Decatur, IL: Boosting Participation of Black Workers in Next Gen Manufacturing

ELEMENT 1: Understanding of regional conditions and needs

When it is time to write the history of America’s manufacturing boom, look to Central Illinois. Whether Americans eat sustainable foods, or transition from petroleum-based vehicles and chemicals, will be thanks to our precision fermentation and EV industries. It will also show if under-served populations, specifically its Black population, shared in the growth of these new technologies. Cities in Central Illinois lead the US in racial inequality. Peoria has the country’s most segregated school system.1 Black households in Bloomington and Springfield have a median income only 36% that of white households, the highest discrepancy among US metros. With the country’s second-highest Black unemployment rate, Decatur has similar challenges, but is ready to lead the region in putting Black workers at the core of the US manufacturing resurgence.

Regional needs: The Decatur MSA (population ~100,000, henceforth “Decatur”) has a prime-age employment gap (PAEG) of 3 p.p., which belies a larger gap for Black residents (15% of MSA’s population).2 As shown in Table 1, the prime-age employment ratio for Decatur’s Black residents is 10 p.p. lower than the US average, largely due to Black unemployment (19%, second highest of US metros), the driver of region’s PAEG and the focus of this proposal (“the Plan”).

Table 1: Select characteristics of MSA and service area, 2021 ACS 5-year estimates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>Decatur MSA</th>
<th>Service area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prime-age employment to population ratio</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime-age unemployment rate</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black employment to population ratio</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black unemployment rate</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Employment ratios may not precisely match the Eligibility Tool’s as they include the armed forces due to data limitations. Measures for Black residents are for those 16 and older.

Black unemployment in Decatur stems from a lack of non-college pathways to jobs, a legacy of school segregation exacerbated by deindustrialization (more below). Improving these pathways is critical as Decatur lags in both educational attainment and employment outcomes for non-college workers. Forty percent of the MSA and 55% of its “Urban Core” (proposed service area) have never attended college, compared to 36% in the US. High school (HS) graduates have employment rates 5 p.p. and 18 p.p. lower than their US peers for the MSA and service area, respectively.

Job quality: Quality job availability and access have been historic barriers for Black residents in manufacturing, yet this is an ideal moment to invest in these pathways. This Plan focuses on access to quality jobs—it will prepare participants for, and connect them to, two leaders in precision fermentation (ADM and Primient) and an EV component producer (TCCI). Our Tech Hub proposal addresses industry bottlenecks to spur continued quality job availability (see Element 4 and 6 for additional detail on precision fermentation and Tech Hubs.)

- Availability: Manufacturing is Decatur’s largest sector with ~11,000 employees, 59% of whom make above a living wage. This industry has faced the same challenges as other manufacturing centers in recent decades but is emerging from a period of flat growth. The sector is forecasted to add nearly ~4,000 jobs over 2022-27 (6% growth) with the emergence of new technologies such as precision fermentation and EVs (Lightcast, 2022). Our three industry partners alone have announced expansion plans representing ~1,100 new jobs, including the world’s largest insect protein facility, two JVs with LG Chem to produce critical inputs for bioplastics, and the $300 million expansion of an alternative protein facility.

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1 Per Governing Magazine (link) rankings based on a “dissimilarity index.” Using a “variance ratio,” Century Foundation (link) ranked Peoria 10th worst in Black-white school segregation.

2 Unless otherwise cited, all statistics are 2021 American Community Survey 5-year estimates or provided by the Plan’s partners.

3 Service area comprises 11 census tracts in Decatur’s Urban Core (see Element 5 for details).
• **Access:** Seventy-seven percent of local manufacturing roles do not require a four-year degree (Lightcast, 2022), but still require essential skills (e.g., dependability, communication), industry-specific technical training, and/or an associate degree. These barriers (among others, see below), are prohibitive for many of the underserved residents in the Plan’s service area. While our industry partners already use the Plan’s programs to employ some of these residents, additional investment is needed to scale them and close Decatur’s PAEG (see Element 2).

**Contributing local conditions and geographic considerations:** Decatur shares a common challenge with many Midwestern communities: small school districts, which “have consistently produced the most economic and racial segregation” (EdBuild, 2020). Across the Rust Belt, “hyper-local hardships” such as plant closures create acute “between-district” inequality, rather than producing “high-need corners” of wider districts (e.g., county-level, which characterize the South). Illinois has 1,032 districts, a uniquely high ratio of districts to students. Texas has 1,229 districts but double the students. Florida has 77 districts and 50% more students (Common Core, 2021).

Decatur is an example of how deindustrialization can compound segregation. Decades of plant closures—notably Borg Warner in the 1980s (~2,500 people), Bridgestone/Firestone in 2001 (~1,400 people), and Akorn in 2023 (~400)—have coincided with “white flight” from the City to the County’s six outlying school districts. Decatur Public School (DPS) District 61, encompassing the Urban Core service area and most of Decatur’s Black residents, lost 38% of its white student body from 2004-2019. This district, now 63% non-white, borders districts such as Mt. Zion District 3 (5% non-white), Meridian District 15 (3% non-white), and Warrensburg-Latham District 11 (8% non-white). DPS students, 60%+ of whom do not attend college, are increasingly underserved, with $1,500-3,000 less in revenue per pupil than the county’s other districts (EdBuild).

**Targeted populations:** Local workforce experts Richland Community College (applicant), United Way of Decatur & Mid-Illinois (UW) and DPS have identified and will target three populations:

**Table 2: Targeted populations within Decatur’s Black community**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Key employment barriers</th>
<th>Plan objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jobless prime-age residents</td>
<td>People unemployed with little previous work experience, often reintegrating from justice system</td>
<td>Lack of essential and technical skills, justice system involvement, trauma</td>
<td>Support 1,350 Black residents secure good manufacturing jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed through Plan investments</td>
<td>Recently employed individuals at risk of falling out of employment due to barriers</td>
<td>Benefit cliff exposure, inability to afford immediate basic needs (e.g., childcare, transportation, housing)</td>
<td>Help 2,000 workers retain employment through wraparounds and other supports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-college bound HS seniors</td>
<td>Students identified by DPS as unlikely to attend college</td>
<td>Lack of understanding and support needed to pursue jobs, essential and technical skills, inability to afford basic needs</td>
<td>Address the future PAEG by strengthening non-college manufacturing pathways for 500 DPS seniors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though HS seniors are not “prime age,” the Plan believes that long-run, sustained benefits for Decatur means investing in populations with a high likelihood of contributing to the future PAEG.

**ELEMENT 2: Strength of strategy and quality of potential investments**

Our strategy has three objectives that collectively address the key inhibitors causing Black unemployment: 1.) Support 1,350 Black residents secure good manufacturing jobs, 2.) Help 2,000 workers retain employment through wraparounds and other supports, 3.) Address the future PAEG by strengthening non-college manufacturing pathways for 500 DPS seniors. With an initial budget of ~$54 million, the Plan’s cost per job placement (~$40,000) is consistent with local benchmarks for similar programs ($35,000-40,000), albeit more transformative in size and scope.
Objective 1: Support 1,350 Black prime-age residents in securing good manufacturing jobs

*Investment 1 ($30M):* Expand Richland Community College’s essential and technical skills program (EnRICH) to place 2,600 prime-age workers across manufacturing and other partners.

- **Program description:** EnRICH combines traditional skills training with trauma sensitive practices to prepare adults with multiple employment barriers (55% of alumni have criminal records, 78% are non-white) for stable jobs. The 10-12 week program, developed with local employers, covers essential skills (e.g., dependability, communication) and industry-specific technical training. To support completion, the program offers a ~$6,000 stipend and wraparounds such as transportation and childcare support. In addition to being an existing talent source for the Plan’s precision fermentation partners, EnRICH is a pipeline for the EV Workforce Academy—an innovation hub developed between Richland, TCCI, the City and the State (see Element 4) that will place students in EV-related fields across advanced manufacturing, computer science, and CNC machining.

- **Investment activities:** Richland will increase participants by ~375 (to ~525 a year). This exceeds the Plan’s headline 1,350 job target to budget for participants choosing non-manufacturing careers and/or additional upskilling (e.g., associate degree), as well as for natural program and employment cessation (both <10%). Scaling EnRICH involves expanding the physical training site, hiring trainers, increasing the scope and timeframe of post-program wraparounds (from six months to three years), and developing pathways for EV and precision fermentation. To ensure equity, Richland will also invest in community liaisons, recruiters, and navigators (see Elements 3 and 5).

- **Barriers addressed:** Essential and technical skills, justice system involvement, trauma, inability to afford basic needs, benefit cliff exposure (via financial literacy and career coaching)

- **Evidence of future success:** The program has ~2,300 alumni (91% have retained employment for at least a year with a median hourly income of $24, above the region’s livable wage), a ~200-person waitlist, and hiring commitments across 30 industry partners not yet involved in this plan.

- **Roles:** Richland will lead and work closely with industry partners (TCCI, ADM, Primient) to deploy essential skills and manufacturing curricula, and with UW on wraparounds coordination.

**Objective 2: Help 2,000 workers retain employment through wraparounds and supports**

*Investment 2 ($6M):* Proactively offer individualized support to Plan participants at risk of leaving the workforce due to employment barriers.

- **Program description:** UW has developed an approach for the early identification of employment barriers, which enables proactive and sustained engagement with workers as they become financially stable (for up to three years). Support involves direct financial aid (e.g., bill assistance), counseling (e.g., benefit cliff, financial literacy), and coordination with ancillary supports. For instance, as of this year the City offers free bus fare for Richland students (20% of residents in the service area lack a vehicle, as high as 45% in one tract).

- **Investment activities:** UW can serve ~2,000 participants by hiring staff (crisis interventionists, navigators and supporting funds) and bolstering program wraparounds.

- **Barriers addressed:** Benefit cliff exposure, inability to afford basic needs

- **Evidence of future success:** UW is a pioneer in data-driven assessments and interventions to support income-constrained workers (United for ALICE). In addition to accessing this national infrastructure, the local UW has seen success with its Hispanic crisis interventionist, who began operating at 100% capacity within a year, that can be scaled to Decatur’s Black residents.

- **Roles:** UW will lead and work closely with RCC and DPS to plan benefits for graduates, and with industry partners (TCCI, ADM, Primient) to identify and assist qualified participants.

*Investment 3 ($9M):* Expand before- and after-school programs to help 1,000 parents

- **Program description:** Childcare is a critical employment barrier in the service area—nearly one-in-six households (~16%) live in poverty with a child under five. DPS’ before- and after-school program (Extended Day) is a cost-effective solution. For three years, DPS District 61 (see Element
1) has used COVID-19 relief (ESSER) to offer academic support, activities, and nutrition for ~930 elementary students (16% of pre-K to eighth grade students) before and after school hours.

- **Investment activities:** Implementation funding will replace ESSER (which expires in 2025 and covers staff and other expenses) and offer Extended Day to over 150 additional students.
- **Barriers addressed:** Inability to afford basic needs (i.e., childcare, nutrition)
- **Evidence of future success:** Over 90% of surveyed DPS households indicated interest in enrolling their children in Extended Day, evidenced by a 300+ student waitlist.
- **Roles:** DPS will continue to lead, working with UW and Richland to ensure working parents are aware of, and utilizing, the program.

**Investment 4 ($3M): Hire a Workforce Ecosystem Officer to holistically coordinate the region’s workforce initiatives across industry, academic institutions, and community groups.**

- **Program description:** Decatur-Macon County EDC serves as a one-stop-shop for companies on challenges such as site selection, having helped attract $2.6B in upcoming corporate investments. It does not, however, have the capacity to coordinate a regional workforce strategy across sectors, demographics, and talent profiles. This is a key enabler for the Plan. As the Officer supports companies on their holistic workforce needs, they will verify the region’s initiatives collectively address industry demand and ensure the participation of historically overlooked talent pools.
- **Investment activities:** Decatur-Macon County EDC will hire a Workforce Ecosystem Officer.
- **Evidence of future success:** This role is a recommendation of a 2022 external workforce assessment of Macon County, involving integrated quantitative data with 45 interviews.
- **Roles:** EDC will organize a collaborative infrastructure encompassing Plan partners and key community stakeholders, including underrepresented population groups.

**Objective 3: Address future PAEG through non-college pathways for 500 DPS seniors**

**Investment 5 ($9M): Establish a DPS Career Academy to support HS seniors enter manufacturing.**

- **Program description:** DPS will invest in programs that allow it to identify and support non-college bound students to graduate and find work. A Manufacturing Career Academy will help students identify career pathways and prepare for work by enrolling in internships, taking coursework in focused skill development, and receiving wraparounds and monitoring to increase career readiness outcomes for up to three years post-graduation.
- **Investment activities:** DPS can serve 75-125 students a year by hiring workforce prep coordinators and specialists to assist Academy students with job applications and interviews and coordinate assistance with barriers (e.g., transportation). Funds will also purchase industry-recognized curriculum, certification materials, and other career readiness expenses (e.g., industry tours).
- **Barriers addressed:** Lack of career understanding of, and support to pursue, job opportunities; essential and technical skills; inability to afford basic needs (e.g., transportation)
- **Evidence of future success:** An Agriculture Academy has enrolled 465 students since 2018.
- **Roles:** DPS will lead, working with Richland to integrate EnRICH curriculum and UW to provide financial, emotional, and skill-building wraparounds.

**ELEMENT 3: Diversity, inclusivity, accessibility, and diversity**

As outlined in Elements 1 and 2, the Plan aspires to fundamentally improve and increase opportunities for Decatur’s Black community, which it will do through intentional planning and the equitable distribution of benefits across historically underserved populations.

**Planning and community engagement:** Recompete Plan Coordinator, Gina Taylor, B.S. Workforce Ed. and Develop., MEd. Higher Ed., CTRP-E is an influential member of the Decatur Black community, whose input she will incorporate into the planning process through:

- **Coordination with the Plan member’s diversity and workforce officers,** leveraging support from Richland’s new executive director for DEIB and industry partners to understand the experience
and needs of Black manufacturing workers and program participants. The RCP will also work closely with the Workforce Ecosystem Officer to convey these insights to employers.

- **Engagement with Black community groups**, including The Decatur Coalition, Illinois Pastors Coalition, and Black Chambers of Commerce, to aid in program awareness and recruitment.
- **Direct community input** (e.g., townhalls and surveys) to refine program outreach and efficacy.

**Equitable benefits:** The Plan’s direct benefit is supporting 1,350 Black residents move out of unemployment into jobs paying $40,000-60,000 a year—a collective anticipated income of $55-85 million (see Element 5 for further details). Considering Decatur’s ~6,400 Black households have a median income of ~$30,000 (~$195 million collectively), **this Plan’s success would increase the Black community’s wages by 25-40%**.

That increase, while ambitious, still lags the forecasted growth in precision fermentation and EV manufacturing. The precision fermentation-derived proteins market—in which ADM and Primient are pioneers—is growing more than 40% per year and will represent a $30-35 billion industry by 2030 (MarketsandMarkets, 2022). In Illinois, EV manufacturing was the fastest growing clean-jobs sector with a 28% increase in jobs for 2021 (Clean Jobs Midwest 2022 Report) and saw a $2 billion battery factory investment announced earlier this year (Illinois.gov, 2023).

Beyond incremental income, this Plan entails important secondary benefits:

- **Focused, trauma-informed resilience training:** Expanding EnRICH will provide trauma-informed resilience training for ~2,600 residents, an important resource for this community.
- **Child wellbeing:** Maintaining DPS’ Extended Day beyond its projected funding expiry will continue to provide ~930 children with childcare and nutrition. Even as Decatur’s largest childcare program, it only addresses a portion of the county’s 8,400 underserved children that need before- and after-school support (Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies).
- **Upskilling into living-wage jobs:** UW estimates 30% of Decatur residents have income insufficient to provide immediate basic needs such as housing and food. By providing ~2,000 additional participants with wraparound supports specifically designed to navigate benefit cliff exposure and other employment barriers, the Plan will allow families to focus beyond the short-term and upskill into more stable employment.
- **Resources for Central Illinois’ Black community:** As mentioned in Element 1, Decatur’s neighbors also struggle with poor outcomes for Black residents despite being home to some of the country’s leading manufacturers, such as Rivian and Caterpillar. Not only will the Plan provide scalable best practices, its pathways extend beyond Decatur. Central Illinois’ economic development community sees this region as an integrated workforce, and often works collectively with companies that hire across city and county lines (see Element 4).
- **Resources for Decatur’s Latino community:** While targeting the Black community in Decatur’s Urban Core service area, this Plan’s investments are accessible to other people of color. Official statistics indicate 3% of the MSA is Latino and has an employment rate exceeding that of US white people (61% vs. 59%), though input from local partners suggest these figures may understate both the size and challenges of this community.

**Historical commitments:** Richland’s Black student body increased 65% in seven years, largely attributed to EnRICH’s success. Richland has hired an Executive Director for DEIB, housed in the President’s Office. This role, in concert with Richland’s robust Diversity Committee, is responsible for generating a campus-wide equity plan. The equity plan will set the intentionality and framework for the entire campus and focus on DEIB in workforce, campus policies and hiring procedures, and community partnerships to advance equity outside the college. Additionally, the DPS Board of Education adopted a Resolution of Racism in 2019, and created a new leadership role - Assistant Superintendent of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, in 2023.

**Key stakeholders:** The Plan counts on the participation of multiple entities representing underserved communities, including DPS District 61 (73% of the student population is low income and underserved), Richland (student body 28% Black), and UW, which leads the region’s 21 Week Racial Equity Challenge and Healing Illinois DEI program.
**ELEMENT 4: Regional assets**

**Industry engagement:** Decatur’s private sector is unique for a city its size, a legacy of its position in the heart of America’s farmland. The MSA and surrounding counties are top-five US producers for corn and/or soy, which led some of the world’s largest nutrition and agriculture players to initially locate here. One hundred years after its incorporation, ADM ($100+ billion in revenue) and other biomanufacturers such as Primient continue to choose Decatur to innovate—notably in the field of precision fermentation, in which single-celled organisms acting as “micro factories” convert plant feedstocks such as corn into high-value ingredients, materials, fuels, and more. The region’s strong industrial base—and proximity to top-flight research institutions such as the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, UIUC—has allowed Decatur to nurture a host of other manufactures such as TCCI, a leader in sustainable transportation solutions.

In addition to hiring commitments (see Element 6), our industry partners have invested heavily in complementary upskilling initiatives. After the Plan places workers in entry-level manufacturing positions, these assets will support participants’ career progression:

- **Precision fermentation upskilling:** ADM and Richland have developed a four-week training program (paid, with benefits) that provides the skills to become process technicians. Entry-level production specialists split time between onsite training and instruction at Richland. This program (78% Black) is also an equity intervention due to its focus on production roles, disproportionately held by Black workers: 24% of region’s machine operators are Black, compared to 13% of overall employment (Lightcast, 2022).

- **EV Workforce Academy:** Earlier this year, Governor JB Pritzker, TCCI, the City, and Richland broke ground on the EV Workforce Academy, which will prepare students to enter directly into high wage EV jobs with an associate degree, or by transferring to a university such as UIUC through 2+2 programs and articulations agreements. This facility, supported by $21 million in capital grants appropriated to the City of Decatur and Richland, provide students with an immersive learning experience, training both on-site and in an augmented reality environment led by Richland faculty with access to technology at TCCI. As mentioned in Element 2, EnRICH is a key talent pipeline for the EV Workforce Academy.

**Community buy-in:** Our members have a track record of developing the community’s understanding of local career options through successful engagement models and partnerships. For instance, Decatur and Macon County EDC’s three-year education campaign on job opportunities reduced the residents’ view of the region’s career options as “poor” by 30 p.p. EnRICH’s inaugural programming in 2017 had ~200 students. To date, 2,300 citizens have received career training. Plan members share a communication network, in which they cross-promote programs and services through their own established outreach channels.

**Regional coordination:** This Plan counts on two regional assets that will amplify its impact:

- **Illinois Fermentation and Agriculture Biomanufacturing Hub (iFAB):** Led by the UIUC Integrated Bioprocessing Research Laboratory, a consortium of 30 industry, academic, labor, and community organizations—including most of this Plan’s members—co-developed EDA Tech & Innovation Hub Designation and Strategy Grant applications. Those proposals, which seek funding to address a critical industry bottleneck among other priorities, are intentionally complementary to this Plan (see Table 3) and provide its governance and engagement model (Element 6.)

- **Mid-Illinois Collaborative:** This forum comprises the economic development organization from Peoria, Springfield, Decatur, Champaign, Tuscola, and Bloomington. This group, which meets quarterly, works in coordination to advance regional business attraction priorities, including on workforce issues that span county lines.

**Potential for EDA funding:** As shown in Table 3, new EDA funding will further unlock the Plan’s potential across four areas:
Table 3: Inventory of existing funding and potential for EDA funds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas</th>
<th>Key current and potential funding</th>
<th>Role of EDA funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continued growth of quality jobs (not in Plan scope)</td>
<td>Reimagining Energy and Vehicles (REV) Illinois Program &amp; Rebuild Illinois ($3M for local manufacturers) BioMADE bioindustrial pilot network (potential)</td>
<td>Address industry’s infrastructure bottlenecks (Tech Hubs, potential)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train and connect workers to entry-level manufacturing jobs</td>
<td>State of Illinois workforce grants ($2M annually) State and federal funding for DPS that supports career placement ($20,000)</td>
<td>Increase participation among underserved population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep workers in jobs through wraparounds and other supports</td>
<td>State and federal funding for DPS Extended Day ($9M ESSER Funding) City of Decatur funding ($60,000) to provide free transportation for Richland and DPS students</td>
<td>Expand scope and duration of wraparounds Maintain after-school programs Fund benefit cliff exposure programs (no public support)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upskill manufacturing workers (not in Plan scope)</td>
<td>State of Illinois capital grants for EV Workforce Academy ($21M) WIOA funding for incumbent worker and on-the-job training ($3M)</td>
<td>Expand scope of precision fermentation upskilling programs (Tech Hubs)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ELEMENT 5: Targeted geographic approach**

**Service area:** The service area comprises eleven census tracts spanning Decatur’s “Urban Core,” home to both the City’s historic downtown as well as the MSA’s most underserved neighborhoods. The Plan developed this service area through a two-step process: 1) Assess the areas with the most need by identifying the tracts with highest PAEG, 2) Expand the service area by adding contiguous tracts to those in (1) with similar educational and demographic profiles (to facilitate community outreach, see below) until the area encompassed 60% of Decatur’s Black population.

Specifically, the Plan determined Tract 31 (PAEG of 52%), Tract 6 (34%), and 5.01 (29%) to be those with the highest need, which are contiguous to another eight tracts with higher-than-average Black populations and lower-than-average educational attainment. As shown in Table 1, this service area qualifies as “persistently distressed,” with a PAEG of 17 p.p. among its ~7,850 prime-age residents and Black unemployment rate of 24% (has exceeded 20% for at least 15 years).

**Long-run, sustained benefits:** The Plan’s key success metric is closing the PAEG for this service area, which is how the Plan calculated a 1,350 job placement goal for Black unemployed residents. As the tracts outside the City generally have above-average employment, delivering on this goal would close the PAEG for the entire MSA and increase Black wages by 25-40% (see Element 3). The path to long-run, sustained benefits for the Urban Core will require:

- **Robust EnRICH recruitment:** The Plan emphasizes outreach and recruitment by investing in community liaisons, recruiters, and navigators (Element 2, Investment 1), engaging trusted partners such as faith leaders (Elements 3), and leveraging tested communication channels (Element 4).
- **High EnRICH completion:** The program already boasts a 90% completion rate, which the Plan will maintain by scaling this pathway without compromising support (Element 2, Investment 1).
- **Sustained employment outcomes:** Richland, UW, and DPS will coordinate to offer proactive and holistic wraparounds in at-risk workers (including HS seniors) for up to three years following EnRICH completion (Element 2, Investments 1-3).
- **Continued upskilling and wage growth:** While out of scope of this Plan, its design intentionally amplifies existing upskilling infrastructure spearheaded by community partners (Element 4).

**Anticipated jobs:** Across precision fermentation and EVs, the Plan anticipates placing entry-level workers in stable roles paying close to the region’s median wage ($26 per hour or $44,000 a year, Lightcast 2022). These roles provide benefits and a living wage ($23 per hour, per MIT). This
expectation is consistent with EnRICH’s median alumni earnings ($24 per hour). Example roles may include Packaging, Filling Machine Operators, Tenders ($34,000 regional median salary); and Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, Weighers ($42,000). Participants that continue through this Plan’s pathways with additional experience, credentialing, and/or associate degrees can expect an earning potential of $50,000-70,000, such as Chemical Equipment Operators and Tenders ($52,000), and First-Line Supervisors of Production Operating Workers ($62,000; Lightcast 2022).

**ELEMENT 6: Partnerships and potential commitments**

**Engagement model:** Plan partners developed this proposal within iFAB’s governance and meeting cadence. Every month, the iFAB plenary (30 members) convenes to discuss the state of the industry and local initiatives, such as federal funding opportunities. The concept for this Plan stems from this broader group. The consortium also has several working groups that drive narrower topics, such as private sector coordination and workforce. The second working group comprises the bulk of the Plan’s partners and is the forum that enabled co-development and writing of this proposal. Going forward, this Plan will continue to leverage iFAB’s collective resources, particularly in recruiting additional industry partners that grow and/or relocate through the Tech Hub initiative.

In its role as applicant and the employer of the RPC, Richland—which has managed over $115 million in grants, gifts, and capital construction projects over the past seven years—will assume the Plan’s central coordinating function. This role entails accountability for the deployment of Implementation funding across grant recipients (Decatur-Macon County EDC, UW, DPS) in alignment with the activities and objectives laid out in this Plan. In the case of extenuating circumstances or learnings that affect the Plan, the RPC will work across partners—in close coordination with the Workforce Ecosystem Officer—to retool the activities as needed.

**Alignment and Vision:** Collaboration in Decatur is unparalleled. While this Plan has been developed as part of iFAB’s vision for an inclusive Central Illinois manufacturing economy, it cites nearly 100 smaller partnerships as enablers. The respective governing boards of the Plan partners are aligned and share board members. Our collaboration has successfully landed economic developments such as two joint ventures between ADM and LG Chem, the Broadwing Clean Energy Complex, Innovafeed (the world’s largest insect protein plan), Tillamook County Creamery Association, and the founding of the TCCI + Richland + City of Decatur EV Workforce Academy.

**Hiring commitments:** Hiring commitments are preliminary yet on track for the Plan’s 1,350 target. Decatur’s largest employer, ADM, anticipates an annual hiring pace of 500 people at the HS level and 250 with associate degrees (~3,750 non-college jobs over five years). The company already hires from EnRICH and is eager to expand the partnership. Primient expects growth while still determining its hiring needs. TCCI forecasts job growth across all departments from management, engineering, and finance to production, transportation, material management, sales and marketing. Currently base salary and benefits for new jobs will be $31-$75 per hour.

Apart from firming up projections from these partners, by Phase II the Plan will have also gathered commitments EnRICH’s ~30 other hiring companies and DPS’ 60+ internship providers.

**State commitments:** The state has committed to:

- **EV:** Use $70 million from Rebuild IL capital plan to build EV charging stations, prioritizing underserved areas such as Decatur (creating jobs for EV Workforce Academy graduates), allow for up to 100% of income tax withholding for manufacturing investments in underserved areas.
- **Biomanufacturing:** Issue competitive grants for infrastructure improvements, construction of training facilities, and site remediation and preparation.
- **Childcare:** Create pilot program covering childcare and transportation costs, supportive services including job readiness supplies, and nonfinancial support including counseling and mentoring.

**Local commitments:** The City has committed, in partnership with DPS and Richland, to provide free student transportation and improve routes to include childcare locations, training centers, and manufacturing facilities. It has also partnered with WIOA and ProjectREAD to host workforce training and upskilling at Decatur Public Library.