

Executive Summary

Project Name: The Gulf Coast Chambers Network (GCCN) Recompete Plan

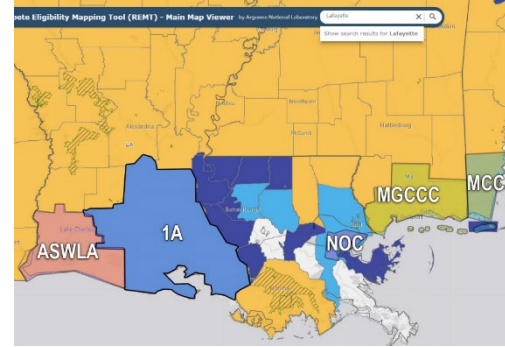
The GCCN consists of six Gulf Coast chambers of commerce in Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana that will fill existing jobs by transforming access to training, developing direct pathways to employment, and providing support to overcome barriers that have traditionally blocked economically disadvantaged individuals from accessing training and jobs. GCCN has designed programming and services with an extensive network of public-private partnerships among economic development entities, chambers, educational institutions, businesses, industries, non-profit agencies, and cities and counties. Together, we will catalyze change within the Prime Age Employment Gap (PAEG) population to create confidence in a pathway to a better quality of life for individuals who previously did not see a pathway to a rewarding future. The GCCN will connect the Gulf Coast's unconnected workforce to existing jobs through three overarching goals: Goal #1 - Implement our community outreach strategy to connect targeted populations to sector-specific training, programs, and resources; Goal #2 - Provide wrap-around services including transportation, childcare, and stipend support; and Goal #3 - Ensure the benefits of this project are shared equitably across our target populations.

80% of the individuals impacted by this programming will be from the prime age employment gap population. Through these projects, GCCN will directly engage at least 28,800 members of the PAEG population to show them clear pathways to training and job placement. We aim to enroll 7,680 into training programs and anticipate 5,840 will complete these programs and join the workforce. Together, we are working with 17 educational or community institutions who can provide training or career counseling and we have gathered commitments from 15 employers and industry to guarantee interviews to members of the PAEG population who complete needed training for the jobs available within their organizations. To support the efforts of training, we will administer stipends to up to at least 3,250 individuals to defray costs such as tuition, testing fees, childcare, and transportation while implementing long-term projects to help reduce the barriers of childcare and transportation for future generations.

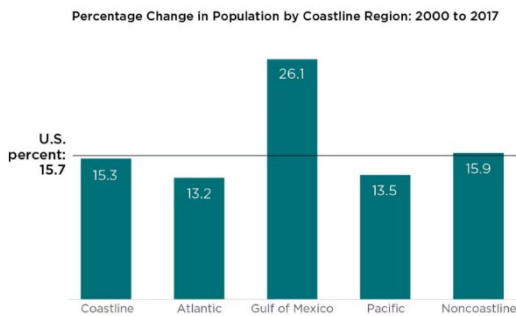
Investment Thesis: All regions in GCCN have a strong economy with common industry and an excess of good jobs available. Each region also struggles with the challenge of how to fill those jobs. An investment from the EDA will ensure those jobs are filled with the population of workers who are already living in our communities - people who have historically been left out and disregarded so often that a lifestyle of poverty is not only the normal experience but also the expectation for next generations. Working together, the GCCN will design programs implemented across three states, and with continual review, input from the population we're working with, and modifications, we will create models of success for workforce transportation, childcare, and using Workforce Influencers and Navigators to engage and create pathways for the PAEG population.

Proposed Service Area: The GCCN's proposed service area remains unchanged from Phase 1. A PAEG Strategy Study was conducted which examined each region by zip code and identified the areas with the highest concentration of PAEG population. Programming and services will be focused on supporting these areas within target zip codes, but any individual living within the service zone is eligible to participate in these programs and services.

- MCC: Mobile County, Alabama - LLM with a total population of 430,194, a Prime Age Population of 117,535, and a PAEG of 5.92.
- MGCCC: Gulfport-Biloxi, Mississippi, includes Stone County, Harrison County, Hancock County, and Jackson County - LLM with a total population of 414,642, a Prime Age Population of 159,178 and a PAEG of 4.54.
- NOC: Orleans Parish, Louisiana - Partially Eligible Local Community with 72 qualifying Census Tracts. The service area will include the following distressed neighborhoods in Orleans Parish: Gert Town/Hollygrove, Central City, Algiers, Lower Ninth Ward, Gentilly, and New Orleans East. Orleans Parish is considered a persistently impoverished parish by the EDA.
- 1A: One Acadiana, Louisiana - five LLMs:
 - Lafayette, LA MSA includes Lafayette Parish, Vermilion Parish, St. Martin Parish, Iberia Parish, Acadia Parish – a total population of 479,888 with a Prime Age Population of 188,733 and a PAEG of 3.04.
 - Opelousas, LA μSA is St. Landry Parish and contains a population of 82,999 with a Prime Age Population of 19,711 and a PAEG of 11.29
 - Commuting Zone #257 is Evangeline Parish and contains a population of 35,538 with a Prime Age Population of 12,284 and a PAEG of 17.59.
 - Jennings, LA μSA is Jefferson Davis Parish and contains a population of 11,980 with a Prime Age Population of 8,432 and a PAEG of 8.
 - Morgan City, LA μSA is St. Mary Parish and contains a population of 49,818 with a Prime Age Population of 12,060 and a PAEG of 13.04.
- ASWLA: Lake Charles, Louisiana, includes Calcasieu Parish – LLM with a total population of 218,296, a Prime Age Population of 83,901, and a PAEG of 4.21.



Why We’re Better as A Whole: With access to over 5,000 member businesses and over 1.8 million residents along the Gulf Coast, the Gulf Coast Chambers Network (GCCN) is uniquely positioned to connect prime-age workers with available jobs that are consistently being added within the Gulf Coast economy. From 2000 to 2017, population growth within the coastal counties bordering the Gulf of Mexico was 26.1%, outpacing the U.S. average population growth by 10.4 percentage points. While the population growth along the Gulf Coast is spread across various age brackets, the inbound migration has resulted in increased business investment and new job creation



for many coastal communities, and in many cases, these jobs are coming from industries that have not previously operated at such a high level within the region. With many new industries across the region, local leaders are working to develop sustainable solutions for workforce accessibility and training that can support consistent job growth and create high-wage opportunities for both existing and new residents¹.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau – Coastline America 2017

Spanning from Louisiana to Alabama, the GCCN’s service region is home to 1,809,222 residents with 716,131 of those being within the prime-age bracket of ages 25-54. At 40% of the total population, the GCCN region has a slightly larger concentration of prime-age workers than the U.S. average of 39%. Approximately 43% of the residents in the GCCN region are minorities, more than the U.S. average of 34%. Additionally, 19% of the GCCN region is below the poverty level, compared to only 13% nationwide². Across the region, there is a total of 825,956 jobs with an average wage of \$57,372, which is 18% below the U.S. average wage of \$70,183. The majority of the Gulf Coast has seen an influx of new jobs in higher wages industries over the past 10 years, with a mix of overall job growth and job loss across the GCCN region³.

While each community within the region is unique, the GCCN industry base and workforce share many similarities, including the types of industries that are concentrated along the Gulf Coast. Some of the target industry sectors for communities include Ship and Boat Building, Chemical Manufacturing, Petroleum Manufacturing, Metals Manufacturing, Healthcare, Water Transportation & Port-Related Industries, and Traveler Accommodations/Tourism. These industries offer various points of entry into the labor force, with different skill sets, wage levels, and education or training requirements, offering flexibility and accessibility for prime-age residents seeking entry into the workforce.

NAICS	Industry	Regional Employees	Average Annual Wages	Location Quotient
6221	General Medical and Surgical Hospitals	40,021	\$68,853	1.29
7211	Traveler Accommodation	28,524	\$38,653	3.00
6211	Offices of Physicians	21,074	\$92,217	1.38
3366	Ship and Boat Building	15,685	\$85,388	16.11
3251	Basic Chemical Manufacturing	7,223	\$126,015	9.24
3241	Petroleum and Coal Products Manufacturing	5,597	\$151,480	10.34
4883	Support Activities for Water Transportation	4,944	\$73,707	9.60
3312	Steel Product Manufacturing from Purchased Steel	1,774	\$112,768	5.96
3311	Iron and Steel Mills and Ferroalloy Manufacturing	1,532	\$127,252	3.59
3252	Resin, Synthetic Rubber, and Artificial and Synthetic Fibers and Filaments Manufacturing	1,476	\$128,297	3.03
4832	Inland Water Transportation	1,332	\$85,924	9.46 ⁴

Across the region, GCCN is proposing the following programming that will support residents by meeting localized workforce gaps in the following areas: Transportation Pilot Programming, Workforce Influencer/Navigator Initiatives, and Childcare Accessibility Improvements. While

² JobsEQ - Demographic Profile (GCCN Region)

³ JobsEQ - 2023Q3 Industry Report (GCCN Region)

⁴ JobsEQ - 2023Q3 Industry Report (GCCN Region)

each GCCN chamber partner will be responsible for executing these programs in their specific area, the gaps around transportation, workforce, and childcare accessibility are shared across the entire region, where there is a significant need to support workforce development infrastructure to meet the growing demand for skilled workers.

Component Project Activities

The following activities are overarching and will be implemented within the components:

Workforce Influencer (WI) Initiatives: For prime-age residents to understand how they could fit into a role within one of the GCCN's target industries, it will be important for the GCCN to help paint that picture and meet them on their level. The GCCN has identified target areas (zip codes) within each of the five metros included in the GCCN partnership, with a focus on areas that had the highest total number of prime-age workers outside of the workforce, based on localized participation rates and population totals for the target demographic. After identifying the target areas, GCCN looked at localized trends within these communities, including racial makeup of the communities, wages for jobs within the target areas, poverty levels within the target areas, and more. As the GCCN partners look to identify and hire WIs within the region, there will be a focus on hiring influencers who represent the community that they are working to influence into the job market⁵.

WIs will provide a dynamic approach to recruiting, enrolling, and mentoring individuals by being actively engaged in the day-to-day activities of potential applicants, attending local events and high-traffic locations, and setting up onsite, mobile registration stations to eliminate barriers to immediate enrollment. The WIs will offer individualized counseling to demonstrate pathways to training and available job opportunities by discussing ways to overcome barriers and discussing commitments from local industry and employers who will offer interviews to program graduates. Across the target areas for each of the five GCCN partners, there is a total of 71,703 prime-age residents that will be directly targeted for entry or re-entry into the workforce. Of these targets, the GCCN is estimating that each area's workforce influencers will connect with 28,800+ residents to discuss pathways to training and employment. From this number engaged, the WIs will enroll 7,680 into training programs and anticipate 5,840 will complete the programming and be set up with an interview for a position with an employer in their community.

Workforce Navigator (WN): Across the GCCN, 15 employers within each region's top industries with the greatest hiring needs are committed to interviewing PAEG individuals who complete relevant training. The WN outreach strategy will focus on establishing relationships with business owners and industry leaders to gain additional commitments to hire and interview PAEG individuals to join their workforce. These commitments should reflect organizations committed to Good Jobs Principles that can provide PAEG individuals with a secure job, living wages, and access to benefits. The WN will share new hiring commitments with the WIs and serve as a liaison for Recompete with local employers and industry, educational institutions, and nonprofits.

Transportation Pilot Program: Efficient and affordable transportation removes barriers to accessing good jobs, quality healthcare, and educational opportunities for all. Where you live should not determine your economic mobility or overall quality of life. While there are several larger cities within the GCCN region, most of the region's workforce resides in either a suburban

⁵ JobsEQ – Demographic Profile (GCCN Region)

or rural setting, where public transportation is either totally unavailable or has limited accessibility. In many areas, industrial assets and the population centers for potential workers are not accessible except by personal vehicle and the commute is often 30-40 minutes from an employee's home. Workers in the region have an average commute time of 24.5 minutes and only 1.5% of workers utilize public transportation, compared to a U.S. average of 3.8%. To reach the U.S. average for public transportation utilization, the region would need to provide public transportation infrastructure and access to an additional 19,000 residents⁶. The results of the GCCN's Strategy Development Grant (SDG) will provide insight into the greatest transportation needs through an assessment of existing data, stakeholder interviews, and input directly from members of the PAEG population through community group feedback sessions.

The Mobile Chamber Foundation piloted a workforce transportation pilot that will serve as a model for transportation projects across the GCCN. The basis is to provide an on-demand microtransit service that can accommodate multiple riders in a single trip. If traveling to a designated work site or training program, the ride is free and if traveling to needs-based sites for services such as doctors, pharmacies, and grocery stores, the cost will be minimal. Rural service zones will implement a shuttle system or minibus to accommodate more riders at a time.

Childcare Accessibility Improvements: The Gulf Coast region's influx of population of all age groups and a more diverse business and industry mix have also created the demand for childcare assets in the region. While childcare costs in Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi are among the lowest in the country, historic wages for workers have been well below the national average. Additionally, a lack of available childcare assets stems from historically low wages that failed to incentivize workers to participate in the labor force. As wages have grown throughout the GCCN region, the availability and access of childcare services has not increased at the same rate, leaving many prime-age residents with no other choice than to stay at home with their children and remain outside of the workforce.

In Louisiana, infant care costs only 16% less than in-state tuition for a four-year public college and just 24% less than average housing costs for Louisiana residents. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, childcare is affordable if it costs no more than 7% of a family's income. In Louisiana, infant care would take up 15% of a median family's income. In Mississippi, infant care would take up 12% of a median family's income. And, in Alabama, infant care would take up 12% of a median family's income. Despite regional daycare costs ranking among the lowest in the United States, only 29% of Mississippi residents, 27% of Alabama residents, and 20% of Louisiana residents can afford infant care⁷. In the GCCN region, 46% of children are living in single-parent families, which is 12 percentage points higher than the U.S. average of 34%, further compounding the need for childcare assets within the region, in order to get single parents engaged in the workforce⁸.

The New Orleans Chamber of Commerce Foundation (NOCCF) and Mississippi Chambers will each pilot projects to address childcare barriers. NOCCF will initiate an in-home service that is accessible 24 hours a day for child and elder care services. Mississippi will establish a Childcare

⁶ JobsEQ – Demographic Profile (GCCN Region)

⁷ Economic Policy Institute – Childcare costs in the United States (2020).

⁸ JobsEQ – Demographic Profile (GCCN Region)

Center Network Coordinator to help existing centers access available funding. They will also provide scholarships to existing and new childcare workers to cover the costs of obtaining a certification. Mississippi and Mobile will each establish a coalition to address childcare in their region, conduct studies, and apply for additional grant funding to support any other piloted programs.

Stipend Support: While developing our Phase 2 application, each region recognized that even with access to training and future employment, the targeted population living with persistent poverty has significant barriers to overcome to begin a training program. Stipends can provide funding for wraparound services needed, such as program enrollment costs, certification testing costs, uniforms, and childcare and transportation while the programs/pilots are being established. The stipends will be reimbursement-based, with the exception of gas cards. Each region has a specified amount of total stipend per participant that was informed by the administering partners. Eligible participants only include members of the PAEG population who are enrolled in and attending training, and for up to 6-months of their initial employment period. All training courses are short-term, at approximately 12-weeks or less. Each contractor will be responsible for tracking the stipends and updating their policies to reflect GCCN requirements.

Governance: While developing our Phase 2 application, the GCCN met weekly to ensure we would develop a cohesive plan that addressed the needs in each region. To continue our work together, the GCCN established a subcommittee that worked with our RPC to create a Governance Plan and Teaming Agreement. This plan was approved by the GCCN leadership team members, the EIC, and the Chief Executive Officers of each Chamber.

Component Projects

Each region is committed to focusing the efforts of its projects within those zip codes with the highest density of PAEG populations to ensure programs and services are reaching the target population. The Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce Foundation, Inc. will be the lead applicant for all component projects. The Project Leads will be sub-recipients who will manage the day-to-day implementation of the projects in their designated areas. The GCCN is proposing common activities across the region to create models and learn from each other. The implementation methods vary according to the needs of each region as follows:

1. Mobile - Connecting the Unconnected Workforce in Mobile County (Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce Foundation - \$13,233,461): Establish six WIs; Expand a Youth Training Program; Expand existing Transportation Pilot; Develop a Childcare Strategies Committee; Execute a Stipend Program; Adhere to EIC; Complete administration duties as Lead Applicant.
2. Lake Charles - Workforce Connection in Lake Charles, Louisiana (Southwest Louisiana Economic Development Alliance - \$6,367,571): Establish one WI; Establish one WN; Initiate a Transportation Pilot; Execute a Stipend Program; Adhere to EIC and Governance guidelines.
3. Lafayette - Economic Mobility for Prime-Age Workers in Acadiana (One Acadiana - \$9,033,651): Establish three WIs; Establish three WNs; Initiate a Transportation Pilot; Execute a Stipend Program; Adhere to EIC and Governance guidelines.
4. Mississippi - Connecting Workers to Good Jobs on the Mississippi Gulf Coast (Mississippi Gulf Coast Chamber of Commerce and the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce - \$10,094,608): Establish eight WIs; Initiate a Transportation pilot; Implement a three-point plan

to address childcare barriers; Execute a Stipend Program; Adhere to EIC and Governance guidelines.

5. New Orleans - Creating Pathways to Sector Specific Training Opportunities for New Orleanians (New Orleans Chamber of Commerce (\$10,488,130
6.); Establish Four (and later six) WNs (one role will serve as WI and WN in this region); Launch a Childcare Pilot Program; Execute a Stipend Program; Adhere to EIC and Governance guidelines.

Deliverables:

Complementary Investments: GCCN will leverage several complementary investments across the region to scale the impact of EDA's investment as follows:

- Mobile: \$800,000 in 2024 to support the Workforce Transportation Pilot - \$500,000 from the Alabama Department of Transportation Carbon Reduction Funding; \$100,000 from the City of Mobile; \$200,000 from private foundations; \$100,000 raised during the Recompete Phase 2 partnership to support Transportation Expansion; \$50,000 from the City of Mobile, and considerations from Mobile County and the Mobile County Personnel Board budget for 2025; \$1,499,999 requested by SWAPTE from the Department of Labor Pathway Home 5 Grant to support justice-involved individuals.
- Lake Charles: \$40M Choice Neighborhood Grant Awarded to refurbish blighted neighborhoods in Calcasieu Parish.
- Lafayette: \$700,000 U.S. Department of Transportation Regional Infrastructure Accelerators (RIA) grant for a rural transportation pilot; \$50,000 grant from the ACCE Foundation for the Economic Mobility for Rural Workers cohort; \$105,000 in in-kind support, including office space, through Acadiana Workforce Solutions; services provided through a U.S. Department of Education grant for TRiO Educational Opportunity Centers in four rural parishes; adult learner scholarship funding through the M.J. Foster Promise Program.
- Mississippi: Accelerate Mississippi and ARPA funds in Mississippi.
- New Orleans: A Department of Education CAAMPUS grant at SUNO.
- Mobile/Lake Charles/Acadiana/Mississippi: Funding requested by the Chamber Foundation from Just Transition Funds as match for stipends (only coal-affected communities applied).

Legislative Policies:

- Mobile: The Alabama Legislature is considering two bills that would create an employer tax credit, childcare facility tax credit, and nonprofit childcare tax credit to incentivize employers to fund childcare for their employees and to enable childcare providers to offer more readily available and affordable childcare options. Specifically, the bills would provide credits for employers that build on-site facilities or give employees benefits (vouchers) for childcare. In addition, there would be a variety of incentives for both non-profit and for-profit providers.
- Mississippi: SB3099 was recently signed to authorize an income tax credit for employers who sponsor skills training for employees; to provide for the amount of the tax credit; to provide that the tax credit will be granted to employers that participate in employer-sponsored training programs through any community college or junior college in the district within which the employer is located.
- Louisiana: The MJ Foster Promise Program provides \$10.5 million annually for tuition and fees for adults age 21+ to pursue short-term training for high-demand jobs in growing industries like construction, healthcare, information technology, manufacturing, and

transportation and logistics. Currently, a bill is making its way through Louisiana's State Legislature to increase the funding cap for the MJ Foster Promise Program from \$10.5 million annually to \$40 million annually. This will expand the availability of state funding to cover short-term training costs for the PAEG population.

Mutually Reinforced Activities: All components are executing similar key activities so that as we implement in each city, county and parish within the Gulf Coast region, we can benefit from sharing best practices, challenges faced, and mitigation strategies. To achieve our goals as a network, we will maintain open and regular communication to mutually support each other and develop camaraderie. During the Phase 2 application, the six chambers participating on the leadership team maintained weekly meetings to discuss common barriers and opportunities to develop this application and address the prime age employment gap in our region as a whole. Going forward, this leadership team will continue to meet as well as convene annual meetings with the Project Directors/Managers and the WIs/WNs so all people involved can learn from one another. Additionally, the EIC will meet quarterly to connect community organizations and members of the PAEG population to inform us on priorities and strategies to meet identified needs.

Equity: One of our key strategies to ensure equity is engaging an **Economic Inclusion Committee** (EIC) which will meet at least quarterly and guide and inform the direction of the project. The Committee was created to assist GCCN in developing a collective, coordinated plan that focuses on the accessibility, effectiveness, and reach of the overall program. This plan intends to ensure we are engaging largely unserved communities across the Gulf Coast and includes ongoing assessments of GCCN's impact on those communities. Other strategies include: 1) **Leadership Team** - The leadership team will foster inclusive community engagement by establishing and building trust, utilizing multiple ways to conduct outreach, and incorporating end-users in the planning, decision-making, and implementation of the project. Trust will be established and maintained throughout the selection, training, and support of WIs and WNs. In training, the expertise and skills of the WIs and WNs will be aligned with the goals of the grant to benefit the target population. There will also be a representative of the PAEG population in each of the GCCN service areas who will be invited to meet with the EIC throughout the project. 2) **Strategic Partners** - Each region contracted with organizations to employ the WIs and WNs that represent entities embedded in the population (HBCU/Community Colleges, United Way, Workforce boards) whose focus is already to serve populations in need. 3) **Industry Leadership** - Participating industry partners currently emphasize safe and healthy workplace environments through their existing policies and procedures.

Climate and Environmental Responsibility: The transportation projects are the GCCN's primary focus on environmental responsibility. The services implemented across the GCCN will be modeled after the pilot in Mobile, which launched in March 2024. MoGo Rideshare is an on-demand microtransit service that can accommodate 6+ riders in a single trip. The service allows riders to request transportation from an app or by calling a customer service number. Requesters must walk up to three blocks to meet the vehicle, which allows for efficient and environmentally friendly service. Disabled riders receive door-to-door service and assistance. The rideshare services will coordinate with any existing public transportation options to not duplicate routes and provide transportation to underserved and underrepresented populations who do not currently have access to any existing public transportation options.

Long-term outcomes: Across the GCCN, out of a total PAEG population of 1,809,222, the WIs/WNs will aim to engage with at least 28,800 individuals in the target population and enroll 7,680 into short-term training programs. In the first year of implementation, we will engage a program evaluator contractor and rely on input from the EIC to evaluate the programs by conducting assessments of the project's reach to the target population, processes to obtain that reach, and outcomes of the investment and project implementation. The processes will be refined to reach the target population further and connect them to the workforce.

The transportation and childcare projects will be solutions that can be sustained after the grant period ends. Throughout the duration of the grant, each region will seek additional funding from other grant opportunities, partnerships with industry and employers, and municipal groups, such as transit authorities, who can support and manage the project at the completion of the program.

Short-term outputs: The GCCN will adopt common metrics to track across the region.

- WI/WN: The GCCN contractor who employs the WI/WN will use software such as Pipedrive or Salesforce to track the number of events they attend and individuals they engage with daily. Upon an opportunity to enroll someone, additional screening data will be gathered such as educational attainment, race, gender, and income. After enrollment, the WI/WN will track individuals as they start, leave, and complete a program, record if/where they get an interview, when a job is offered, accepted, and/or declined. When possible, an interview will be completed to determine why a participant leaves a program or declines an offer. Any WN focused on employer connections and hiring commitments will use the same software to track the number of partners added, interview and hiring commitments added, average wage of the new positions, any benefits provided, and the number of total jobs the employer needs to fill.
- Transportation: Tracking ability will be a requirement in the Request for Proposal from the transportation vendor so each region can collect information on where people are requesting rides, where they need to go, and how long it takes the service to complete the trip.
- Childcare: New Orleans and Mississippi will track the number of participants using their service or receiving stipends, hours used per person, and employment retention rates.
- Stipends: Stipends will be available for at least 3,250 members of the PAEG population completing training programs. The entities administering the stipends each have experience, software, and processes to effectively track stipend distribution and use.

Work Conducted Between Phase 1-2: The GCCN accomplished many tasks in the four months between Phase 1 and 2. Separately, each chamber held meetings with city, county, industry, employers, and area workforce entities to discuss the goals of the project and develop commitments. Together, the leadership team met weekly starting January 16th through April 23rd, held one on-site planning meeting on February 27th, established a Budget Committee and Governance Committee to create guidelines and review documents for fairness, conducted an initial PAEG strategy study, procured a transportation feasibility study contractor, formed the EIC, and participated in EDA Recompete Training Sessions. This regular cadence of meetings helped to develop relationships and commitment to the success of this project.

Changes to the Projects: From Phase 1 to Phase 2, there were no changes in the proposed Service Area, the overall vision, or the key partners of the GCCN. However, during our discussions, there were modifications to some of the original goals and activities in each region as follows:

- Removed Construction Project: The Mobile Chamber removed a project to renovate buildings to serve as career tech training facilities. All the projects proposed in Phase 2 are designed to be implemented across the entire GCCN in a way that will allow us to learn from one another and ultimately create models of success that can be implemented across the nation. Renovations for a training center located in only one area would not benefit the entire region's common approach to reducing PAEG.
- Refined Programming: Several participants refined programming based on weekly meetings, hearing about best practices in other places, and conducting one-on-one conversations with supporting partners. Lake Charles decided not to pursue an internship program; Mobile added a youth training program; Mississippi added childcare initiatives.
- Added Staffing: To ensure our ability to implement this investment, each chamber added a staff member to serve as their region's Project Manager. This position will coordinate with the RPO and Data Manager that will serve the entire GCCN.
- Added Workforce Navigators: While working to gain employer/industry commitments between Phase 1 and 2, One Acadiana identified a gap in their ecosystem regarding employer engagement. This became an overlapping barrier in other regions and to overcome it, the group decided to create this second activity within Community Outreach.
- Added Stipends: One of the risks identified was how to connect the underserved and underrepresented individuals into training programs. Without a stipend, the WI/WN would have little success in recruiting from the targeted population. To make a clear pathway, stipends are required to provide initial support to PAEG participants.

Risk and mitigation: The additions to the projects listed above are mitigation to risks discussed by the GCCN leadership team. Additional risks addressed include forming the EIC and involving them in each leadership team meeting to ensure equity was built into the programming. Finally, a governance document and teaming agreement were developed to safeguard against fragmented project implementation. The leadership team discussed additional barriers that would prevent the targeted population from enrolling in training and beginning employment with two additional but unaddressed risks being drug/alcohol use and fear of losing benefits.