Soft skills/basic knowledge current employees need:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication skills (#1) • Critical thinking skills • Desire to help others • Good common sense • Good credit • Math/science including basic math, geometry, fractions and chemistry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to help others • Ability to work efficiently • Problem solving • Reading comprehension • Work ethic – attendance, drug free • Safety • Self-motivation/desire to grow • Teamwork |
|--|---|

Specific physical/technical skills current employees need:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to lift • Automation skills • Basic mechanical skills • Computer skills- basics, multitasking (e.g., talking on the phone and typing), Windows based (#1 – tie) • Construction/trade/other skills (depending on the job) – painting, carpentry, roofing, abatement, warehouse operations, truck driving, operations support, fiber, office, healthcare management, police skills • Cooking and cleaning skills • Current driver's license with a F endorsement • Customer service/hospitality/phone skills – ability to deal with customer needs and concerns | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dexterity • Dispatching • Machine operation • Mapping • Mechanical ability • Office • Problem solving • Reading comprehension • Work ethic – attendance, drug free • Safety • Self-motivation/desire to grow (#2) • Teamwork |
|--|---|

APPENDIX B: Strategic Priorities and Action Steps

1. Determine employer needs, including the needs of emerging businesses and businesses facing closures or layoffs. Disseminate the results to workforce agencies, training providers, secondary and postsecondary schools and community leaders to refine/develop programs to meet employer needs
 - a. Employ a variety of methods to determine needs: regional surveys, skills panels, lunch and learn sessions, regional board member task force, one-on-one meetings and other useful approaches.
 - b. Utilize the Business Services Teams effectively, including: working with training providers on a regional basis to develop training to meet employer needs; coordinating approaches to employers by activities such as holding quarterly meetings; sharing employer contacts to identify opportunities and avoid duplication of services; and fostering the development of long-term relationships with employers in the region.
 - c. Sponsor a regional workforce conference designed to help employers, educators and workforce agencies understand each other's challenges and opportunities and to develop realistic strategies to meet those needs.
2. Develop regional approaches for defining and implementing/funding work-based learning and career pathways, including youth-focused programs, as well as pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships for adults and youth.
 - a. Convene a regional work-based learning summit involving employers, educators and workforce agencies.
 - b. Develop a regional approach to placing individuals with businesses and industries that streamlines the process for employers.
 - c. Work with Career and Technical Education programs in the secondary schools to market work-based learning to employers.
 - d. Support existing programs and initiatives in the region: educators in the workplace and employers in the classroom, P-16 councils or similar initiatives that bring together elementary, secondary and post-secondary educators with employers and workforce agencies.
3. Develop a regional strategy to work with employers and training providers to develop/update needed training and equipment, especially targeted short-term training, pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships.
 - a. Assist training providers in obtaining necessary resources such as equipment
 - b. Offer boot camps and short-term certification programs that are employer-driven.
 - c. Develop regional participant training programs for basic skills that employers need (e.g., soft skills, communication skills, math skills and customer service) that can be offered at the AJC's and at sites in underserved areas.
4. Foster communication and cooperative efforts between partners and agencies
 - a. Support interagency coordination teams at the local and regional levels
 - b. Work with TN Department of Economic and Community Development to attract new businesses and retain existing businesses.
 - c. Develop a regional strategy to promote communication and cooperation with stakeholders, advisory councils, communities, partner agencies, and human resource associations to serve youth, dislocated workers and adults, especially targeted populations.
 - d. Encourage co-enrollment, as appropriate, by better assessment of applicants.
5. Extend the reach of the AJCs by utilizing technology and the Career Coaches to connect with individuals throughout the region via public libraries, schools, partner agencies, and by offering workshops in locations without AJCs.
 - a. Work together on a regional basis to develop a process to deploy the two Career Coaches, especially in rural, inner-city, and underserved areas.
 - b. Link agency websites in the region and consider developing a comprehensive regional website to provide information for employers and jobseekers.
6. Market workforce development services and resources, including the Career Coaches and Labor Market Information (LMI), which are available to employers through the AJCs.
 - a. Monetize the cost of AJC services to show their value-add for employers
 - b. Emphasize the value and cost effectiveness of using the AJCs, by working with the media to highlight successful workforce development programs and activities.
 - c. Host events such as employer open houses.
7. Work with transportation planning agencies such as TDOT and MPO's to identify and develop expanded transportation options
 - a. Apply for regional grants and seek other resources to support transportation throughout the region.
 - b. Provide links to transportation services on the local and regional websites.
8. Work with school systems and training providers to provide resources.

- a. Focus on providing resources for counselors that assist them in advising students on employer needs, and that encourages counselors to refer students to workforce resources that may help meet the student's needs, such as Vocational Rehabilitation, and WIOA youth and adult programs.
 - b. Apply for and implement LEAP grants.
 - c. Work with training providers on job placement.
9. Develop regional staff training to better serve employers and jobseekers.
- a. Cross train staff
 - b. Provide expertise in topics relevant to service delivery, especially new approaches: work-based learning, including work experience and apprenticeships; assessing applicants, serving individuals with disabilities and other target populations; and implementing best practices.