

West Valley Pipeline

Regional Workforce Development Strategy
Building the Region's Talent: 2018- 2023





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Executive Summary

The West Valley of the Phoenix Metropolitan Area encompasses fifteen communities west of Interstate 17 in Arizona's Maricopa County including a significant portion of Phoenix residents west of I-17. The West Valley resident workforce is estimated to be over 630,000 although a significant number of these workers commute eastward for employment in higher wage jobs.

West Valley communities share a common goal of enhancing the economic health and vitality of their town or city. Essential to this goal is the ability to effectively demonstrate to existing and prospective employers that there is a large resident workforce with a wide range of skills, a significant pipeline of new talent coming out of secondary and post-secondary institutions in the region, and that the region can deliver a workforce with the necessary skills.

The Western Maricopa County Coalition (WESTMARC) serves as the economic development advocate for the West Valley communities. Given that a robust pipeline of skilled talent is one of the most

important asset to the attraction, retention and expansion of businesses, and that these businesses in turn create jobs, pay taxes, stimulate investment and wealth, WESTMARC commenced its focus on workforce development which resulted in a five-year workforce development plan—*The West Valley Pipeline; Building the Region's Talent 2023*.

This regional workforce development plan will serve as the guiding document in building the talent pipeline, moving the region forward in a competitive fashion, attracting new businesses and creating employment opportunities for residents.

Over the next 25 years, 49.5% of the growth in Maricopa County will occur in the West Valley. Building a pipeline of talented workers is critical to the economic success of the West Valley region.

How do we keep our talent in the West Valley? This was the question that initiated efforts to create a workforce development plan which includes a series of reports: SWOT Review, Economic Data Scan, Workforce Gap Analysis, and the Workforce Development Plan.

SWOT REVIEW

In 2016 WESTMARC convened local stakeholders representing business, real estate, economic development and education for a discussion of the area's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). A review of the findings from this meeting was the first step in beginning the Workforce Development Plan.

Strengths and Assets

- Workforce quantity and quality
- Population growth projections
- Multiple education and training providers
- Workforce and economic development partners
- CTE and degree programs available
- Consensus on economic development and workforce development needs among West Valley communities
- Supply of ready-for-market real estate (some communities)
- Highway access and transportation improvement projects

Challenges (threats and weaknesses)

- Residents commute elsewhere for higher wage jobs
- Negative perceptions of West Valley as a place to live or work
- K-12 Education funding and quality perception
- Keeping relevant with industry-specific skills and equipment

- Lack of worker amenities in some employment centers
- Negative perception of Career Technical Education
- No or limited supply of ready-for-market real estate (some communities)
- Lack of Class A office space
- Few businesses in the advanced manufacturing industry sector

Opportunities

- Employers in business services and medical industries are hiring
- 2018 Trip Reduction Program Employee Survey expanded its occupation reporting
- Expanded intern and apprentice programs
- Existing BRE programs
- Existing companies in the West Valley's targeted industries: Advanced Business Services, Advanced Manufacturing, Aerospace and Aviation, Health Services, Information Technology, Transportation and Logistics

ECONOMIC DATA SCAN

An important shortcoming of online and third-party data sources that most people rely on for initial demographic information is that occupational data are reported by where people are *working*, not by where they *live*. Areas with a large out-commuting workforce, like the West Valley, are often not accurately portrayed. Data are lumped in with the Phoenix MSA or Maricopa County. So, when West Valley communities are looked at individually the talented West Valley resident workforce is not readily apparent.

WESTMARC and its member communities decided that these data shortcomings needed to be addressed and negotiated for regional licensing fees with EMSI for city-specific labor market data.

The primary focus of the data scan is on the factors that are critical to the location decisions of businesses particularly businesses in the region's targeted industries. Recommendations were made regarding the data and its presentation that would support the West Valley's economic development messages.

WORKFORCE GAP ANALYSIS

The workforce gap analysis focuses on the talent needs of the West Valley target industry sectors—Advanced Business Services, Advanced Manufacturing, Aerospace and Aviation, Health Services, Information Technology, and Transportation and Logistics.

There is a strong concentration of most occupations required to support these target industry sectors already present in the metro area workforce and a larger number of post-secondary training and education programs that align with the occupational needs.

- **Advanced Business Services:** The resident workforce is particularly strong in this industry's occupations. The ability to grow this industry and support the region's existing companies depends on the area's ability to supply enough additional qualified employees at a pace that matches the companies' hiring needs.
- **Advanced Manufacturing:** The West Valley has an above-average share of electronic equipment assemblers, machinists, systems software developers, truck and tractor operators, and production clerks. There is a below-average share of team assemblers—the top in-demand occupation.
- **Aerospace and Aviation:** West Valley has an above-average share of several aviation related occupations but a below-average share of team assemblers and computer-controlled machine operators—two of the top in-demand occupations.
- **Health Services:** The healthcare industry employs nearly 60,000 workers in the West Valley. The demand for all occupations along the skills spectrum will continue; the industry is expected to grow as the population increases and ages.
- **Information Technology:** This industry is among the fastest growing nationwide which creates competition for quality workers and the need to continue to support and grow this segment of the workforce.
- **Transportation and Logistics:** The West Valley is particularly strong in several management and office-related occupations. The challenge is that there is a shortage of truck drivers impacting this industry sector nationwide.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The workforce development plan presents immediate and long-term strategies to strengthen West Valley's workforce skills, build the talent pipeline, and carry out effective messaging campaigns. The accompanying implementation guide is designed to ensure strategies are initiated, activities are coordinated, and goals are achieved.

For each strategy a lead organization is or will be identified. WESTMARC staff is prepared to support and coordinate the efforts of these West Valley Workforce Development Teams as they strive to:

- Align resources to enhance workforce and education infrastructure for current and future occupations.
- Guide a diverse workforce to choose career pathways relevant to target industries.
- Provide employer access to responsive customized training, employee recruitment and business resources.

2018 Strategies

Address Skills Gaps through Industry, Education, and Workforce Partnerships

Convey Consistent, Regular and Valued Messages to Employers

Operate a Collaborative Business Outreach Program

Build a Key Message Platform

2019 – 2023 Strategies

Create Career Pathways for In-Demand Occupations

Re-Brand Vocational Education and CTE

Conduct a Resident and Commuter Survey

Integrate Soft Skills in K-12 Curriculum

Support STEM Education

PRIORITY STRATEGIES

Address Skills Gaps

GOAL: West Valley industry leaders are guiding the workforce education and training infrastructure.

LEAD: WESTMARC Education and Workforce Development Committee

WHY: Today's highly competitive markets and ever-changing technologies call for a new approach to workforce training and education. An approach that is flexible and responsive to business' changing needs.

Involving business leaders in the design and executive of innovative programs with state-of-the-art equipment will help prepare students and workers for 21st Century jobs.

Convey Persuasive Messages

GOAL: West Valley is effectively conveying a message of unparalleled training and employer services.

LEAD: WESTMARC Staff

WHY: The number one thing businesses consider when evaluating a new location is the workforce because an educated and skilled workforce is critical to business success regardless of industry. Nearly every region in the U.S. offers workforce training. The West Valley can stand out by promoting their reputation of unparalleled training and education services that are created with employers in mind.

Collaborate on Business Visits

GOAL: Economic development, workforce development agencies and partners jointly visiting local businesses and conveying a coordinated message.

LEAD: Workforce and Economic Development Staff

WHY: Joint visits to local businesses by personnel who are familiar with the variety of business services available in the West Valley presents a seamless, "no wrong door" approach and reduces the time employers need to invest in learning about and accessing services.

Build a Key Message Platform

GOAL: A key message platform that is supported with factual proof points and testimonials and used by economic development and workforce partners.

LEAD: WESTMARC Economic Development Committee

WHY: Key messages are the principal things that should come to mind when people think of the West Valley as a business location. A key message platform helps guide and manage marketing efforts, creates clarity and continuity for communications with multiple audiences.

Statements explaining why the West Valley is the business location of choice address employers' concerns and are proven with facts and testimonials.

LONG-TERM STRATEGIES 2019 TO 2023

Chart Career Pathways

GOAL: An education and workforce network with clearly defined and industry informed career pathways.

WHY: Having established and clearly defined career pathways for occupations that are in demand helps students access the education they need and demonstrates to employers that there is a resident workforce and a pipeline of new talent with needed skills.

Survey Commuters

GOAL: Primary data that substantiates the quantity and quality of the West Valley regional workforce.

WHY: There is a perception that there is no depth of talent in the West Valley. West Valley economic development professionals have been struggling to combat this perception. Surveying is the best way to get reliable, representative data to help document the skill sets of West Valley residents and commuters.

Integrate Soft Skills in K-12

GOAL: Behavioral changes that lead to a talent pipeline equipped with life, workplace, and leadership skills; a ready for work population.

WHY: Many employers agree that these soft skills are often more important than technical skills and high educational attainment. Also, because of constant introduction of new innovations and technology the workforce of today and the future must be adaptable, responsive, and engaged in lifelong learning if they are to meet demands of the 21st Century workplace.

Re-Brand Vocational Ed

GOAL: A shift in the public perception of CTE training, jobs, wages and career advancement opportunities.

WHY: CTE or vocational education is a tough sell to students and parents who have outdated notions of routine or physically demanding jobs that don't pay well. This mistaken idea is a large contributor to the skills gap challenge.

Yet, nationwide and in the West Valley a significant number of job openings today and in the future will be the middle-skilled ones in career and technical fields that often come with a good salary—such as radiology and other medical technicians, electricians, mechanics, and computer support specialists.

Support STEM Education

GOAL: Fully-funded STEM educational program that prepares students for today's and tomorrow's jobs.

WHY: Besides preparing students for highly-technical careers and a knowledge-based economy, skills in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) is the foundation of a strong and stable economy. Even non-STEM careers require a basic grasp of math and science. STEM permeates all aspects of our lives.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- More workers trained in industry-relevant occupations and a more robust pipeline of skilled workers.
- Improved labor participation rate.
- Clear articulation of pathways for industry-certified, competency-based education.
- Focused and collaborative teams visiting with employers, workers, and students to relay pertinent information and connect them to local resources.
- Workforce, education and industry aligned on skills training and seamlessly delivering services.
- Increased knowledge of and participation in CTE programs.
- Fewer West Valley workers commuting for careers of choice.
- Whole-school performance improvements based on expectations that are aligned with employers.
- An educated and skilled workforce prepared for STEM careers.
- Convincing, collaborative, and fact-based retention, expansion and attraction campaigns.

IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

Implementing the Workforce Development Plan is a team effort. Its success depends on the continued participation of government, economic development, employers, workforce, education and training partners.

Arizona Career Information Systems (AZCIS)
Arizona Commerce Authority
AZ Pipeline
Arizona@WORK
GPEC
WESTMARC
West-MEC
Education partners
Employment agencies
Industry sector leaders
Industry Advisory Committees
Training providers
Marketing partners
Municipal partners
Decision makers
Parents
Media
Industry Associations and other business groups

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