



Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Region 4 Plan

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires local boards and chief elected officials (CEOs) in each planning region to engage in a regional planning process that results in the preparation and submission of a single regional plan. Regional plan must include a description of the following:

1. 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.

Prosperity Region 4 consists of thirteen counties in West Michigan. Collectively, this includes two Michigan Works Agencies, fourteen American Job Centers, and one affiliate sites.

[Michigan Works! West Central's](#) (MWWC) service area includes Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Newaygo, Oceana, and Osceola counties, while [West Michigan Works!](#) (WMW) serves Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Montcalm, Muskegon, and Ottawa counties.

The Region 4 Michigan Works! Agencies convene local area employers, industry talent councils, community-based organizations, economic development organizations, talent development initiatives, and educational providers to create a plan for the region. Although much of this work is localized, both agencies remain committed to the broader, regional perspective as evidenced in the following ways:

[Talent First](#) works as a catalyst to ensure an ongoing supply of world-class talent for West Michigan. Talent First illuminates gaps, evaluates leading practices, and advocates for the implementation of those leading practices to make West Michigan a top 20% employment region.

Through the leadership of the [board of directors](http://www.talent2025.org/about/board-of-directors) and over 100 [CEO council members](#), ten [Talent First staff](#), and seven workgroups focused on regional initiatives for early childhood , K-12 education, post-secondary education, workforce development, workforce diversity and inclusion, workforce analytics, employer talent solutions, West Michigan Region 4 has identified the goals and strategies reflected in this plan.

Adult Learning Partners of West Michigan (ALPWM) is a networking group made up of approximately 70 members representing the thirteen-county region to bring together professionals committed to sharing 'Best Practices' used to serve the adult population in need of a high school diploma, general education development (GED), English as a Second Language (ESL), remediation education, vocational education, credentials, certifications as well as job readiness and employability skills training. ALPWM meets monthly and plays a vital role in the Region 4 planning process.

Also vital to the planning process is the Region 4 [Offenders Success](#) program. MWVC oversees this program and both agencies actively participate with the quarterly steering team meetings, proactively targeting service provision to meet the identified needs of returning offenders, thereby reducing their risk of recidivism, and enhancing their employment opportunities.

[The West Michigan Veteran Coalition](#) (WMVC) connects both region 4a and 4b by identifying solutions for gaps in veteran services, reducing duplication of efforts and simplifying connections with local resources. WMVC has four areas of concentration: education, employment, health care, and quality of life. In addition to participating in bimonthly meetings and being an active resource for veterans seeking education and employment services, WMW is also represented on the board of directors.

Additionally, Michigan Works! West Central and West Michigan Works! collaborate on statewide workforce initiatives, National Emergency Grants (NEG) applications and promote the Going Pro Talent Fund (GPTF) throughout the region.

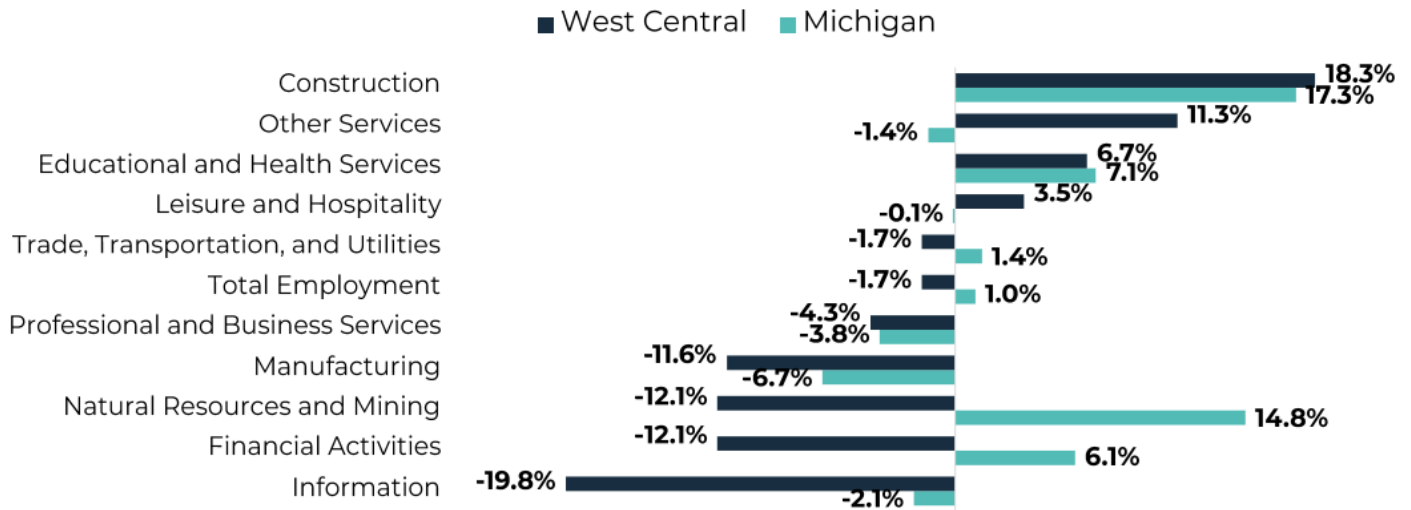
These types of partnerships provide consistency while recognizing the unique needs of our communities and employers. Stakeholders representing both region 4a and 4b are encouraged to participate in joint training sessions in relation to regional planning and continue to analyze and discuss joint data and service delivery approaches while remaining intentional about the importance of “regional thinking.” Each partner agency has shared draft planning information and convenes as needed to exchange ideas and discuss proposed goals, priorities, and industry needs.

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

- ***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 information provided below reflects data both prior to, during, and after the COVID pandemic significantly impacted economic conditions in March of 2020. Although post-pandemic, we continue to monitor labor market information to understand current workforce needs and adjust appropriately.

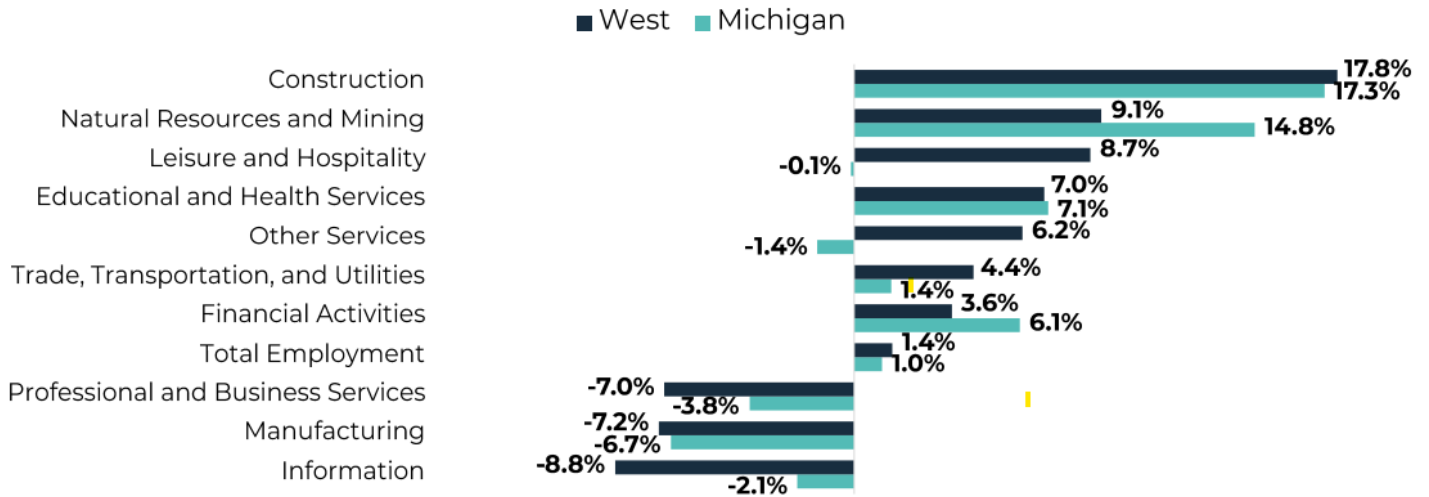
Private Sector Job Trends, 2019–2025



Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (Table 10)

Current Labor Market information (LMI) for West Central Michigan, provided by the DTMB, Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives, and Local Area Unemployment Statistics, shows total private sector employment decreased in West Central Michigan by 1.7% in the 2019-2025-time period. This was still .72 percentage points greater than the state. In West Central, Other Services, Leisure and hospitality, and Construction all experienced greater employment growth compared to the state. Several industries experienced modest growth since 2019, with the Construction sector witnessing the most significant expansion at 18.3% for the area. Other Services represents 11.3% growth, compared to -1.4% for the state.

Private Sector Job Trends, 2019–2025

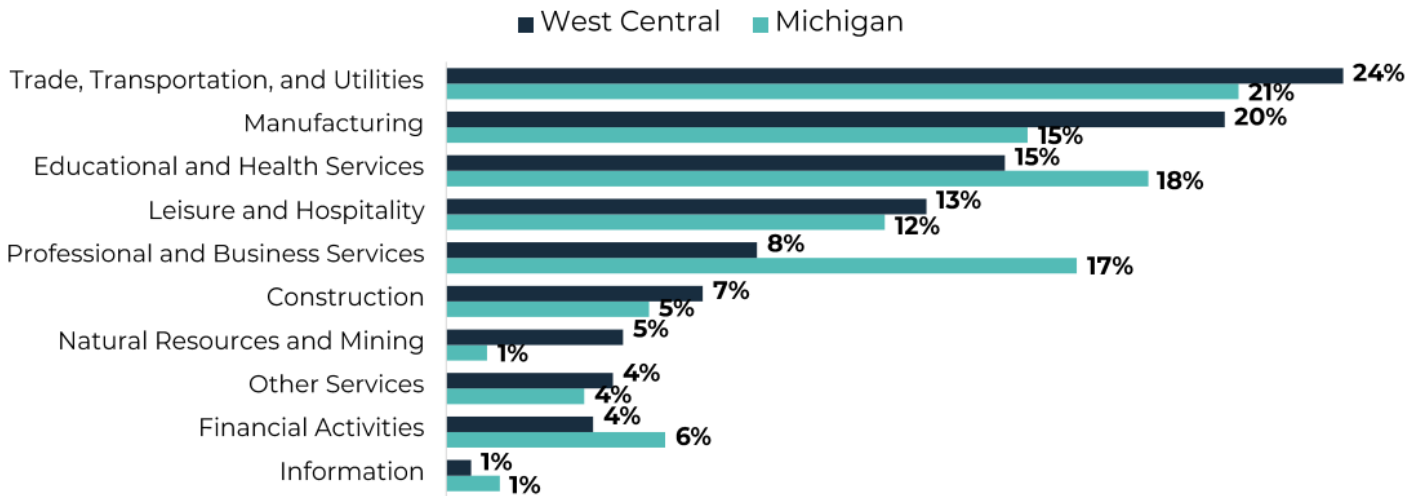


Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (Table 10)

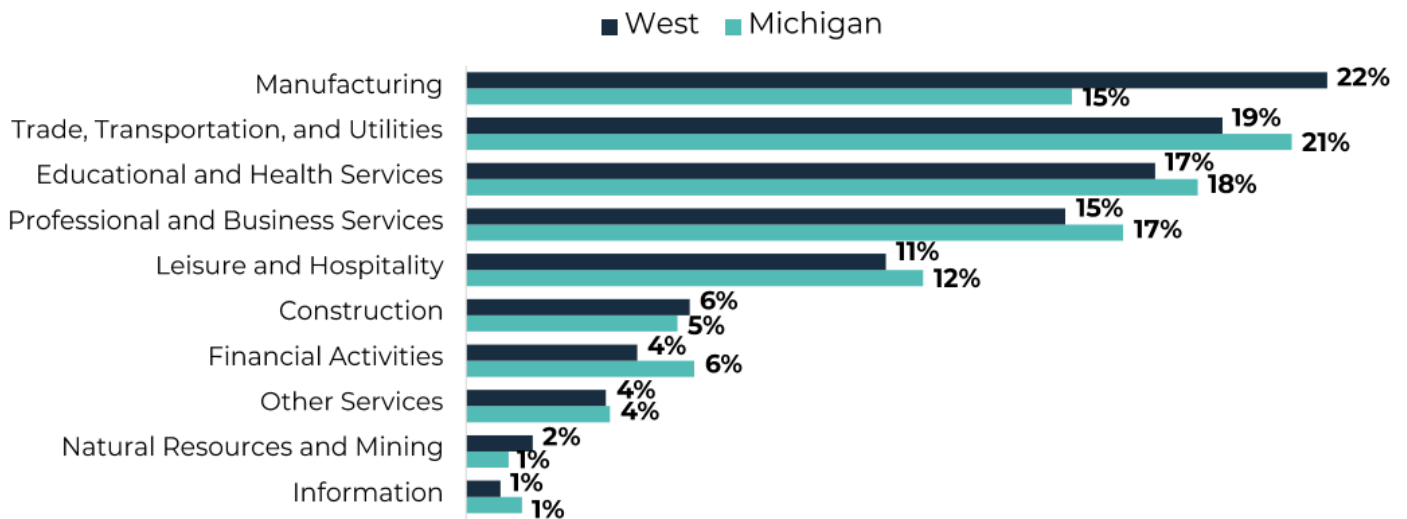
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Data on private sector job trends shows considerable growth in construction, natural resources and mining, and leisure and hospitality in West Michigan from 2019-2025. The most notable growth is in construction, representing a 17.8% increase in West Michigan. Natural resources and mining show a 9.1% increase, and leisure and hospitality show a 8.7% increase. Professional and business services, Manufacturing, and information show a slight decline. Overall, West Michigan shows a 1.4% increase in total employment, outpacing the state’s 1% increase.

Distribution of Industry Jobs, Second Quarter 2025



Distribution of Industry Jobs, Second Quarter 2025



According to the Michigan Center for Data and Analytics, manufacturing, trade, transportation and utilities, education and health services, and professional and business services represented nearly three-quarters of jobs in the West Michigan area.

Occupations within the management and business and financial operations categories represented 14.9% of the total of all online job advertisements in West Michigan. High-demand occupations within West Michigan's include Registered Nurses, Retail Salespersons, First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers, Home Health and Personal Care Aides, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers, and Janitors and Cleaners, except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners.

Manufacturing as a whole shows declining growth in West Michigan, though occupations in--demand within West Michigan's manufacturing industry include automotive, CNC programming and operation, food and other production, machinery manufacturing, and machine shops.

Agribusiness, the business of agricultural production, can be identified throughout high-demand occupations in the construction, manufacturing, and information technology sectors. With its continuous growth, it is a recognized sector with high-demand occupations within West Michigan that include many cross-industry careers. Occupational opportunities include maintenance mechanic, food processing and production, tractor trailer truck driver, first-line supervisors, computer and IT services, and general farm labor.

High-demand occupations within West Michigan's healthcare industry include patient care assistants, medical surgical registered nurses, registered nurses, community health workers, phlebotomists, physical therapists, medical assistants, and other healthcare support workers.

These occupations continue to show regional growth and Michigan Works! West Central and West Michigan Works! are collectively focused on growing the talent pipeline in this area.

Jobs in Information technology span between several industries such as information and professional and business services. Additionally, jobs within high demand positions within the IT industry include software developer, web developer, information security analyst and computer user support.

Occupations within the leisure and hospitality categories include food preparation and serving related, building and grounds cleaning and maintenance, personal care and service and represent 11% of the total of all online job advertisements by major occupational category in West Michigan. High-demand occupations within West Michigan's leisure and hospitality industry include retail salespersons, first-line supervisors of retail sales workers, fast food and counter workers, janitors and cleaners, and food service managers.

The professional occupations include higher skilled and educated positions such as mathematical analyst, architect, and designer.

West Michigan is also focused on employer needs in the transportation and utilities industry. Both Michigan Works! West Central and West Michigan Works! offer training scholarships and career services for individuals under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) who are interested in pursuing this career choice to include those who are considered hard to serve and re-entering citizens.

These occupations include employment opportunities for high school completers through those holding graduate or professional degrees. This trend aligns well with the goals of WIOA and will allow career pathway development and apprenticeship opportunities for those individuals who are accessing the workforce system.

These industries continue to remain steady or show regional growth, and West Michigan Works! continues focusing on growing the talent pipeline in these areas.

2025 Online Advertised Job Postings in the West Central Michigan Works! Area

Job Title	Postings
Registered Nurses	602
Retail Salespersons	481
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	408
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	359
Customer Service Representatives	251
Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	242
Merchandise Displayers and Window Trimmers	210
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	177
Postsecondary Teachers	174
Fast Food and Counter Workers	171

Source: The Conference Board-Lightcast Help Wanted OnLine (Table 16)

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Online Advertised Job Postings in the West Michigan Works! Area

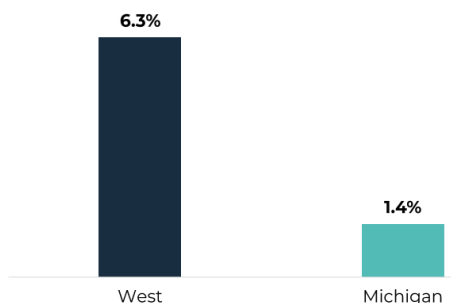
Job Title	Postings
Registered Nurses	6,568
Retail Salespersons	6,515
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	4,151
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	3,980
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	3,470
Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	3,448
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	2,837
Stockers and Order Fillers	2,767
Customer Service Representatives	2,709
Production Workers, All Other	2,385

In 2025, approximately 173,732 jobs were advertised online in West Michigan, according to Lightcast Developer. The top six advertisements were for registered nurses, retail salespersons, first-line supervisors of retail sales workers, heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers, janitors and cleaners, and maintenance and repair workers. In the West Central area, there

were 11,556 online job postings during 2025. High-demand advertisements included positions for retail salespersons, registered nurses, first-line supervisors of retail sales workers, personal care aides, and customer service representatives.

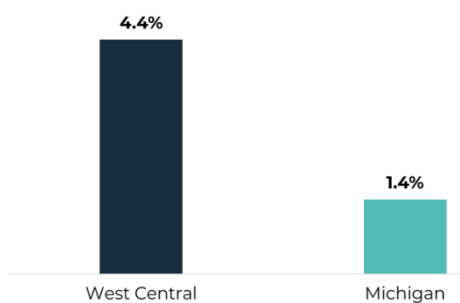
- ***An analysis of the current workforce in the region, including employment and unemployment data, labor market trends, and the educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment.***

Population Change, 2015–2025



Source: Population Estimates Program, U.S. Census Bureau (Table 1)

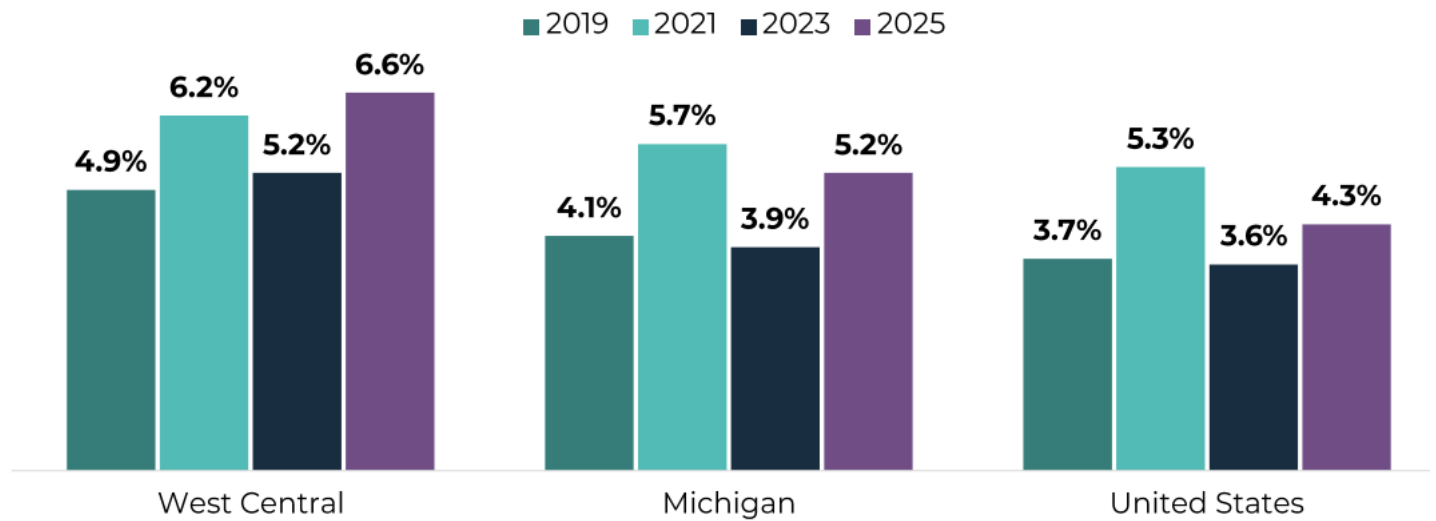
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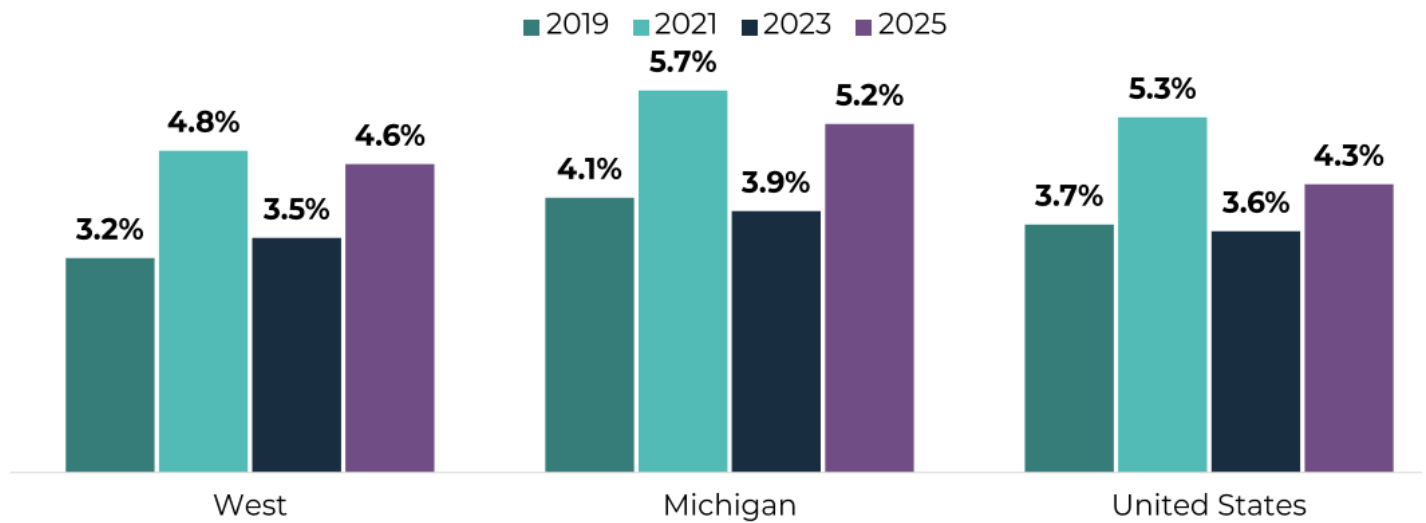
An analysis provided by the Michigan Center for Data and Analytics estimated the population for West Michigan in 2025 (US Census Bureau) was 1,448,700. This was an overall increase of 6.3 percent, or 101,100 since 2015 when the population was 1,396,900. West Central’s population increase by 1.4 % between 2015 and 2025. This was a gain of 8,000 residents, showing a total population of 141,400 in 2025. Michigan’s population has increased by 1.4 percent. Nationally, there was over a six percent increase in the population between 2015-2025.

Unemployment Rates by Area and Year



Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (Table 6)

Unemployment Rates by Area and Year

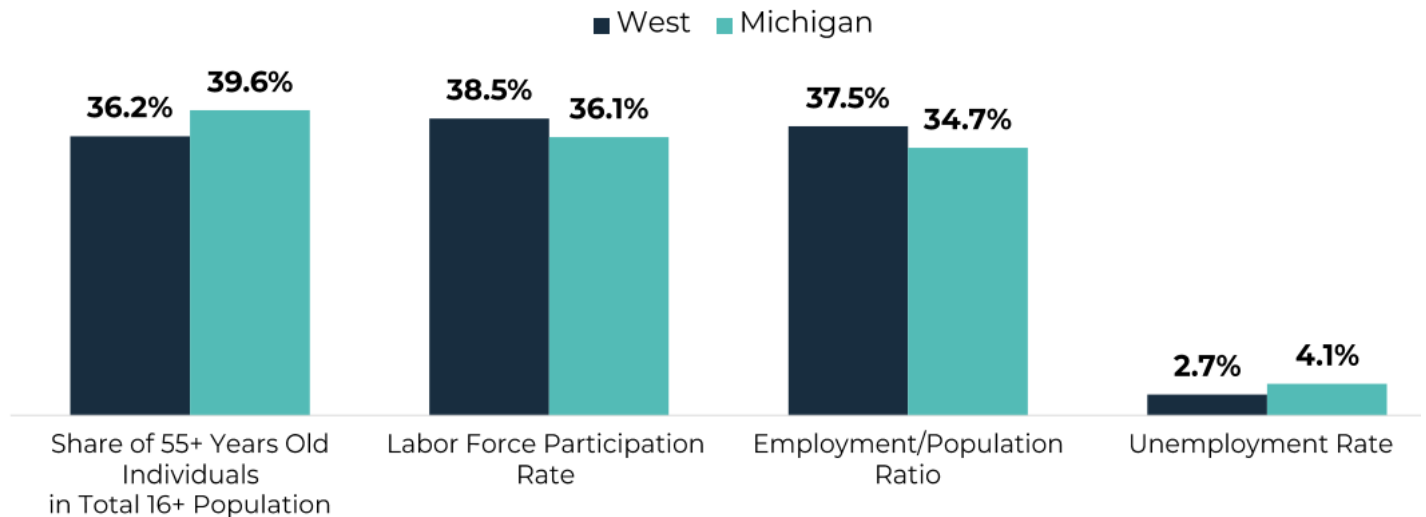


Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (Table 6)

Current Labor Market information (LMI) for West Michigan, provided by the Michigan Center for Data and Analytics, shows that the population increased by 6.3% between 2015 and 2025. The jobless rate in West Michigan increased to 4.6% since 2019 (3.2%), representing a rate lower compared to the state but slightly higher compared to the national at 4.3%. Between 2015 and 2025 in the West Central Region the population increased by 4.4%. The area's jobless rate was consistently higher compared to Michigan and the United States. Since 2019, the number of unemployed in the area increased by 11.7 percent.

Looking at jobless rates by demographics, West Michigan experiences rates below the state average in every category. Males in the region had a jobless rate 0.2 percentage points less than that of females in the region. Individuals who are Black/African American had a jobless rate of 9.5 percent. This rate was 2.6 percentage points lower than that of the state. The unemployment rate for those who are Black/African American was notably higher than all other demographic groups in both the West Central area and Michigan. The local jobless rates by age and gender were lower than most statewide averages. Individuals aged 20-24 had a noticeably lower jobless rate than the statewide rate.

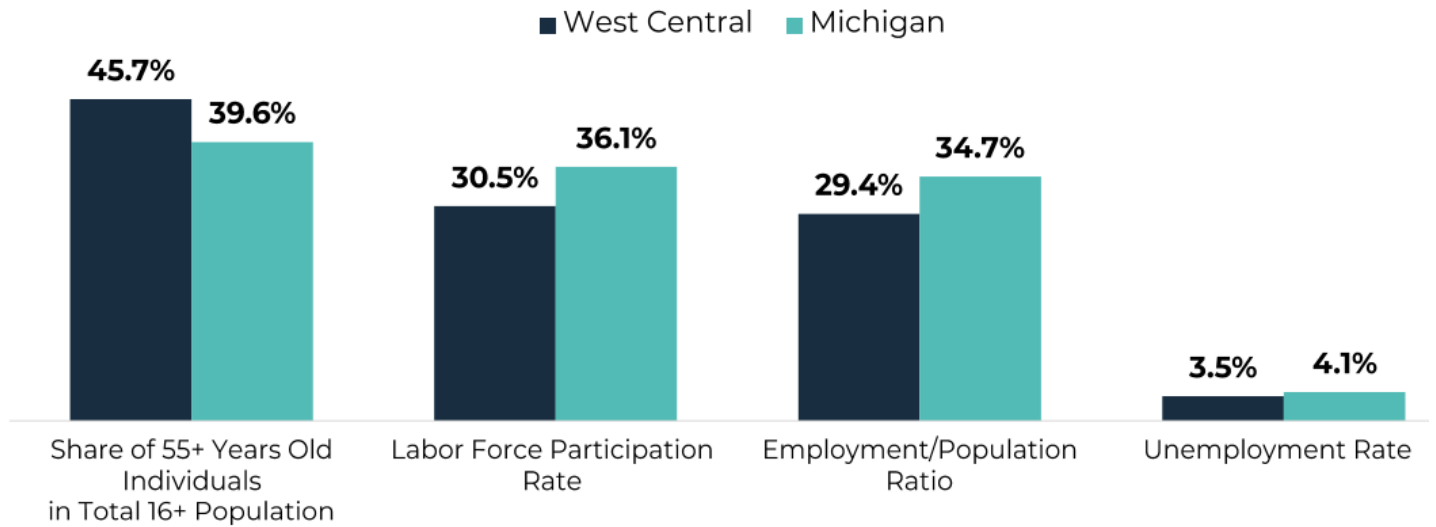
Labor Force Status of Older Workers



Source: 2020-2024 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau (Table 9)

West Michigan’s older workers, those age 55 and older, accounted for nearly 36.2 percent of the total population, lower than the statewide average of 39.6 percent. Older workers in the region had a labor force participation rate almost 2.5 percentage points higher than Michigan’s. Unemployment rates among older workers are lower in the region (2.7 percent) than at the statewide level (4.1 percent).

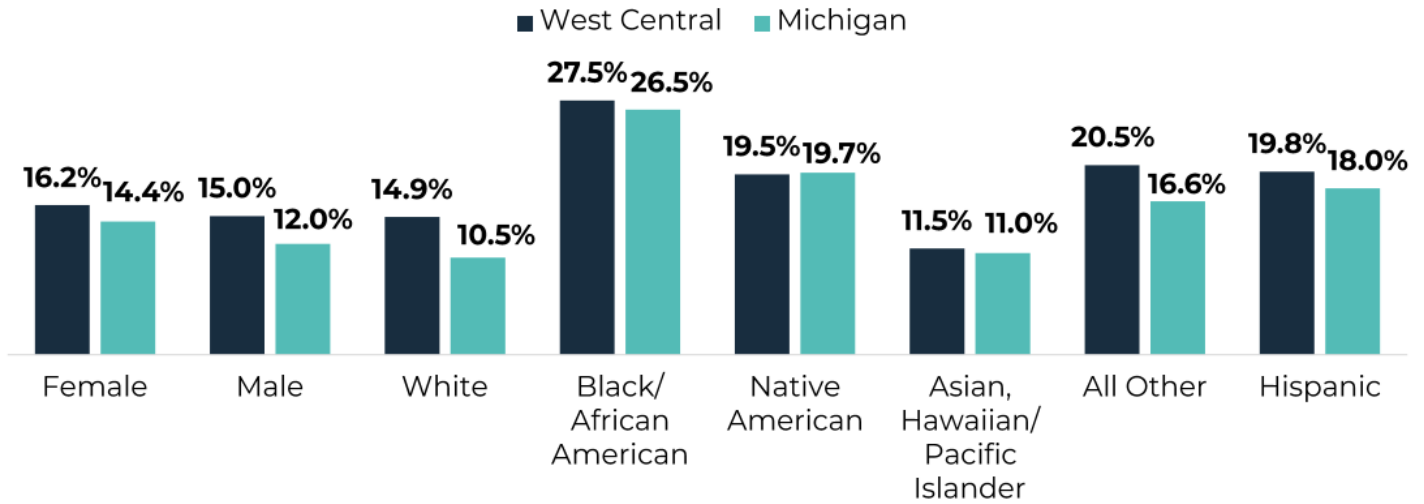
Labor Force Status of Older Workers



Source: 2020-2024 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau (Table 9)

West Central's older workers, those age 55 and older, accounted for nearly 45.7 percent of the total population, higher than the statewide average of 39.6 percent. Older workers in the region had a labor force participation rate almost six percentage points lower than Michigan's. Unemployment rates among older workers are lower in the region (3.5 percent) than at the statewide level (4.1 percent).

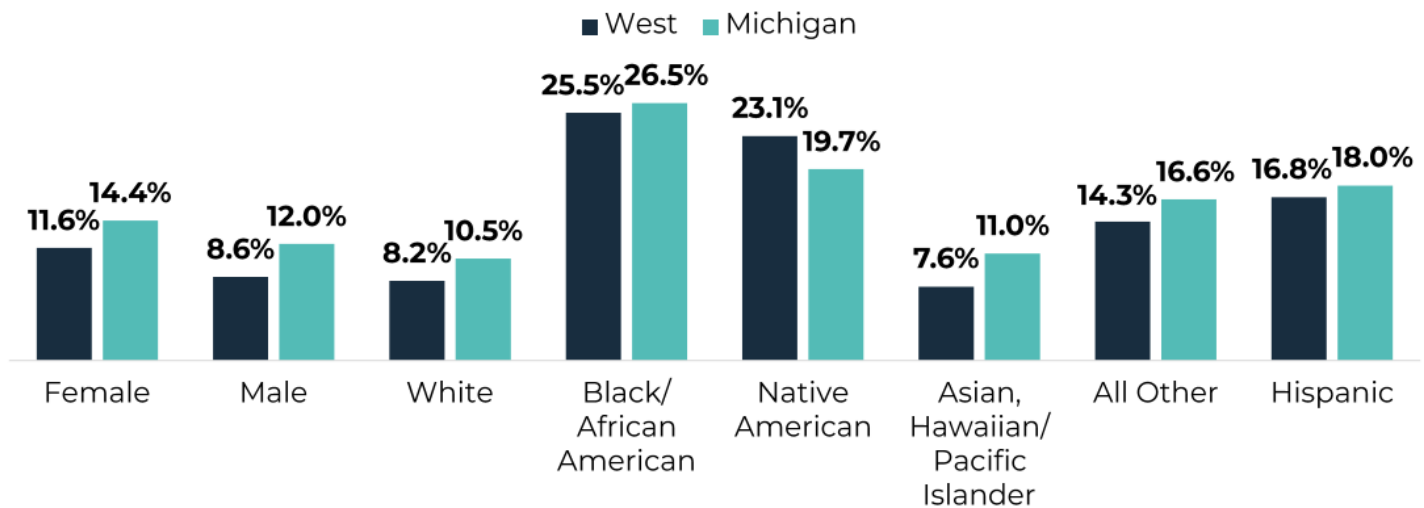
Poverty by Gender, Race, and Ethnicity



Source: 2020-2024 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau (Table 14)

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Poverty by Gender, Race, and Ethnicity



Source: 2020-2024 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau (Table 14)

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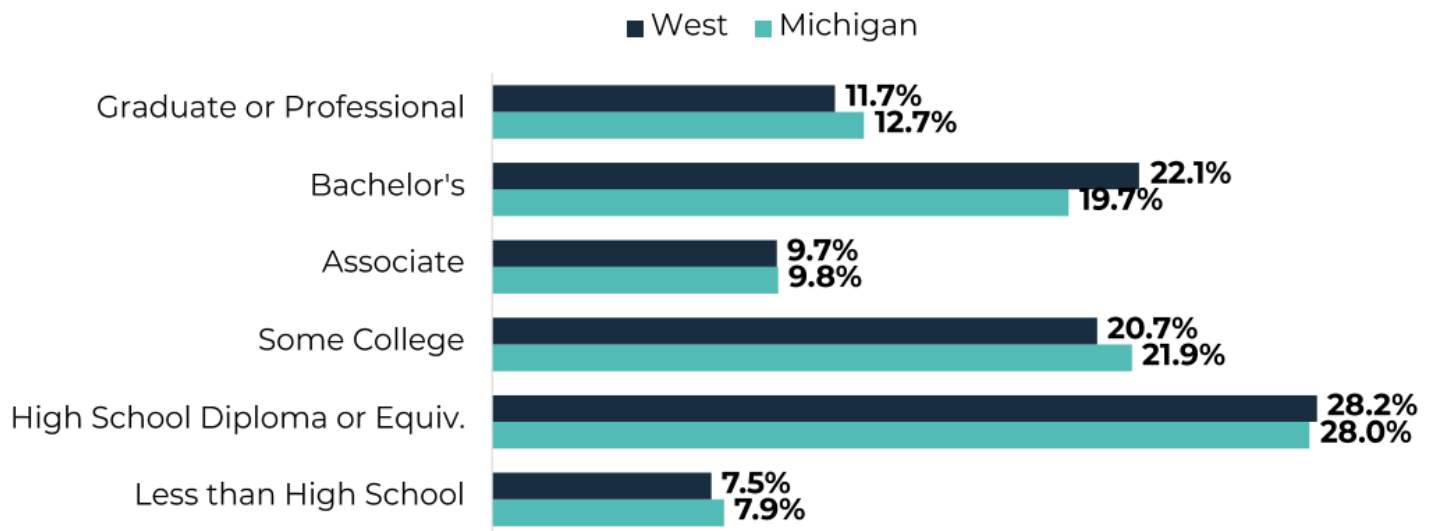
According to 2020–2024 estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau, 10.1 percent of West Michigan’s population lives below the poverty line. In West Central, nearly every group, except Native Americans, experienced greater rates of poverty compare to Michigan., 13.2 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. Those who are Black/African American have the highest poverty rate of those living in West Michigan at 25.5 percent and 27.5% in West Central.

In December of 2025, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services reported that there were nearly 42,000 assistance program recipients in West Michigan and 5,074 in West Central. In West Michigan, 54.5 percent of recipients were female, 55.9 percent for West Central. The region as a whole had a much lower share of recipients who were Black/African American than that of the state.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 11.8 percent, of the population in West Michigan . The number of individuals with a disability by race/ethnicity aligns closely to their share of total population in the West Michigan region.. Approximately 40 percent of those with a disability in the region were age 65 or older,, and the majority group in both areas is White

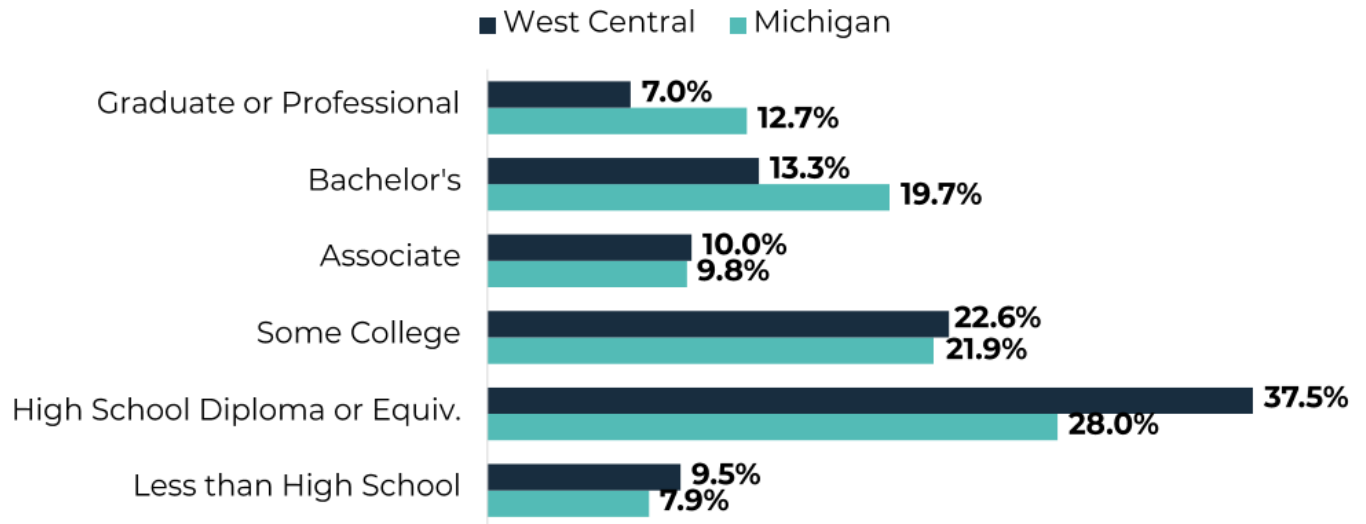
The chart below shows education attainment for ages 25 and up for West Michigan and West Central in comparison to the State. West Michigan outpaces the state in bachelor degree attainment at 22.1 percent compared to the state’s 19.7 percent. Individuals holding high school diplomas or GEDs were only slightly above the state average by .2%. The West Central residents held a lower level of educational attainment, on average, than state wide for graduate or professional and bachelor’s degrees, but outpaced the state in all other categories. 37.5% had a high school diploma or equivalent as their highest education.

Educational Attainment (Ages 25+)



Source: 2020-2024 Five-Year Estimates, American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau (Table 3)

Educational Attainment (Ages 25+)



Source: 2020-2024 Five-Year Estimates, American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau (Table 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.***

Although West Michigan has experienced population increases, unemployment rates lower than state averages, and slightly better than state averages in most of the workforce trends, it remains a region in need of intentional workforce development.

Although the West Michigan region appears to be ahead of the state in many areas, we know there are pockets experiencing high poverty rates, low educational attainment, and high unemployment. These pockets are either geographically or demographically based. Michigan Works! West Central and West Michigan Works! are relentlessly pursuing innovative and relevant solutions to these challenges through unique partnerships and resources to meet individual and employer needs. This includes seeking ways to provide access to those not currently utilizing the welfare reform or other workforce systems, provide one stop barrier removal services in coordination with existing and newly sought out community partners, better preparing individuals to attend various training opportunities, and finding ways to increase the labor force by re-engaging people with disabilities who are otherwise capable of working.

Using sector strategies, the Region 4 Michigan Works! agencies continue to convene and connect to create a network of partners to meet the demands of the region's current employers as well as the emerging industry needs in order to achieve a skilled workforce.

As previously mentioned, industry talent councils have been established within the region to help identify employer needs from an industry-wide perspective. These councils allow for the identification of best practices and shared strategies as well as increased articulation of what areas employers may need workforce development assistance.

Key roles of each of the industry sector council includes:

- Information conduit: sharing trends and best practices affecting talent.
- Talent initiatives: leading, supporting and promoting talent initiatives throughout West Michigan.
- Training needs: sharing current training needs with educational partners to develop curriculum, create career pathways and nurture a supply chain of talent.
- Networking: promoting networking among employers, educators, workforce development and economic development professionals for the purpose of developing a skilled workforce.

Educating youth and enhanced outreach activities allow for a better understanding of what the regional economy looks like and what career opportunities are in existence post high school or following postsecondary education. Building the talent pipeline will increase the skilled talent pool and retain young people in our area. [MiCareerQuest](#), a region-wide career exploration event for youth, Jobs for Michigan Graduates (JMG), and the Summer Youth Work Experience program are all examples of current workforce development activities targeted at increasing the local labor force and addressing the education and skill gaps in our region.

West Michigan is also focused on identifying and advocating to provide more meaningful and efficient services to individuals with disabilities. These initiatives include addressing the infrastructure improvements needed to lessen the barriers brought by housing, transportation, and internet access as well as increasing the training and employment opportunities that are available to this population. Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) is a core partner, and representatives are co-located inside many of the service centers. In addition, West Michigan has established relationships with the Michigan Bureau for Blind Services, Disabilities Advocates of Kent County, Disability Network, Mid-Michigan Industries and Disability Connections. West Central Michigan Works now has an advocate from Disability Network co-located in their Lake County Service Center. These agencies are sharing resources and are at the table investigating ways to share common intakes, assessments, and making direct connects to opportunities.

In rural areas or where public transportation is unavailable, support services, such as gas cards or auto repairs, may be provided to assist individuals with getting to and from workforce development activities including education and employment. Though the causes of transportation barriers are different, these barriers exist in both urban and rural areas of the region.

Adult education and literacy programs are made available through established and emerging partnerships with local providers. Some of the West Michigan Region 4 service centers provide instruction and testing onsite or through direct services. In areas that have expanded resources, community conversations and informational tours are taking place to increase awareness of workforce development services. In some communities, Michigan Works! staff conduct workshops and initiate career coaching as part of the educational curriculum.

Short-term occupational skills training and higher education opportunities are also available throughout the region and are funded with local WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth allocations for those who qualify. Region 4 works closely with training providers to ensure that the supported programs lead to an industry recognized credential and the credential falls in line with employer demand. Recent initiatives have also shown that training providers including community colleges are responsive to the development and delivery of a curriculum that directly addresses the skill gaps.

The geography of Region 4 presents a challenge to both rural communities and employers. Although some training opportunities are offered online, many are only available in the urban areas. Lack of transportation makes occupational skill training or higher education inaccessible for many in rural areas. Commuting patterns suggest that many people living in the rural areas are working in urban locations; however, there is still a large gap in accessible skills training for those who want to live and work in the same community. Efforts to better assess training needs and accessibility of training programs are being addressed in collaboration with the West Michigan industry councils, higher education providers, vocational training partners, Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS), adult education providers, veterans' services, and other community partners.

Work-based training is available and is a viable option that allows individuals to learn the skills that employers need without attending occupational skills-based training or higher education. Depending on the desired skill, the training, and the length of the training, this may assist residents with employment opportunities that will require an education attainment of high school diploma through associate degree (approximately 80 % of projected jobs). Work-based training can be funded with local WIOA Adult, Youth and Dislocated Worker allocations, and, for those who qualify, this is a very desirable option.

Work-based training opportunities include:

- ***On-The-Job Training***: intended to provide a participant with the knowledge and skills necessary for the full performance of the job. OJT is a critical tool that can help job seekers

enter into successful employment. The term “on-the-job training” means training by an employer that is provided to a paid participant while engaged in productive work in a job that:

1. Provides knowledge or skills essential to the full and adequate performance of the job.
2. Provides reimbursement to the employer of up to 75 % of the wage rate of the participant for the extraordinary costs of providing the training and additional supervision related to the training.
3. Is limited in duration as appropriate to the occupation for which the participant is being trained, taking into account the content of the training, the prior work experience of the participant, and the service strategy of the participant, as appropriate.

- **Pre-Apprenticeship Training:** designed to provide work experiences that can help participants obtain the skills needed to be placed into a registered apprenticeship.
- **Registered Apprenticeships:** designed to combine paid learning on-the-job and related technical and theoretical instruction in a skilled occupation. This training is an important component of the education and training services that the workforce system can provide to its participants and should be used as a strategy to train and employ job seekers. Registered Apprenticeships offer job seekers immediate employment opportunities that usually pay higher wages and offer continued career growth.
- **Incumbent Worker Training:** designed to assist employers with training current workers in specific circumstances to meet the needs of employers and increase the skill level of workers.

3. 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. Regions may consider:

- **Existing service delivery strategies that will be expanded, streamlined, or eliminated.**

In addition to the analysis of workforce development activities in the region, including available education and training opportunities mentioned. Hope Network’s Wheels to Work program provides an opportunity to expand services across the region. This program provides transportation to designated “hubs” through an area, based on employer needs. Wheels to Work is currently operating in Kent, Ottawa and Muskegon Counties and has recently expanded into include Newaygo County. With

employer interest increasing, this program is a possible solution to both employers' needs to decrease turnover due to lack of reliable transportation and enabling talent to access reliable transportation.

- ***New service strategies necessary to address regional education and training needs.***

Both Michigan Works! West Central and West Michigan Works! actively participate in and attend monthly meetings with the Adult Learning Partners of West Michigan (ALPWM), a region-wide collaborative that includes adult education providers from all thirteen counties. This allows the region to share information with adult education providers.

Career Education Advisory Councils (CEAC) are active in both regions and specifically address education and training needs for youth. Career and Technical Education (CTE) partners participate in these as well fostering the development of job skills training throughout the region.

- ***Strategies to address geographic advantages.***

Region 4 is made up of both urban and rural communities. Many people in rural parts of the region are commuting to urban areas for training and to participate in the workforce. Supportive service policies are written specifically to adjust to the needs of the geographical area served. Training opportunities will almost always require the need for travel and is factored into suitability for training discussions. Efforts are made to respond to the needs through collaboration with partners such as Veteran's Career Advisors (VCA), Michigan Rehabilitation Counselors, Adult Education Providers, institutions of higher learning and other partners based upon the needs of the participant.

- ***Approaches to improve services to individuals with disabilities, veterans, youth, or other hard-to-serve populations.***

In several service centers across the region Michigan Rehabilitation counselors are co-located within the MWWC and MWW service centers and available for referrals. Staff are also familiar with Michigan Career and Technical Institute programs tailored to suit individuals with disabilities. In our continuous effort to grow our partnership we strive to co-enroll individuals into both organizations' programs as we have identified that we share the same populations. MRS has been involved in some of the rapid response meetings and routinely attends community events throughout the region. Staff have participated in the transitional council meetings that coordinate services for individuals with disabilities who will soon be graduating. This provides an opportunity to share information about services offered by different agencies within the local communities.

Veteran career advisors (VCAs) are shared across the region. Additionally, county employed Veterans Service officers provide services when the need arises.

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

Collaboration continues across the region to establish new USDOL Registered Apprenticeships and to increase employer and training institution engagement in the process. National Apprenticeship Week is promoted through social media posts and coordinated activities in area schools to raise awareness about apprenticeships.

Work experiences provide youth the opportunity to build relationships with local employers, while giving businesses the opportunity to develop the skill sets of future employees. Smaller businesses offer a unique opportunity to learn about running your own business and these opportunities are a focus for work experience sites.

On-the-job training opportunities provide work-based training for people who are learning a new skill or specific employer processes.

- ***Strategies to integrate existing regional planning efforts among core partners.***

Regional service strategies are currently being developed through the guidance and direction of the Career Education Advisory Council (CEAC) and Talent First to ensure the upcoming talent pipeline is exposed to in-demand industries and have the knowledge required to access training for those occupations. These efforts include partners from adult education, training providers, community colleges, and employers.

In many instances the ISDs rely on Michigan Works! to help connect them to employers and employer training needs. Additionally, Michigan Works! coordinates with school districts and Tech Centers to take part in events such as student career days and job fairs.

Other planning efforts include the regional collaboration through the West Michigan's Veteran Coalition bi-monthly meetings, the Adult Learning Partners of West Michigan (ALPWM) monthly meetings, and the Offender Success steering team quarterly meetings.

As mentioned, Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) representatives are located in many of the One-Stop Service Centers across Region 4. This connection integrates referral processes, barrier removal strategies and allows MRS and the Michigan Works! agencies to share best practices.

Job Corps is a core partner that provides high school diploma (HSD), high school equivalency (HSE), job training, and certificate opportunities to youth ages 16-24. Although the residential facility is located in Grand Rapids, they are considered a valuable resource for youth for the entire region.

Additionally, both MWWC and WMW have implemented a direct service delivery system for Workforce Innovative Opportunity Act (WIOA), Partners Accountability Training and Hope (PATH), Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), and Wagner Peyser (WP). This allows for one point of contact for partner agencies, enabling stronger integrated strategies with core partners.

4. 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.

Regionally, Michigan Works! Agencies (MWAs) convene employers along with education providers, economic development organizations, and other groups associated with workforce development to solve talent challenges. Local industry clusters are formed based on local needs and are led by employers.

An industry cluster is a geographic concentration of related employers, industry suppliers and support institutions in a product or service field. Michigan's Industry Cluster Approach (MICA) creates a framework in which many employers within a single industry jointly engage with the workforce system to identify their talent demand and challenges.

Much of the work being done to address talent demand issues is happening through industry sector collaboration, or industry councils. Councils bring together employers, workforce agencies and other partners such as training institutions and economic development agencies to create regional, sector specific workforce strategies. Creating a continuous flow of information between key players ensures that labor supply is aligned with employer demand.

- ***Current in-demand industry sectors and occupations within the region.***
- ***Which sectors are regional priorities, based upon data-driven analysis.***

Key industry clusters for region 4 include the following:

- Agribusiness
 - Construction and energy
 - Health care
 - Information technology
 - Manufacturing
 - Hospitality
- ***The status of regional collaboration in support of the sector initiatives.***
 - ***Current sector-based partnerships within the region.***

In addition to the work both agencies are convening locally, both agencies work with [The Right Place](#), a West Michigan economic development organization, offering confidential, comprehensive business services in many counties throughout the region.

[Hello West Michigan](#) focuses on the region's in-demand sectors with employers engaging through memberships. They offer several initiatives such as *Rethink West Michigan* and have been instrumental in promoting West Michigan as a place where business thrives, and people want to live and work. Both WMW and MWWC are close partners with Hello West Michigan.

Industry sector engagement is robust in region 4. There are many employer-led collaboratives that drive innovative programming and events to help bring awareness to high demand jobs and address solutions to address employers' short term talent needs. Information on the employer-led collaboratives in our region include:

The Construction Careers Council (CCC) was established in May 2021 to address the current and future talent needs in the construction industry. The mission of the Construction Careers Council is to create a bright future for West Michigan's construction industry by building a diverse and qualified workforce. The council is employer led, and a culmination of local employers, educators, workforce development, union representation, and association representation with the goal of working together to solve workforce development issues within the construction industry. The council uses three major strategies to address workforce development needs:

- o Campaign: The council helps to spread awareness about construction careers. The council promotes career paths within the industry through innovative projects.
- o Train: The council aims to provide resources for employers looking to upskill new or current employees and create a sustainable talent pipeline for the construction industry in West Michigan.
- o Sustain: The council creates beneficial retention solutions aimed at keeping the current talent that is in the industry... in the industry.

Discover Manufacturing (DM), the industry Talent Council for Manufacturing, began in 2014 but was formally recognized with a resolution signed August of 2016. DM's mission is to inspire and expand manufacturing talent in West Michigan. DM is a collaborative of manufacturers, educators, workforce development, and economic development organizations working together to meet West Michigan's manufacturing talent needs. West Michigan Works! and The Right Place are the visionary founders of Discover Manufacturing, taking it from a sub-committee of the Manufacturers' Council focused in Kent County, to a larger scale initiative serving Region 4a and 4b. There are three strategies that guide its work to bring the vision and ideas to reality:

- o Promote manufacturing
- o Identify and expand training opportunities
- o Share best practices regionally

The Agribusiness Talent Council (ATC) was incorporated in 2018 and was originally known as the Food Processing Talent Council. The council was born out of the need to address a common need of talent, training, and industry promotion among regional food processors. Food processors recognized the importance of having the region's farms, animal raisers, and other agribusinesses at the table as well. The council expanded to include traditional agriculture operations and changed its name to Agribusiness Talent Council in 2019. The ATC addresses common challenges in attracting talent, promoting the industry, and providing training and resources to employers in Agribusiness. This employer led collaborative seeks to expand the talent pool by promoting career pathways and opportunities in West Michigan's agribusiness industry. It focuses on four key strategies to meet its vision:

- o Train: Connect businesses with resources to create your own skilled talent by upskilling your current workforce.

- Recruit and Retain: Create and join projects that pull new talent into Agribusiness and keep existing talent long term.
- Promote the Industry: Focus on promoting Agribusiness as a great career pathway for all ages.
- Connect to Resources: Create new and share existing beneficial resources for the Agribusiness industry.

The West Michigan Health Careers Council (WMHCC) was established in January of 2016 out of a need to address specific health care talent needs in the West Michigan region. The mission of the WMHCC is to strengthen the West Michigan health care industry by identifying, developing, and promoting health care career opportunities. The purpose of the council is to provide an employer led collaborative council of health care employers, educators, workforce development, and economic development organizations working together to solve health care needs. This mission and vision are supported through four key strategies:

- **Outreach & Promotion**: The council works with employers and community partners to encourage careers in the health care industry.
- **Education & Training**: The council works to create and provide effective ways to enter into, learn in, and be effective employees in the health care industry.
- **Funding & Resources**: The council works to find funding opportunities to support the efforts of the WMHCC.
- **Retention**: The council works to find ways to help health care employees stay within the industry or organization.

West Michigan Tech Talent (WMTT) is a West Michigan Works! Supported Industry Talent Council. WMTT's mission is to engage employers of IT professionals with best practices, resources, and a community to grow, develop, recruit, and retain a diverse and inclusive world class IT workforce in West Michigan. To accomplish their work, WMTT focuses on the following key strategies:

- **GROW**: reaching out to students K-16 to promote IT careers, ensuring that under-represented groups have equitable access.
- **DEVELOP**: upskilling our current workforce and adult career changers.
- **RECRUIT & RETAIN**: partner with organizers of conferences, meetups, and local tech events to sponsor and promote their efforts to build a vibrant and inclusive tech community

Established in 2024, Explore Hospitality (ExH) is a collaborative initiative developed in partnership with Experience Grand Rapids. This regional council was created with the purpose of advancing the hospitality industry in West Michigan by addressing ongoing workforce and talent development challenges. Explore Hospitality brings together a diverse group of stakeholders, including employers, educators, and community partners, to create strategic solutions that support industry growth and long-term sustainability.

To better understand and respond to the unique needs of the sector, the council has identified and organized its focus into five key subsectors: Food and Beverage, Lodging, Transit, Recreation and Entertainment, and Event Management. By aligning efforts within these categories, Explore Hospitality aims to cultivate talent, strengthen career pathways, and elevate the perception and impact of the hospitality industry across the region.

To accomplish their work, ExH focuses on the following key strategies:

- Elevate: partnering with educators and industry leaders to promote hospitality as a sustainable career pathway for all ages.
- Train: collaborating with businesses and educators to provide resources and training opportunities for employers looking to upskill new or current employees, and creating a sustainable talent pipeline for West Michigan’s hospitality industry.
- Retain: working with industry leaders and workforce development professionals to develop and promote beneficial retention programs and projects aimed at keeping our current talent in the hospitality industry.

Recently, Region 4a has also implemented and convened an employer-led collaborative in health care. The partnership between regions 4a and 4b was instrumental in bringing this to fruition. Within the health care sector, we have several shared employers — specifically hospitals — across the region.

- ***The extent of business involvement in current initiatives.***

Businesses involved in the development, implementation, and expansion of sector initiatives include all the employer partnerships noted through the regional collaboration as well as the local industry councils and the small business owners in each of our communities.

- ***Other public-private partnerships in the region that could support sector strategies.***

Other partnerships that support sector strategies include community colleges, career tech centers, adult learning providers, organizations committed to community support initiatives, and agencies with a similar mission.

5. 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. Regions may consider:

- ***Current or proposed resource leveraging agreements.***
- ***Establishing a process to evaluate cost sharing arrangements.***

While MWWC and WMW continue to collaborate on multiple projects, with one or the other agency acting as the fiduciary, there are no overarching arrangements or any intent to pool funds for administrative costs at this time. MWWC and WMW continue to share lessons learned and best practices throughout the region.

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

The need for transportation and other support services are identified through the assessment of individuals' needs and the available resources in an area. Although there is no universally accessible transportation for all region 4 commuters, MWWC and WMW remain committed to seeking timely solutions for those in need by utilizing a direct contact at each of the agencies.

- ***Whether the provision of transportation or other supportive services could be enhanced, and if so, how and establishing a process to promote coordination of supportive services delivery.***

Reliable transportation, as well as access to quality childcare and education, remain a struggle for many individuals in our region, particularly in rural areas. Addressing these barriers has been a primary focus of the [Workforce Development Working Group](#). By prioritizing the insights into the personas of our workforce, this workgroup asked a series of "How Might We" questions that allows insight, continued focus, ideation, and intervention in their impacted areas.

Childcare Trade-offs *How Might We:*

- Help employers implement strategies that address the childcare needs of their employees.
- Remove constraints that impact childcare providers ability to operate or expand.
- Secure funding to support the expansion of Reach Out & Read Michigan.
- Implement a statewide Kindergarten Readiness Assessment.

It's More Than Moving People *How Might We:*

- Find ways to utilize other resources (church vans, Wheels to Work program, carpool networking)?
- Influence transportation options to be more uplifting and less stigmatized?
- Equip commuters to obtain transportation on their own terms and not as a favor or obligation?

Uncovering My Skills *How Might We:*

- Improve postsecondary attainment and reduce poverty in West Michigan while incentivizing work and advancement by partnering with the Federal Reserve.
- Enhance Michigan's adult basic education system by accelerating the implementation, evaluation, and scaling of effective practices.
- Increase the number of adults in West Michigan with a postsecondary credential through the West Michigan Education-to-Employment Partnership.
- Expand work-based learning opportunities (internships, co-ops) offered by employers to college students to increase the number of graduates who stay in West Michigan.

- ***What organizations currently provide or could provide supportive services.***

Organizations that currently provide services or are seeking to expand services to our region include:

- [Great Start Readiness Program \(GSRP\)](#); A Michigan state-funded preschool program for four-year-old children with factors which may place them at risk of educational failure.
- [Hope Network Wheels to Work Program](#); a program designed to help employers get their employees to work, efficiently and affordably. This program currently provides transportation solutions to Kent, Ottawa, Muskegon and Newago counties. ~~with plans to expand to beyond.~~
- [Michigan Mobility Plan](#); Michigan needs a vision for a 21st-century transportation system that will support user needs for improved safety, infrastructure conditions, and system reliability to drive statewide economic investments. The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) is developing an integrated, performance based 2045 State Long-Range Transportation Plan (Michigan Mobility 2045) to guide implementation of this vision.

7. 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. Regions may consider:

- ***Current economic development organizations engaged in regional planning.***

West Michigan Works! and Michigan Works! West Central have formed a regional prosperity collaboration that aligns with the Regional Prosperity Initiative (RPI). Through the guidance and direction of the Career Education Advisory Council (CEAC), Talent First, and The Right Place, Michigan Works! West Central and West Michigan Works! have come together to develop a regional prosperity plan. This will ensure that businesses have the skilled talent they need, educators are providing the training and credentials that match these needs, and individuals, including those with disabilities, have current labor market information and access to viable training opportunities to close the skills gaps. Through the development of industry sector councils and the support of community partners and employers who have united to form industry sectors, Region 4 will continue to prosper by increasing business and talent attraction. The MWAs will work closely with economic development and MEDC to assure employer councils and associations, as well as individual employers, are aware of services and opportunities for their operations.

- ***Education and training providers involved with economic development.***

Many training providers, ALPWM members, and CEAC committees are valued contributors to the economic development in West Michigan. The following education and training providers are also represented on our Workforce Development Boards:

Michigan Works! West Central

- Ferris State University
- Mecosta Osceola ISD
- Mason-Lake Adult Education

West Michigan Works!

- Ottawa Area ISD
- Muskegon Community College
- Northview Public Schools
- Grand Rapids Community College
- Montcalm Community College

- ***Current businesses involved with economic development organizations.***

Many regional and local businesses are valued contributors to the economic development in West Michigan. The businesses are also represented on our Workforce Development Boards:

Michigan Works! West Central

- Blue Triton/Ice Mountain
- Bucher Hydraulics
- Consumers Energy
- Dawn Riley, Gray & Company
- Dept. of Health and Human Services
- Ferris State University
- Five-Cap, Inc.
- Fremont Area Community Foundation
- Fremont Public Schools

- Grand Oaks Nursing Center-Baldwin
- Hamtech, Inc.

- Hardman Construction
- Lake-Osceola State Bank
-
- Michigan Dept. of Corrections
-
- Michigan Rehabilitation Services
- Nestle Nutrition/Gerber Products
- Northern Precision Products
- Plumbers, Fitters and Service Trades No. 174-Coopersville
- OPC Arbre Farms
-
- Reed City Group
- River Country Chamber of Commerce
- SMART Local No. 7
- United Auto Workers - Grand Rapids
- Whitehall Industries
- Youth Attention Center

 *West Michigan Works!*

- Berends Hendricks Stuit
- Wolverine Coil Spring
- Haworth
- Greater Muskegon Economic Development
- Second Act, LLC
- Department of Health & Human Services
- ITC Holdings, Inc.
- Goodwill Industries of West Michigan
- Plumbers, Fitters, and Service Trades #174
- Barry County Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development Alliance
- Heart of West Michigan United Way
- Perrigo
- Cascade Engineering
- Holland Board of Public Works

- The Right Place
- Lakeshore Advantage
- Trinity Health
- Meijer Inc.
- Michigan Rehabilitation Services
- Fleis & Vandenbrink
- Plascore
- Consumers Energy
- Corewell Health
- West Michigan Construction Institute
- Kendrick Plastics
- West Michigan Training Alliance
- Bradford White
- CarbonSix

- ***Targeted businesses from emerging sectors/industries.***

High growth businesses and industries in the West Michigan region include manufacturing and transportation/utilities. Agriculture, construction and energy, healthcare, information technology and most recently, hospitality, are additional industries that the region has identified as key sectors.

8. 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 the WIOA Section 116(c), for the local areas or the planning region. Regions may consider:

- ***The process to be used for determining regional performance goals.***

Michigan Works! West Central and West Michigan Works! both participated independently with Michigan Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO) to negotiate the performance goal through program year 22/23. These negotiations were based on historical performance and local economic conditions.

Performance levels for future programs have not been set or negotiated at this time. Both areas have updated their respective local plans to reflect the negotiated rates.