

# Capital Region WIOA Plan

FREDERICK COUNTY ■ MONTGOMERY COUNTY ■ PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY



**2024 - 2028**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## BOARD BACKGROUND AND LEADERSHIP

The Capital Region, encompassing Frederick, Montgomery, and Prince George's Counties, Maryland, is represented by three distinct Workforce Development Boards (WDBs):

- **Frederick County Workforce Development Board:** Oversees the operation of Frederick County's workforce system, guided by its mission to create a robust talent pipeline and foster a thriving, inclusive economy.
- **Montgomery County Workforce Development Board:** Administers workforce development initiatives in Montgomery County, with WorkSource Montgomery serving as the administrative and fiscal agent. Montgomery County has a proud history of developing supportive government and community programs to help employers and job seekers who may be unemployed or underemployed. WSM, the Montgomery County Workforce Development Board is continuously advancing systems and strengthening stakeholder relationships to create clear, equitable and accessible pathways to employment for all residents of Montgomery County.
- **Prince George's County Workforce Development Board:** Provides leadership, direction, and policy oversight for the workforce delivery system in Prince George's County. The board strives to support innovation, integration, continuity, productivity, and efficiency of a workforce system that produces a robust, qualified, and skilled workforce that meets the needs of the business community. Employ Prince George's (EPG) serves as the fiscal and administrative agent of Prince George's County Workforce Development.

This collaborative regional plan reflects the unified commitment of the WDBs to create a thriving and inclusive workforce ecosystem that benefits all residents and businesses across the three-county region. This WIOA Capital Region plan represents a region wide, collective effort to research, analyze, and ground-truth the data, current conditions and future opportunities for the region. Recognizing the diverse needs and priorities within each county, the WDBs have engaged in a series of WIOA Regional Planning sessions, where Executive Leadership of each of the respective workforce systems provided historical information and information about current activities and proposed advancements to produce this plan. Each of the three workforce boards have engaged in extensive stakeholder engagement to inform their local plans, including gathering input from employers, community members, and workforce partners through activities such as employer forums, partner meetings, and data analysis. All of this information was collected and reviewed to inform the Capital Region Plan.

## **VISION FOR THE REGION**

The Capital Region WDBs envision a dynamic workforce ecosystem that prepares residents for family-sustaining careers, supports business growth, and drives economic prosperity. However, the region faces various challenges, including skills gaps in key industries; persistent equity and access issues for underserved populations such as individuals with disabilities, English Language Learners, and returning citizens; a need to increase labor force participation; limited transportation options; and childcare needs. To address these challenges, the WDBs will implement a multi-faceted approach that includes regional sector strategies, equity-focused initiatives, expanded work-based learning opportunities, strengthened talent pipelines, increased supportive services, and integrated technology solutions. The WIOA Capital Region Plan is crafted to advance workforce activities that support local communities, promote quality jobs, reinvest in the regional economy, and foster economic inclusion, ensuring that growth does not come at the expense of the most vulnerable. The Capital Region workforce partners are committed to supporting career pathways that lead to quality jobs, with accessible entryways to new opportunities to historically disinvested populations, including low-income residents and communities of color.

This plan prioritizes a customer-centric approach, ensuring that workforce services are designed around the needs of both job seekers and employers. Data-driven decision-making will be paramount, utilizing labor market information and performance data to inform program design, resource allocation, and continuous improvement efforts. The WIOA Capital Region Plan is a workforce development strategy that leverages the region's priority industries, job opportunities and strategic advantages. By advancing a cohesive narrative across Frederick, Montgomery and Prince George's County, that values the individuality of each county, this plan presents an opportunity to cultivate new partnerships, share resources and coordinate strategies. Ultimately, this collaborative approach ensures that each counties unique strengths reinforce our collective goals at both state and national levels.

Regional collaboration will be strengthened among the WDBs, American Job Centers (AJCs), educational institutions, and economic development organizations to leverage resources and maximize impact. The WDBs are also dedicated to exploring and implementing innovative approaches to workforce development, such as incorporating technology solutions, developing new work-based learning models, and supporting employer-led initiatives.

## **COMMITMENT TO ALIGNING WITH THE FOUR CORE STRATEGIC PILLARS**

The Capital Region WDBs are committed to aligning their strategies with the Maryland State Plan's Four Core Strategic Pillars:

## MARYLAND STATE PLAN'S FOUR CORE STRATEGIC PILLARS:

PILLAR 1	Supercharge Key Sectors
PILLAR 2	Advance Equity and Access
PILLAR 3	Prepare Future Workforce
PILLAR 4	Improve System Alignment and Accountability

## VISION FOR THE REGION

### 1. Supercharge Key Sectors:

- **Regional Industry Partnerships:** The WDBs will convene industry partnerships in key sectors, such as healthcare, biotechnology, and construction and skilled trades, bringing together employers, training providers, and workforce partners. These partnerships will identify skill needs, develop targeted training programs, and create career pathways that lead to industry-recognized credentials.
- **Prioritize Industry-Recognized Credentials:** The WDBs will prioritize industry-recognized credentials and collaborate with economic development organizations to ensure that workforce programs are aligned with employer demands and prepare residents for in-demand occupations.
- **Support Small Businesses:** The WDBs will leverage their business services departments to provide tailored assistance to small businesses, recognizing their unique needs and challenges. This may include offering specialized workshops and training programs, facilitating connections to resources, and promoting the use of On-the-Job Training (OJT) and Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) programs.

### 2. Advance Equity and Access:

- **Targeted Outreach and Support:** The WDBs will implement targeted outreach and support, focus on barrier removal, and promote inclusive hiring practices to address equity and access issues for underserved populations, such as individuals with disabilities, English Language Learners, and returning citizens.
- **Co-Enrollment with State Programs:** The WDBs will partner with the MD DOL apprenticeship navigator and the MD DOL reentry navigator in each region to develop and operationalize a process where customers are referred and co-enrolled with state programs and WIOA Title I to leverage the services of both.

### 3. Prepare the Future Workforce:

- Career Exploration and Awareness: The WDBs will expand career exploration and awareness activities, increase work-based learning opportunities, and expand dual enrollment programs to prepare the future workforce.
- Youth Programs: The WDBs will support youth programs, such as Frederick County's WIOA Youth program, to expand services to in-school youth, ensuring that those who may not meet traditional "barrier" criteria still have access to career development support.

### 4. Improve System Alignment and Accountability:

- Data Sharing and Continuous Improvement: The WDBs will improve data sharing and analysis, develop a comprehensive performance measurement system, and foster a culture of continuous improvement to ensure that workforce system partners are working together efficiently and effectively.
- Regional Collaboration: The WDBs will strengthen regional collaboration among the WDBs, American Job Centers (AJCs), educational institutions, and economic development organizations to leverage resources and maximize impact.

By aligning with the Four Core Strategic Pillars and focusing on collaboration, innovation, and measurable outcomes, the Capital Region WDBs are committed to building a workforce system that is responsive, effective, and equitable for all residents and businesses in the Capital Region. This plan reflects a shared commitment to building a thriving and inclusive workforce ecosystem that drives economic prosperity and provides equitable opportunities for all.

## SECTION 1: REGIONAL ANALYSIS

The Capital Region presents a dynamic and evolving economic landscape, rich in diversity and opportunity, including diverse industry sectors and a skilled workforce. However, the region faces both opportunities and challenges in maintaining its economic competitiveness and ensuring equitable access to opportunity for all residents. To effectively leverage its strengths and address challenges, a thorough understanding of the region's employment data, labor market trends and educational attainment is crucial. Analysis of this data and insights will inform the development strategies that support local communities, promote quality jobs, and foster economic inclusion.

This analysis of labor market information aims to identify in-demand industries, assess regional growth potential, and highlight challenges and opportunities for the next four years.

ECONOMY OVERVIEW

The Capital Region's population has experienced steady growth, reaching 2,310,003 in 2024. This growth is projected to continue, with an estimated increase of 65,535 by 2029. In terms of employment, the region experienced a slight decline in jobs from 2019 to 2024 but is expected to rebound with a projected growth of 24,630 over the next five years. The region's average earnings per job are \$96,000, which is \$11,000 higher than the national average.

<b>2,310,003</b> Population (2024)	<b>1,035,325</b> Total Regional Employment	<b>\$96.0K</b> Avg. Earnings Per Job (2024)
Population grew by 86,703 over the last 5 years and is projected to grow by 65,535 over the next 5 years.	Jobs decreased by 5,857 over the last 5 years but are projected to grow by 24,630 over the next 5 years.	Regional average earnings per job are \$11.0K above the national average earnings of \$85.0K per job.

Figure 1.1: Economic Overview Report, Lightcast, May 2025

Key Takeaways:

- The region's population is growing, presenting opportunities for businesses and organizations.
- The labor market has experienced recent fluctuations but is projected to grow in the coming years.
- The region boasts relatively high average earnings per job, indicating a skilled workforce.
- The top three industries in 2024 are Government, Healthcare and Social Assistance, and Professional, Scientific and Technical Services.

EXISTING AND EMERGING IN-DEMAND SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS

The capital region boasts a diverse economy with several prominent industry sectors. **Government** employment remains a significant contributor to the workforce, considering the region’s proximity to the nation’s capital and numerous federal agencies. **Healthcare and Social Assistance** represent a growing sector across all three counties, driven by an aging population and advancements in medical technology. **Professional, scientific and technical services** are also

prominent, particularly in Montgomery County and Frederick County, with Montgomery County establishing itself as an essential hub for biotechnology and life sciences and Frederick County hosting several local incubators and research institutions that distinguish itself from neighboring areas. **Retail Trade, Accommodation and Food Services and Construction/Skilled Trades** are the final in-demand industries in common between Frederick, Montgomery and Prince George’s County.

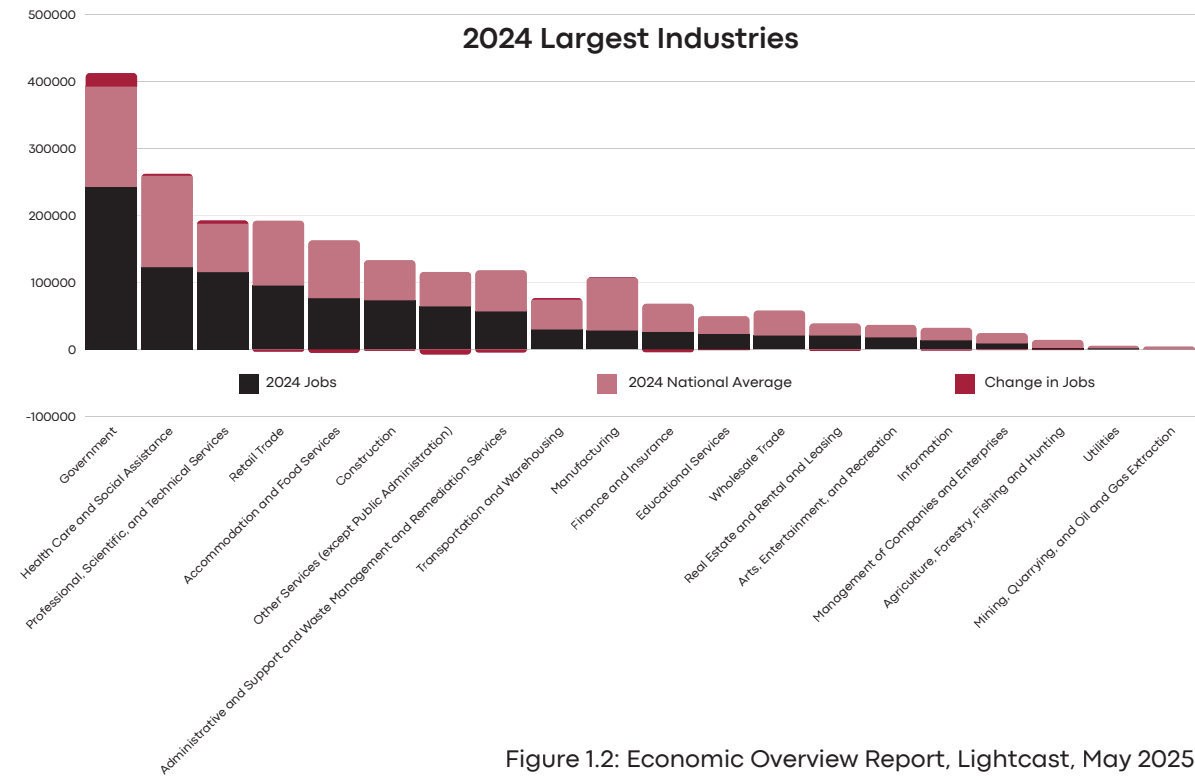


Figure 1.2: Economic Overview Report, Lightcast, May 2025

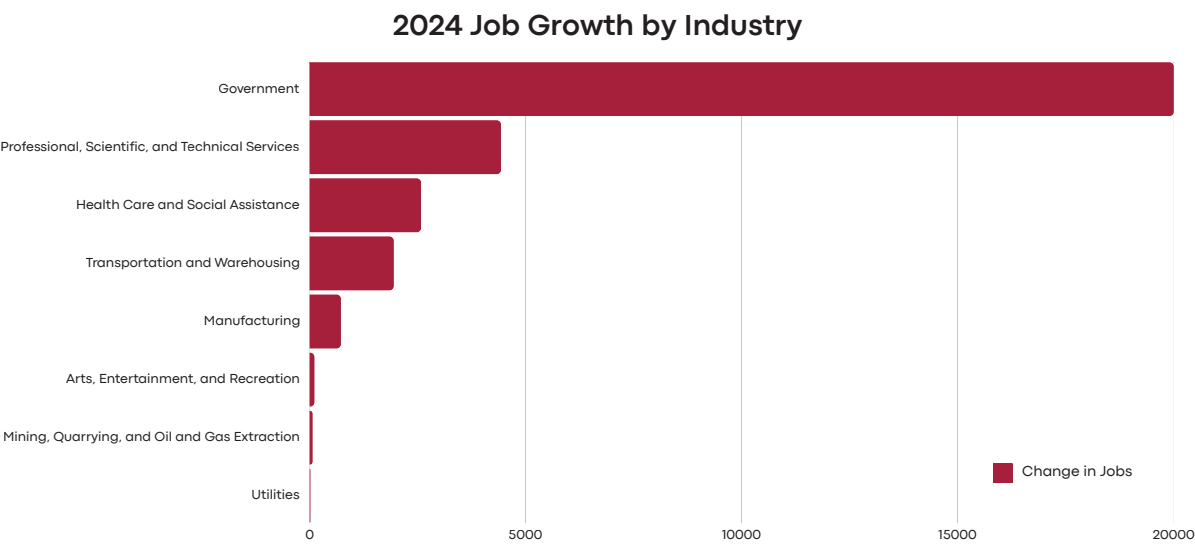


Figure 1.3: Economic Overview Report, Lightcast, May 2025



The Capital Region is experiencing significant growth in several key occupational categories, reflecting evolving industry demands and the need for a skilled and adaptable workforce. Management occupations are leading this growth, with an increase of over 24,000 jobs, highlighting the need for effective leadership and strategic decision-making in a dynamic economic environment. Business and Financial Operations occupations are also expanding rapidly, with an increase of over 10,000 jobs, reflecting the growing complexity of business operations and the demand for financial expertise. Additionally, Life, Physical, and Social Science occupations are experiencing notable growth, with an increase of over 3,000 jobs, driven by advancements in research and development and the increasing importance of scientific and analytical expertise. These trends underscore the importance of investing in education and training programs that prepare individuals for these in-demand occupations, ensuring that the Capital Region's workforce remains competitive and adaptable to the changing needs of the economy.

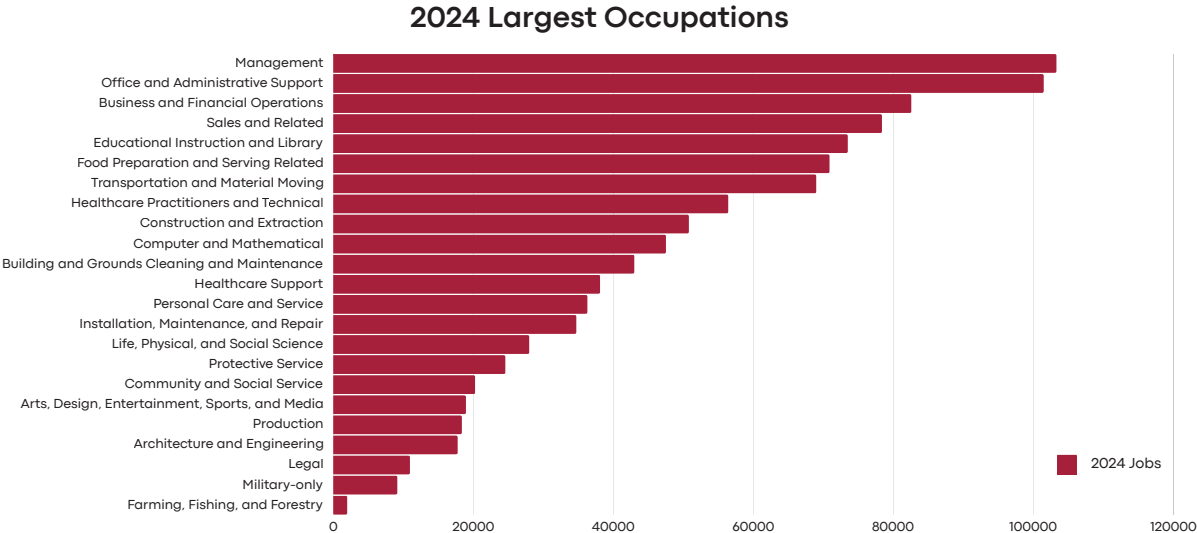
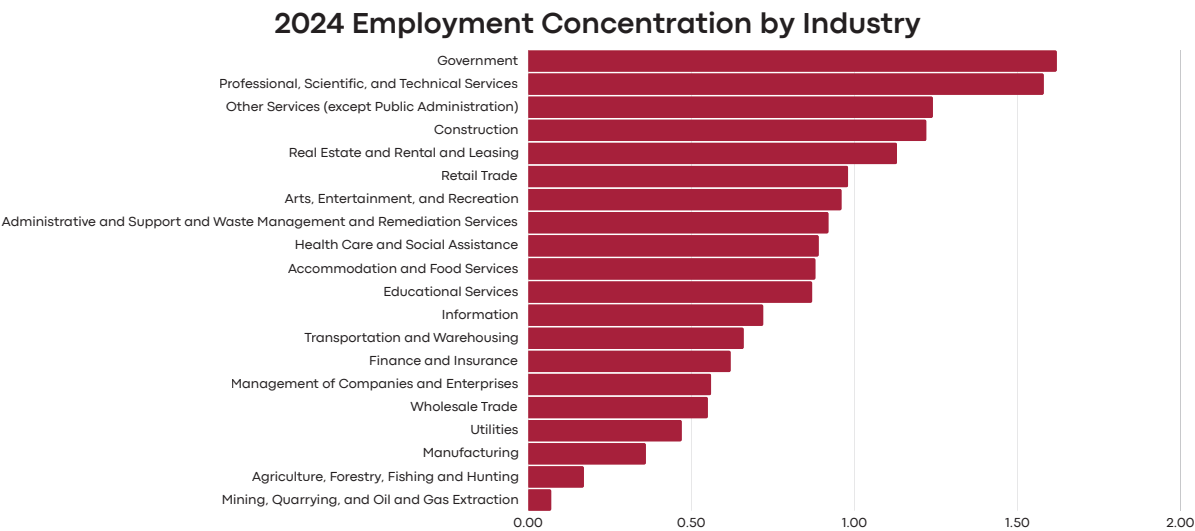


Figure 1.4: Economic Overview Report, Lightcast, May 2025

The Capital Region’s industry employment concentration provides valuable insights into the economic structure of the region and can inform targeted workforce development strategies. The high concentration of employment in Government, Professional, Scientific and Technical Services, and Construction sectors highlights the region's strengths and potential for growth in these industries. However, it also indicates a potential vulnerability to economic downturns or shifts in these sectors. Therefore, a diversified approach to workforce development is essential, ensuring that residents are prepared for a range of career opportunities across various industries.

The data on employment concentration will inform decisions regarding resource allocation and program development. Investing in training and education programs that align with the needs of these concentrated sectors can maximize the impact of workforce development efforts and ensure that residents are

equipped with the skills and credentials needed for in-demand occupations. Furthermore, understanding the regional distribution of industry concentration can guide targeted outreach and recruitment efforts, connecting job seekers with opportunities in their local areas and promoting economic growth across the region. By considering these factors, the Capital Region can develop a comprehensive and responsive workforce development strategy that strengthens the regional economy and provides equitable opportunities for all residents.



1.5: Economic Overview Report, Lightcast, May 2025

The Capital Region's economic landscape is characterized by a diverse range of industries, each contributing significantly to the region's overall prosperity. Among these industries, several stand out for their exceptional earnings potential, offering high-paying jobs and attractive career opportunities for workers.

Leading the pack in terms of earnings is the Management of Companies and Enterprises sector, with an average earnings per worker of approximately \$200,000. This sector encompasses a wide range of managerial roles, including chief executives, financial managers, and marketing directors, highlighting the importance of strong leadership and business acumen in driving economic growth.

Closely following Management of Companies and Enterprises are the Finance and Insurance and Utilities sectors, both offering average earnings per worker well above \$100,000. These sectors demand specialized skills and knowledge, reflecting the value placed on financial expertise and technical proficiency in the modern economy.

Other industries with notable earning potential include Information, Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services, and Government, all offering average earnings per worker above \$80,000. These sectors highlight the growing importance of technology, innovation, and public service in the region's economy.

In contrast, the Accommodation and Food Services sector stands out for its relatively low earnings potential, with an average earnings per worker of approximately \$20,000. This sector is often characterized by low wages, limited benefits, and precarious employment conditions, raising concerns about job quality and worker well-being.

To address this issue, the Capital Region WDBs will focus on developing career pathways in the Accommodation and Food Services sector that lead to higher-paying jobs and improved working conditions. This will involve implementing training programs that equip workers with the skills and certifications needed to advance within the industry, as well as supporting efforts to improve wages and benefits.

The WDBs will also collaborate with employers and other stakeholders to promote the use of the JFF Quality Jobs Framework, a tool that helps to assess the quality of jobs based on factors such as wages, benefits, working conditions, and opportunities for advancement. By adopting this framework, the WDBs can help to ensure that the region's workforce is benefiting from good quality jobs that provide economic security and support individual well-being.

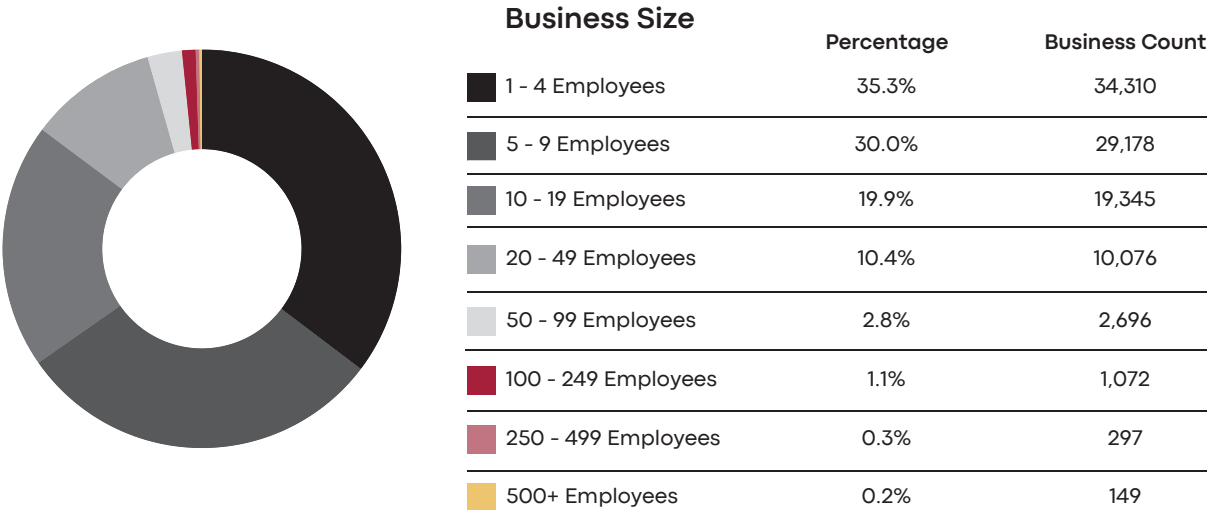
The Capital Region offers a diverse range of industries with varying earning potential. While some sectors offer high-paying jobs and attractive career opportunities, others require targeted interventions to improve job quality and ensure that all workers benefit from the region's economic growth. By focusing on developing career pathways, promoting the use of the JFF Quality Jobs Framework, and addressing other challenges, the WDBs can help to create a more equitable and prosperous future for all residents of the Capital Region.



1.6: Economic Overview Report, Lightcast, May 2025

The Capital Region's economy is characterized by the strong presence of small businesses, with 65% of businesses having between 1 and 9 employees. This highlights the importance of prioritizing services and programs that support small business growth and development. The Capital Region WDBs should leverage their business services departments to provide tailored assistance to small businesses, recognizing their unique needs and challenges.

This may include offering specialized workshops and training programs on topics such as accessing capital, marketing and branding, and navigating regulations. Additionally, the WDBs can facilitate connections between small businesses and resources such as the Small Business Administration (SBA) and local chambers of commerce. On-the-Job Training (OJT) and Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) programs can be particularly beneficial for small businesses, providing financial support and resources to help them train and upskill their workforce. By prioritizing services that support small businesses, the Capital Region WDBs can foster a thriving and dynamic economic environment that benefits businesses of all sizes and contributes to the overall prosperity of the region.



\*Business Data by DatabaseUSA.com is third-party data provided by Lightcast to its customers as a convenience, and Lightcast does not endorse or warrant its accuracy or consistency with other published Lightcast data. In most cases, the Business Count will not match total companies with profiles on the summary tab.

1.7: Economic Overview Report, Lightcast, May 2025

REGIONAL COMPARISON

While the Capital Region as a whole exhibit’s positive economic trends, a closer look reveals distinct strengths and challenges within each county.

Montgomery County benefits from a high concentration of jobs in Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services, offering strong earnings potential. The county also boasts a highly educated workforce and anticipates significant growth in the Healthcare and Social Assistance sector. However, the high cost of living and potential skills gaps in emerging fields like AI and cybersecurity present challenges.

Prince George's County has a strong concentration of Government jobs, providing stable employment opportunities. The county also anticipates growth in the Transportation and Warehousing sector and benefits from a diverse workforce. However, challenges include lower educational attainment compared to Montgomery County and a high unemployment rate among the Black population.

Frederick County is experiencing strong growth in the Construction/Skilled Trades sector and enjoys a relatively low property crime rate. However, the county faces lower average earnings compared to Montgomery County and potential skills gaps in emerging fields.

These regional variations highlight the need for targeted workforce development strategies that leverage each county's strengths while addressing its unique challenges. Collaboration among the WDBs will be essential to promote regional economic growth and ensure equitable access to opportunity for all residents.

## **EMPLOYMENT NEEDS OF BUSINESS**

The Capital Region WDBs recognize the growing challenge businesses face in finding qualified candidates, especially in fields experiencing rapid advancements and those influenced by AI. To prepare job seekers for this future of work, the WDBs propose a comprehensive plan focusing on upskilling and reskilling initiatives, fostering adaptability, and promoting lifelong learning. This involves investing in training programs, in partnership with training providers and educational institutions, to equip individuals with in-demand skills. Leveraging online learning platforms like Metrix Learning will provide accessible and flexible training opportunities. Metrix Learning, a comprehensive online learning platform used in all three counties, offers a valuable resource for individuals seeking to acquire new skills, advance in their careers, or re-enter the workforce. Metrix Learning provides a wide range of courses and training programs covering a variety of topics, including industry-recognized certifications, essential skills, and career pathways. The platform's user-friendly interface and 24/7 access make it convenient for learners to access training materials at their own pace and schedule. This accessibility is particularly beneficial for individuals who may face challenges attending traditional in-person training programs due to scheduling conflicts, transportation limitations, or other barriers. Metrix Learning has also integrated with Maryland's state CRM tool, Geographic Solutions, which enables the Capital Region to track the progress of job seekers and ensure that they are receiving the support they need to achieve their career goals. By leveraging Metrix Learning, the Capital Region can provide a more comprehensive and effective workforce development system, helping to address skills gaps, promote economic growth, and ensure that all residents can thrive.

Additionally, the Capital Region will continue to explore, develop and support micro-credentialing programs. Micro-credentialing allows for quicker acquisition of specific skills and certifications and encourages employer-led training to address industry-specific needs.

To foster adaptability, the WDBs will develop training for Career Counselors, so they better understand the changing landscape of work and can help job seekers identify the skills needed to qualify for competitive careers. Career counselors will be equipped with tools to individually assess job seeker skills, explore career options, and develop personalized individualized employment plans that consider future workforce trends. Promoting a culture of lifelong learning is crucial, and we must create avenues for our front-line staff to continuously update their skills and knowledge. This includes providing resources and support for continuing education opportunities and collaborating community partners to offer professional development opportunities and learning resources.

By implementing this plan, the Capital Region WDBs aim to empower Career Counselors and job seekers and strengthen the region's economy by fostering a highly skilled and adaptable workforce ready for the future of work.

The Capital Region WDBs recognize the critical importance of essential skills, often referred to as "soft skills," in today's workplace. Research reveals that the top skills scraped from job postings across the Capital Region are centralized around the essential skills of communication, customer services and management. To address this regional challenge, the WDBs propose a multi-pronged strategy that focuses on embedding essential skills development into all aspects of the workforce development system.

#### **1. Integrate Essential Skills into Training Programs:**

- Partner with training providers to incorporate modules on communication, customer service, and management skills into existing occupational skills training programs. This will ensure that individuals gain both the technical expertise, and the essential skills needed to succeed in their chosen field.
- Develop stand-alone workshops and online courses specifically focused on essential skills development. These offerings can be tailored to different audiences, such as youth, adults in transition, and individuals with specific career goals.

#### **2. Embed Essential Skills into Career Pathways:**

- Work with industry partners to define the essential skills required for success in specific career pathways. This will ensure that training programs and career counseling align with employer expectations.

- Incorporate essential skills assessments into career counseling and guidance services. This will help individuals identify their strengths and areas for improvement, guiding them towards appropriate training and development opportunities.
- Promote the value of essential skills through career awareness campaigns and outreach efforts. This will help job seekers understand the importance of these skills in achieving their career goals.

### **3. Foster Essential Skills Development in Work-Based Learning:**

- Encourage employers to provide opportunities for essential skills development within work-based learning programs, such as apprenticeships and internships. This can include mentoring, feedback, and training on workplace communication and teamwork.
- Partner with employers to develop work-based learning programs that specifically target essential skills development. This could involve simulations, role-playing, and other interactive activities that allow individuals to practice and refine these skills in a real-world setting.

### **4. Support Essential Skills Development through Community Partnerships:**

- Collaborate with community-based organizations that offer programs focused on essential skills development, such as leadership training, conflict resolution, and communication workshops. This will provide additional resources and support for job seekers.
- Leverage community partnerships offer essential skills training in accessible locations, such as libraries, community centers, and faith-based organizations. This will increase access for individuals facing barriers to transportation or childcare.

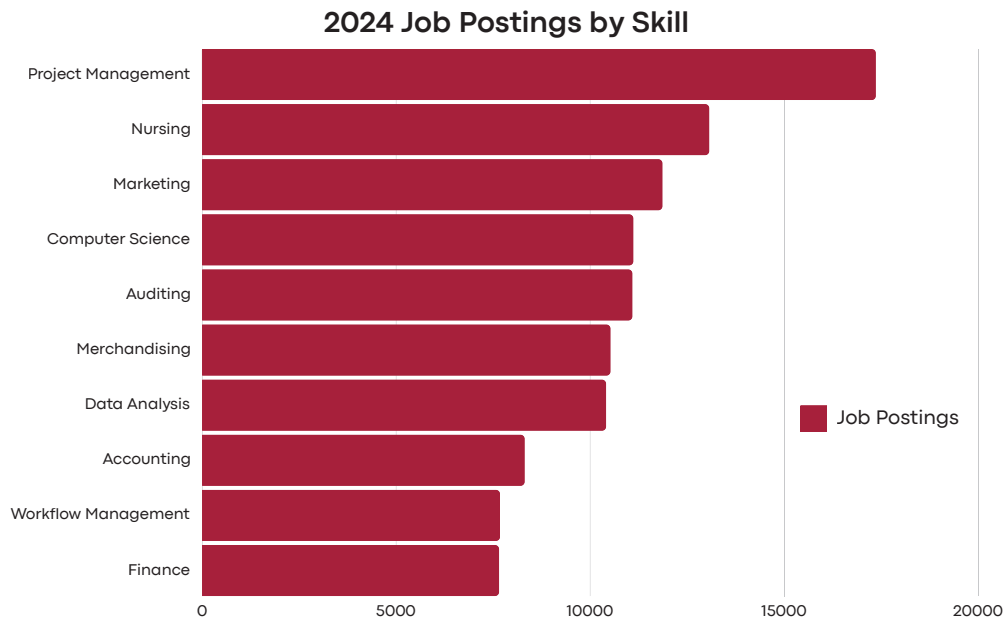
### **5. Promote Essential Skills through Employer Engagement:**

- Encourage employers to incorporate essential skills assessments into their hiring processes. This will help identify candidates who possess these valuable skills and highlight their importance in the workplace.
- Provide training and resources to employers on how to foster essential skills development among their employees. This can include workshops on effective communication, conflict resolution, and team building.

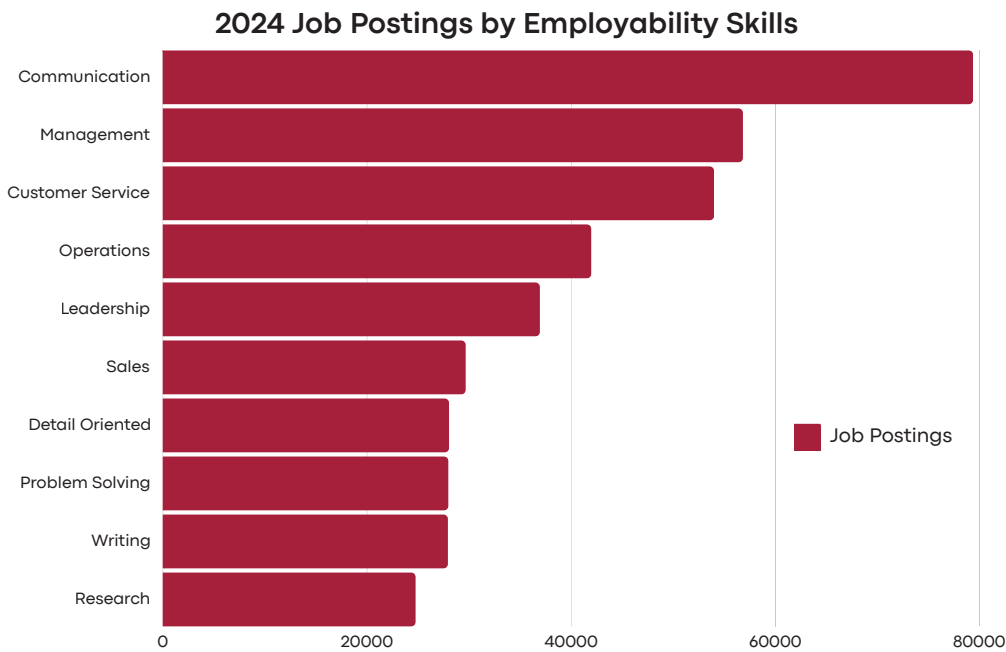
To further strengthen this strategy, the WDBs will prioritize the development of specialized skills that are in high demand across the region. According to Lightcast data, the top specialized skills include Project Management, Marketing, Nursing, Computer Science, Auditing, Data Analysis, Merchandising, Accounting, Finance, and Workflow Management. By incorporating these specialized skills into training



programs and career pathways, the WDBs can ensure that job seekers are equipped with the specific skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the region's key industries. This comprehensive approach aims to create a workforce that is not only technically skilled but also possesses the essential skills and specialized knowledge needed to thrive in today's dynamic and collaborative work environment, ultimately enhancing the region's competitiveness, promoting individual career success, and contributing to a stronger and more resilient economy.



1.8: Economic Overview Report, Lightcast, May 2025



1.9: Economic Overview Report, Lightcast, May 2025



By implementing this comprehensive strategy, the Capital Region WDBs aim to create a workforce that is not only technically skilled but also equipped with the essential skills needed to thrive in today's dynamic and collaborative work environment. This will enhance the region's competitiveness, promote individual career success, and contribute to a stronger and more resilient economy.

## **DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CURRENT WORKFORCE**

The three-county region that makes up the Capital Region is a dynamic tapestry woven from diverse threads of age, ethnicity, education, and ability. Understanding these demographic characteristics, particularly among youth, adults in transition, and individuals with disabilities, is crucial for crafting effective workforce development strategies.

Currently, the region benefits from a highly educated workforce, with a significant portion of residents in Frederick, Montgomery and Prince George's County holding bachelor's degrees or higher. However, educational attainment varies across demographic groups, with disparities existing among Hispanic populations and those facing economic hardship. Literacy levels are generally high, but addressing the needs of English Language Learners and those with limited literacy skills remains a priority.

Youth in the Capital Region represent a vital segment of the future workforce. Programs like Summer RISE in Montgomery County, Apprenticeship Maryland in Frederick County and the South County Summer Youth Employment Program in Prince George's County provide valuable career exploration and work-based learning opportunities. However, challenges such as absenteeism, dropout rates, and mental health concerns require attention to ensure youth are adequately prepared for future success.

Adults in transition, including those facing job displacement, career changes, or re-entry into the workforce, require targeted support. This includes individuals impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, those seeking to upskill or reskill, and those facing barriers such as childcare responsibilities or limited access to transportation.

Individuals with disabilities represent a valuable talent pool, and the region benefits from partnerships with organizations like The Arc Montgomery County and DORS. Ensuring accessibility and providing appropriate accommodation are essential for maximizing their participation in the workforce.

The region's demographics are constantly evolving. Population growth brings both opportunities and challenges. An aging population necessitates a focus on healthcare and senior services, while a growing immigrant population requires culturally and linguistically appropriate services.

Planning for the future workforce requires a proactive approach. Addressing skills gaps in emerging industries like biotechnology and cybersecurity is crucial. Promoting lifelong learning and adaptability will be essential in a rapidly changing economy. Investing in youth development, supporting adults in transition, and ensuring inclusivity for individuals with disabilities will be critical for building a strong and resilient workforce for the future.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS NEEDED TO MEET EMPLOYMENT NEEDS OF THE EMPLOYERS IN THE REGION, INCLUDING EMPLOYMENT NEEDS IN IN-DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS**

To thrive in the Capital Region's evolving economy, both job seekers and the workforce system must adapt to the shifting demands of employers. Aligning knowledge and skills with industry needs is crucial for ensuring a competitive workforce and fostering economic growth.

By focusing on developing these knowledge and skills, the Capital Region workforce system can ensure that residents are prepared for the demands of the current and future labor market. This will require collaboration among educational institutions, training providers, and employers to align curricula, offer relevant certifications, and provide work-based learning opportunities. Investing in the development of both technical and essential skills will be crucial for fostering a competitive workforce and driving economic growth in the Capital Region.

## **PROVIDE AN ANALYSIS OF CURRENT EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT DATA, ALONGSIDE LABOR MARKET TRENDS AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, PROVIDES A COMPREHENSIVE PICTURE**

The Capital Region presents a complex and dynamic workforce landscape. Analyzing employment/unemployment data, alongside labor market trends and educational attainment, reveals both opportunities and challenges in fostering a thriving and inclusive regional economy.

### **Employment/Unemployment Data:**

While each county exhibits unique trends, the region has generally experienced a decline in unemployment rates since the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, indicating economic recovery and job growth. However, labor force participation rates have not fully rebounded to pre-pandemic levels, suggesting a need to re-engage individuals who have left the workforce. This trend is particularly pronounced in Frederick County, where labor force participation has decreased significantly. Prince George's County, while experiencing a decline in its labor force, boasts an extremely low unemployment rate, which may limit job recovery due to a smaller pool of available talent.

## **Labor Market Trends:**

Several key trends are shaping the labor market in the Capital Region:

- **Growth in High-Skill Industries:** Sectors like IT, cybersecurity, biotechnology, and advanced manufacturing are driving job growth, particularly in Montgomery and Frederick Counties. This creates a demand for workers with specialized knowledge and skills, highlighting the need for targeted training and education programs.
- **Emphasis on Essential Skills:** Employers across all sectors consistently emphasize the need for strong essential skills, such as communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking, in addition to technical expertise. This underscores the importance of integrating essential skills development into all workforce development initiatives.
- **Evolving Nature of Work:** Technological advancements, including the growing influence of AI, are transforming the workplace, requiring workers to adapt to new tools and processes. The need for lifelong learning and upskilling is becoming increasingly critical.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** The region's increasing diversity, particularly the growing Hispanic population in Prince George's County, necessitates a focus on inclusivity and culturally competent workforce services to ensure equitable access to opportunities for all residents.

## **Educational and Skill Levels:**

The Capital Region benefits from a highly educated workforce, with a significant portion of residents in Montgomery and Frederick Counties holding bachelor's degrees or higher. However, educational attainment varies across demographic groups and addressing disparities remains crucial. Prince George's County faces challenges in educational attainment, particularly among the Hispanic population, with high dropout rates and chronic absenteeism further impacting workforce readiness. Access to quality training and credentialing programs is essential for meeting the evolving skill demands of the labor market.

## **Individuals Facing Employment Barriers:**

Several groups in the Capital Region face significant barriers to employment: individuals with disabilities, English Language Learners, returning citizens, Opportunity Youth, and low-income individuals and families.

- **Individuals with Disabilities:** Ensuring accessibility and providing appropriate accommodation are crucial for maximizing their participation in the workforce
- **English Language Learners:** Language barriers can limit access to employment

opportunities, highlighting the need for language support and culturally relevant services.

- **Returning Citizens:** Re-entry into the workforce can be challenging for individuals with criminal records, requiring support with job readiness, skills training, and employer engagement.
- **Opportunity Youth:** Young people disconnected from education and employment need targeted interventions to gain the skills and experience needed for success.
- **Low-Income Individuals and Families:** Economic hardship can create multiple barriers, including limited access to transportation, childcare, and stable housing.

Addressing these barriers requires a multi-faceted approach that includes targeted outreach, supportive services, and training programs aligned with the needs of both job seekers and employers. By investing in a skilled and inclusive workforce, the Capital Region can strengthen its economy and ensure that all residents can thrive.

## **SECTION 2: STRATEGIC PLANNING**

### **PART 1: ALIGNING MARYLAND'S STRATEGIC PILLARS**

**IDENTIFY AND DESCRIBE WHICH SERVICE STRATEGIES AND/OR SERVICES THAT WILL BE DEVELOPED ON A REGIONAL BASIS AND HOW THESE STRATEGIES WILL ALIGN WITH THE STATE'S FOUR CORE STRATEGIC PILLARS. INCLUDE HOW YOUR REGION WILL ENSURE CONSISTENT IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE STRATEGIES.**

The Capital Region WDBs are dedicated to aligning their workforce development strategies with Maryland's vision for a thriving and inclusive economy, as embodied in the Four Core Strategic Pillars. To achieve this vision, the WDBs will develop and implement a range of service strategies and programs on a regional basis, ensuring consistent implementation through ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement efforts.

#### **1. Supercharge Key Sectors:**

The WDBs will convene industry partnerships in key sectors, such as Government, Healthcare and Social Assistance, Professional, scientific and technical services and Construction/Skilled Trades, bringing together employers, training providers, and workforce partners. These partnerships will identify skill needs, develop targeted training programs, and create career pathways that lead to industry-

recognized credentials. By actively engaging industry leaders, the WDBs will ensure that workforce programs are aligned with employer demands and prepare residents for in-demand occupations.

## **2. Advance Equity and Access:**

Recognizing the diverse needs of the Capital Region's population, the WDBs will prioritize initiatives that remove barriers to employment for underserved populations. This includes:

- **Immigrants and Refugees:** Developing culturally and linguistically appropriate outreach strategies and expanding community-based programs to provide support and guidance.
- **Opportunity Youth:** Leveraging programs like the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and Summer Youth Programs to provide career-connected learning opportunities.
- **Returning Citizens:** Partnering with the State Reentry Navigator in each county to create referral pathways to WIOA services, facilitating successful reintegration into the workforce.
- **Individuals with Disabilities:** Ensuring accessibility and providing appropriate accommodation in all programs and services.

## **3. Prepare the Future Workforce:**

The WDBs will transform and expand career-connected learning opportunities for all young people, regardless of their post-secondary plans. This includes supporting initiatives like the Career Coach Apprenticeship Program and the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, which provide career exploration, work-based learning, and pathways to post-secondary education. Frederick County's WIOA Youth program will expand its services to include more in-school youth, ensuring that those who may not meet traditional "barrier" criteria still have access to career development support.

## **4. Improve System Alignment and Accountability:**

The WDBs will enhance collaboration and data sharing across the workforce system. This includes developing a regional business database, aligning systems to pursue grants as a regional coalition, and developing a sustainable funding model using braided funds. Montgomery County's micro-grants to small community-based organizations exemplify this commitment to leveraging community expertise and increasing capacity. By sharing best practices and aligning performance goals, the WDBs will ensure that workforce system partners are working together efficiently and effectively to achieve regional and state-level goals.

Through these strategies, the Capital Region WDBs are committed to building a workforce system that is responsive to the needs of both job seekers and employers, fosters economic competitiveness, and promotes equity and inclusion. The Capital Region WDBs will explore opportunities to share data and performance tracking strategies to assess progress, identify areas of improvement and ensure accountability for outcomes. By embracing innovation, collaboration and a focus on measurable outcomes, the Capital Region WDBs are committed to building a workforce system that is responsive, effective and accessible for all.

## PART 2: REGIONAL SECTOR STRATEGIES

### **THIS SECTION SHOULD DESCRIBE WHICH IN-DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTOR(S) OR OCCUPATION(S) THE LOCAL BOARDS IN YOUR REGION ARE SERVING AND WHY.**

The Capital Region WDBs are strategically focusing on four key industry sectors that are critical to the region's economic health and offer promising career pathways for residents: Government, Healthcare and Social Assistance, Professional, Scientific and Technical Services, and Construction/Skilled Trades. These sectors have been prioritized based on a combination of factors, including:

- **Strong Employment Base:** These sectors represent a significant portion of the current workforce in the Capital Region, providing a stable foundation for job creation and economic growth. Government employment is particularly prominent in Prince George's County, while Montgomery County boasts a strong presence in Professional, Scientific and Technical Services. Frederick County stands out with its robust Construction/Skilled Trades sector, fueled by ongoing growth and infrastructure development.
- **Growth Potential:** Labor market analysis indicates that these sectors are poised for continued growth in the coming years, creating a demand for skilled workers and offering opportunities for career advancement. Healthcare and Social Assistance, in particular, are projected to experience significant growth across all three counties, driven by an aging population and advancements in medical technology.
- **Alignment with Regional Economic Priorities:** These sectors align with the broader economic development goals of the Capital Region, which seeks to attract and retain businesses in high-growth industries and foster a diverse and competitive economy.
- **Availability of Training and Education Programs:** The region benefits from a strong network of educational institutions and training providers that offer programs aligned with the needs of these key sectors. This ensures that residents have access to the education and training needed to pursue careers in these fields.

### Here's a deeper dive into each sector:

- **Government:** This sector offers a wide range of career opportunities, from public administration and policy analysis to public safety and social services. The proximity of Prince George's County to the nation's capital and numerous federal agencies makes government employment a major contributor to the region's workforce. The sector also provides stable employment with competitive benefits, making it an attractive option for many job seekers.
- **Healthcare and Social Assistance:** This growing sector encompasses a variety of occupations, including registered nurses, medical assistants, healthcare technicians, and social workers. With an aging population and advancements in medical technology, the demand for skilled healthcare professionals is expected to remain strong. This sector offers opportunities for individuals with diverse educational backgrounds, from those with associate degrees to those with advanced degrees and certifications.
- **Professional, Scientific and Technical Services:** This sector encompasses a broad range of occupations, including those in IT, cybersecurity, engineering, research and development, and consulting. Montgomery County, in particular, has established itself as a hub for biotechnology and life sciences, attracting a highly educated workforce and driving innovation in these fields. This sector offers high-paying jobs with opportunities for career advancement, making it an attractive option for those with advanced degrees and specialized skills.
- **Construction/Skilled Trades:** This sector provides essential services for the region's infrastructure development and building projects. Skilled trades, such as carpentry, plumbing, electrical work, and HVAC, offer well-paying jobs with opportunities for apprenticeship and on-the-job training. Frederick County's strong construction sector is fueled by its ongoing growth and development, providing ample opportunities for those seeking careers in the trades.

By focusing on these in-demand industry sectors, the Capital Region WDBs aim to align workforce development efforts with the needs of the regional economy, providing residents with pathways to family-sustaining careers and supporting the growth of key industries.

### DESCRIBE THE CURRENT STATUS OF YOUR REGIONAL COLLABORATION IN SUPPORT OF THE SECTOR/OCCUPATION(S) AND IDENTIFY ANTICIPATED NEXT STEPS AND TIMELINES FOR AT LEAST THE FIRST TWO YEARS OF PLAN IMPLEMENTATION.

The Capital Region WDBs have a strong foundation of collaboration in serving the needs of in-demand industry sectors and occupations. Each county has



demonstrated a commitment to working with employers, training providers, and community partners to develop and implement workforce solutions.

**Current Status of Regional Collaboration:**

- **Information Sharing:** The WDBs regularly share labor market information, industry trends, and best practices to ensure alignment and identify opportunities for collaboration. This includes sharing data on in-demand occupations, skills gaps, and successful program models.
- **Joint Initiatives:** The WDBs have participated in joint initiatives, such as the Skilled Trades Convening in Frederick, to address regional workforce needs. There is also interest in collaborating on projects like the regional business database being developed by Employ Prince George's.
- **Alignment with State Priorities:** The WDBs are actively working to align their efforts with the state's four core strategic pillars, including initiatives to increase apprenticeship participation, advance equity and access for underserved populations, and improve system alignment and accountability.

**Anticipated Next Steps and Timelines:**

**Year 1:**

- **Co-Enrollment with State Programs:** Partner with the MD DOL apprenticeship navigator and the MD DOL reentry navigator in each region to develop and operationalize a process where customers are referred and co-enrolled with state programs and WIOA Title I to leverage the services of both. This will ensure that individuals receive comprehensive support and access to a wider range of resources.
- **Regional Skills Gap Analysis:** Conduct a comprehensive regional skills gap analysis to identify specific areas where training and education programs need to be strengthened. This analysis will inform the development of targeted programs and initiatives to address critical workforce needs.
- **Regional Marketing Campaign:** Develop and implement a regional marketing campaign to promote career pathways in key sectors and attract individuals to these opportunities. This campaign will utilize various channels, including social media, job fairs, and partnerships with community organizations.
- **Expansion of Community Partnerships:** Expand partnerships with community-based organizations to provide wraparound support services for job seekers facing barriers to employment. This will include collaborating with organizations that offer services such as transportation assistance, childcare, and housing support.
- **Coordinated Virtual Engagements:** Host a series of virtual engagements



focused on priority topics such as essential skills development, digital literacy, and career pathways in high-growth industries. These virtual events will bring together employers, job seekers, and workforce partners from across the region to foster collaboration and knowledge sharing.

- **Replication of Successful Initiatives:** Replicate successful initiatives from each county across the region. This includes expanding Frederick County's Skilled Trades Convening to a regional model, sharing best practices for youth engagement from Montgomery County's Summer RISE program, and implementing Prince George's County's strategies for employer engagement and data sharing.
- **Career Coach Framework Alignment:** Examine the Career Coach Framework being implemented in all three counties and identify opportunities to align best practices and create a unified regional approach. This will ensure consistent and high-quality career coaching services for all residents.

## **Year 2:**

- **Pilot Programs:** Launch pilot programs in key sectors to test innovative approaches to workforce development. This may include employer-led training initiatives, work-based learning models, and programs that integrate essential skills development into occupational skills training.
- **Regional Performance Measurement System:** Develop and implement a regional performance measurement system to track progress and ensure accountability for outcomes. This system will utilize data sharing agreements and regular reporting to monitor progress toward regional goals.
- **Outreach and Recruitment:** Expand outreach and recruitment efforts to engage underserved populations and connect them with training and employment opportunities. This will include targeted initiatives for individuals with disabilities, English Language Learners, returning citizens, and opportunity youth.

By continuing to build on their existing collaborative efforts and implementing these next steps, the Capital Region WDBs are committed to creating a workforce system that effectively serves the needs of the region's businesses and residents, fosters economic competitiveness, and promotes equity and inclusion.

## **SECTION 3: COORDINATION WITH REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS**

**THIS SECTION SHOULD DESCRIBE YOUR REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICES AND PROVIDERS AND EXPLAIN HOW THE LOCAL BOARD(S) COORDINATES WITH THEM. OUTLINE THE CURRENT COORDINATION STRATEGY AND THE ANTICIPATED NEXT STEPS PLANNED FOR THE NEXT FOUR-YEAR PERIOD.**

The economic development and workforce development entities in Frederick, Montgomery and Prince George's county's work together to foster a robust and competitive economy, recognizing the interconnectedness of business growth and workforce development. The region benefits from a diverse network of organizations dedicated to economic growth, including the Maryland Department of Commerce, County Economic Development Offices, Industry Associations, and Chambers of Commerce. These organizations provide a range of services, from attracting and retaining businesses to developing the workforce and promoting the region's assets.

The WDBs and economic development organizations employ several strategies to ensure alignment and maximize impact. They regularly share labor market information, industry trends, and workforce development outcomes to inform their strategies and identify collaborative opportunities. They also work together on joint initiatives, such as industry partnerships and business outreach events, and explore joint funding opportunities to leverage resources and support regional economic development priorities. Cross-representation on boards further facilitates communication and shared perspectives.

Currently, the WDBs maintain strong working relationships with their respective county economic development offices and actively participate in regional initiatives led by the Maryland Department of Commerce. For example, WorkSource Montgomery and the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC) are co-located and share board representation, demonstrating a strong partnership in promoting business growth and employment opportunities.

Over the next four years, the Capital Region WDBs will enhance coordination with economic development organizations by collaboratively developing a comprehensive regional economic development strategy that aligns workforce development initiatives with broader economic goals. This will involve strengthening existing industry partnerships to include economic development

organizations, ensuring a coordinated approach to talent development and business support. Improved data sharing mechanisms will provide economic development organizations with real-time labor market information and workforce development outcomes, facilitating data-driven decision-making. Finally, the WDBs and economic development organizations will collaborate on advocacy efforts to promote policies and initiatives that support both business growth and workforce development in the Capital Region.

## **SECTION 4: COORDINATION OF TRANSPORTATION AND/OR OTHER SUPPORT SERVICES**

**BASED ON YOUR REGIONAL ANALYSIS, IDENTIFY IF TRANSPORTATION OR OTHER SUPPORT SERVICES REQUIRE COORDINATION, AND SPECIFY WHICH SERVICES AND HOW THEY WILL BE COORDINATED.**

The Capital Region's workforce faces significant transportation challenges that require a coordinated regional approach. With many residents commuting across county lines and relying on public transportation, addressing these challenges is crucial for ensuring equitable access to employment opportunities. Limited availability and accessibility of public transportation, especially in rural areas and for those with non-traditional work schedules, can create barriers to accessing training, attending interviews, and maintaining employment. Reliance on personal vehicles contributes to traffic congestion, particularly along major commuter routes, further hindering access to employment and impacting productivity.

To address these challenges, the Capital Region WDBs will collaborate with transportation providers and community organizations to offer transportation assistance programs, such as subsidized bus passes and ride-sharing initiatives. Promoting flexible work arrangements, such as telecommuting and staggered work hours, will be encouraged to reduce reliance on traditional commuting patterns. Supporting infrastructure improvements that enhance transportation efficiency, such as expanding road capacity and promoting alternative transportation options, will also be a priority. The WDBs will actively participate in regional transportation planning efforts to ensure that workforce development needs are considered in infrastructure development and transportation policies. Furthermore, the WDBs will build upon innovative programs like Prince George's County's "4 Wheels to Work" initiative, which provides refurbished vehicles to eligible residents facing transportation barriers to employment. Expanding this program to Frederick and Montgomery Counties, leveraging partnerships with organizations like Vehicles for Change and Full Circle Auto Repair & Training Center, will provide reliable transportation options and support automotive training programs.

Beyond transportation, other supportive services require coordination to address barriers to employment. This includes expanding access to affordable childcare through collaboration with childcare providers and employers, as well as connecting job seekers with housing resources to address housing insecurity. The WDBs will also offer digital literacy training to ensure residents can navigate the digital landscape and provide financial literacy training and counseling resources. Addressing mental health and wellness concerns through collaboration with mental health providers and community organizations is also crucial. By coordinating these supportive services, the Capital Region WDBs aim to remove barriers to employment, promote economic self-sufficiency, and ensure all residents have the opportunity to participate fully in the workforce.

## **SECTION 5: REGIONAL COST ARRANGEMENTS**

**DESCRIBE YOUR REGION'S COST ARRANGEMENTS FOR COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH SECTIONS 1 THROUGH 5 ABOVE, INCLUDING THE POOLING OF ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.**

The Capital Region WDBs recognize the importance of responsible financial management to maximize the impact of workforce development investments. Cost arrangements for activities outlined in this regional plan will prioritize efficiency, accountability, and alignment with state and local guidelines. Each WDB will manage its own budget and expenditures, adhering to the fiscal policies and procedures of their respective counties. However, the WDBs will collaborate to explore opportunities for cost-sharing and resource leveraging, particularly for regional initiatives that benefit all three counties. This may include joint funding for activities such as regional training programs, employer engagement events, and transportation assistance programs.

Administrative costs will be carefully managed by each WDB, and the pooling of administrative costs will be explored for specific regional initiatives where it is deemed beneficial and cost-effective. This may include shared staffing, technology resources, or joint procurement of services for activities that support the overall goals of the regional plan. The WDBs are committed to transparency and accountability in their financial management. Regular financial reporting, audits, and performance monitoring will be conducted to ensure that funds are utilized effectively and comply with all applicable regulations. By adhering to sound fiscal practices and exploring opportunities for collaboration, the Capital Region WDBs will maximize the impact of workforce development investments and ensure the long-term sustainability of the regional workforce system.

## **SECTION 6: REGIONAL PERFORMANCE NEGOTIATION**

**DESCRIBE THE PROCESS FOR NEGOTIATING PERFORMANCE IN SINGLE-AREA REGIONS. FOR MULTI-AREA REGIONS, EXPLAIN HOW YOUR LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS COLLABORATE TO NEGOTIATE AND AGREE WITH THE GOVERNOR ON PERFORMANCE LEVELS AND REPORT ON ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES.**

In the Capital Region, each county, as a single-area region, has its own WDB that negotiates performance levels with the Governor, considering local economic conditions, workforce demographics, and the capacity of the local workforce system. These negotiated performance levels are documented in each county's local WIOA plan and serve as benchmarks for measuring the effectiveness of their respective workforce development programs.

Representatives from each of the three counties that make up the Capital Region, meet with the Governor's Workforce Development Board to present their proposed regional performance goals and negotiate mutually agreeable performance levels. Once an agreement is reached, the negotiated performance levels are documented in the regional WIOA plan and communicated to each WDA. Each WDA is then responsible for monitoring its performance against the negotiated levels and reporting on its progress to the Governor's Workforce Development Board.

The Capital Region WDBs are committed to accountability for achieving the negotiated performance levels. This accountability is ensured through a comprehensive performance measurement system that tracks progress towards regional goals, using metrics such as employment rates, credential attainment, and wage increases. Regular data sharing and analysis among the WDAs and the Governor's Workforce Development Board provides insights into performance trends and identifies areas for improvement. The WDBs will utilize performance data to inform continuous improvement efforts, adapting strategies and programs as needed to achieve better outcomes. Performance data will also be shared with stakeholders to promote transparency and accountability for workforce development investments.

By engaging in this collaborative process, the Capital Region WDBs demonstrate their commitment to working together to achieve their independent performance goals, which in turn, advance the collaborative workforce development efforts of the Capital Region.

# SIGNATURES

By signing below, the Local Board Chairs request approval of the Capital Region’s 2024-2028 Workforce and Innovation Opportunity Act Regional Plan.

*Philip J Brown*

May 2, 2025

Philip Brown  
Chair, Frederick County Workforce Development Board

Date

*Omar Lazo*

04/30/2015

Omar Lazo  
Chair, Montgomery County Workforce Development Board

Date



MAY 4, 2025

Brad Frome  
Chair, Prince George’s County Workforce Development Board

Date