



JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

Regional Growth and Opportunity Learning Network

Participating Regions

Cali-Baja Region

As part of its Cali-Baja mega-region economic growth strategy, the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation (EDC) plans to link and leverage assets in San Diego County, Imperial County, and Baja California to attract and create sustainable high-wage jobs. San Diego County brings an educated workforce, academic and applied research centers, and access to venture capital. Imperial County offers abundant, relatively inexpensive land, water rights, and capacity for alternative and renewable energy development and generation. To better align workforce development strategies with economic development priorities, and to better integrate workforce development systems across the region, the San Diego Regional EDC will establish a formal alliance with the San Diego Workforce Partnership and join the board of the San Diego Workforce Funders Collaborative. Both the Workforce Partnership and the Funders Collaborative will work with workforce development institutions in Imperial County to build their capacity to support the growing alternative and renewable energy industry. As a first step in that process, they plan to expand an existing healthcare training program for Southeast San Diego residents, establish a machinist training program for Imperial Valley residents, and designate someone to oversee these efforts and to serve as a liaison between the WIBs and the EDCs in the two counties.

CT-NY Region

Building on its WIRED initiative, the “One Coast One Future” regional economic growth initiative, and other collaborative efforts in the CT-NY region, the Talent for Growth Leadership Committee plans to develop a sustainable regional planning and action platform to promote economic growth, job creation and individual economic opportunity. The committee is a partnership of business, education, workforce, and economic development entities in Fairfield County in southwestern Connecticut and three counties in adjoining New York State. The focus is on strengthening the region’s capacity to respond to layoffs, retrain individuals, facilitate access to jobs in the health care and “green” industries, develop and implement strategies to keep more young professionals in the region, and strengthen linkages between workforce development initiatives and local colleges and universities. As part of that effort, the committee plans to experiment with “career coaches” in order to link and leverage resources across different systems to help move individuals into jobs in the health care and “green” industries.

Kansas City Region

The Mid-America Regional Council (a nonprofit association of city and county governments and the metropolitan planning organization for the nine-county, bi-state Greater Kansas City area) and its partners plan to develop a regional, sector-based information platform. This platform will support more strategic decision making and more effective collaboration among workforce development entities, and between them and economic development entities in the region. This collaboration will be achieved through a “workforce intelligence council” that will collect and analyze labor market data, and turn that data into information that can guide and align regional decisions. The data also will be used to guide the work of existing sector partnerships and industry organizations, to support the creation of new industry sector partnerships, and to establish a dashboard of indicators to measure the growth of key sectors and the overall competitiveness of the region. This effort builds on partnerships and relationships established through the OneKC WIRED initiative, and addresses a need those partners have identified as strategic to sustaining their ongoing collaboration.

Mid-Michigan Region

The Prima Civitas Foundation is building on its WIRED initiative, which brought together 13-plus counties of former silo “regions” including the Thumb, Great Lakes Bay, Greater Lansing, Genesee, Livingston, and Shiawassee, into an engaged “Mid-Michigan” region that functions collaboratively to reinvent Mid-Michigan’s economy. PCF is a community economic development nonprofit that operates and collaborates on programs that emphasize business retention and development, job growth, wealth creation, higher quality of life, educational opportunities, and strong community identity for Michigan and its residents. The foundation seeks to leverage its relationships with its collaborators and with other regional, state, and national leaders to strengthen, sustain, and expand these regional growth initiatives statewide. As part of this process, PCF is currently bringing leaders from regional partnerships and other key regional institutions onto their board and advisory committees.

OH-Penn Region

Based on a plan developed with the support of a DOL Regional Innovation Grant, the OH-Penn Competitiveness Council (a partnership between three workforce boards, local elected officials, chambers of commerce and economic development leaders in a five-county area straddling the Ohio-Pennsylvania state line near Youngstown, OH) plans to provide a sustained forum for planning and action to promote growth and innovation in the region. This business-led council will build sector-based networks of the region’s employers to identify and acquire the resources they need for growth, and it will guide and coordinate the region’s education and training providers to respond effectively and efficiently to the needs of employers. As a first step, the Council will oversee the expansion of successful work readiness preparation and assessment programs (WIN and WorkKeys) from two counties in Pennsylvania to three additional counties in Ohio, and the expansion of a successful employer outreach and support program (Business Resource Network) into three Ohio counties and two additional counties in Pennsylvania. Those efforts will support programs to train dislocated workers for high-wage jobs in healthcare and advanced manufacturing, in partnership with NEO Healthforce and the Advanced Manufacturing Initiative, established industry sector partnerships in Ohio, which are expanding into Pennsylvania. The Council is involved in The Tech Belt Initiative, a mega-region initiative (supported by chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, universities, and

hospital systems) that links Cleveland, Youngstown, and Pittsburgh—supporting technology-based development in alternative energy, biosciences, information technology, robotics, advanced manufacturing, and advanced materials, such as polymers and specialty steels, by linking business innovation, research and development, and worker retraining along the 134-mile corridor.

Lancaster (PA) Region

The Lancaster County Workforce Investment Board has developed a network of Industry Partnerships and “Centers of Excellence” to develop a local innovation system in Lancaster and the surrounding counties in south central Pennsylvania. It is doing so in partnership with LancasterProsper, an economic development collaborative consisting of the Lancaster Chamber, the Economic Development Company, the Lancaster County Planning Commission, Cooperative Extension, and the Lancaster County Conservation District. The PA CareerLink of Lancaster County, which provides workforce readiness and pre-employment training, is also an essential part of the network. Eight Industry Partnerships provide incumbent worker training and involve 400-500 employers in the plastics, metals, agriculture, construction, health care, printing, and food industries, as well as the industrial maintenance skill set. Five Centers of Excellence in long-term care, packaging, production agriculture, manufacturing, and renewable energy assure that the competitive advantages of key regional industries are fully leveraged and sustained by conducting local research and development, organizing technology transfer activities, promoting entrepreneurial development activities, conducting incumbent worker training, and maintaining a pipeline from school to work for essential careers in each industry. Also, the Board works with the Spanish-American Civic Association to expand employment opportunities for the Hispanic population in the region to ensure that everyone in the region shares the benefits of economic growth. As part of that effort, the partners plan to expand opportunities for the growing Hispanic population in the area to gain access to pre-employment training and skill training which leads to a credential along established career pathways and supported by existing industry partnerships, adding staff for ESL instruction, and better coordinating existing services available through PA CareerLink and the Spanish-American Civic Association.

West Alabama-East Mississippi Region

Building on “rural place building” partnership structures and relationships developed through the West Alabama-East Mississippi WIRED initiative, The Montgomery Institute (a bi-state, non-profit intermediary established to advance the people, places, programs and region of West Alabama and East Mississippi) plans to revamp its Commission on the Future (a business-led regional council that was the forerunner to the WIRED structure) to oversee efforts to enhance the economic vitality of the West Alabama-East Mississippi region. Those efforts include helping communities develop “grow your own” strategies as an alternative to plant recruitment, hosting quarterly meetings of mayors from 33 communities to focus on regional issues and strategies, hosting summits on regional competitiveness to help regional leaders understand opportunities and challenges, building the capacity of community colleges to serve as intermediaries between workforce development and economic development in the region, coaxing communities to utilize *Small Town Design* charrettes and workshops to build infrastructure and marketing systems, and building a competitive, regional, advanced manufacturing workforce. As part of that effort, TMI and partners will provide advanced manufacturing and basic skills training to dislocated workers and out-of-school youth at four community colleges in a 19-county region of eastern Mississippi. The participating colleges will replicate a model developed by one of the schools

that incorporates adult education and basic skills training into training and assessment for Career Readiness Certificates, provides training in the basic components of the Modern Multi-Skill Manufacturing (M3) credential, and uses “navigators” to help individuals access the services they need and find jobs.

West Michigan Region

Building on its WIRED initiative, the West Michigan Strategic Alliance (a partnership of business, government, and other institutions involved in education, and economic and workforce development in a nine-county region in West Michigan), is serving as a catalyst in support of the launch of an independent, business-led Talent 2025 council to drive a new wave of economic prosperity in the region by creating a world-class talent pool. The council will focus on transforming the region’s talent development systems—including employee retention/attraction; adult workforce development; higher education; K-12; early childhood development, and internal employer-developed training programs. It will also benchmark best practices from across the country and the world, and develop and publicize key performance indicators to measure progress in achieving world-class standards. As part of that effort, WMSA plans to take a successful program that provides foundational skills for occupational and postsecondary training to displaced workers currently offered in one county and initially replicate it in two additional counties, then expand it to the rest of the region, in collaboration with four community colleges. The program addresses a strategic need in the region, and responds to changes in state policy that require individuals to have these types of certificates in order to gain access to the job training and postsecondary learning opportunities that are part of Michigan’s mainstream No Worker Left Behind program. The region is also planning to seek designation by the state of Michigan as a Regional Skills Alliance for literacy, as part of a statewide initiative to promote economic growth through a more competitive workforce.