

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

FEBRUARY 2024

8 OF 9 ISSUE BRIEFS

INTRODUCTION

A well-educated, robust workforce is not only vital to fuel a region's strong recovery from economic shocks like the COVID-19 pandemic, but available talent can also ensure sustainable long-term growth.

Despite the significant increase of baby boomer retirements and overall decreasing labor force participation rates, labor economists expect the U.S. labor force to continue growing, albeit more slowly than in recent years. Many of these new workers will fill the 8.3 million new jobs that the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects will be available by 2031.¹ Not only will many of these jobs be new to our economy, but the skill requirements of existing jobs will also continue to evolve.

To best respond to employers' changing workforce needs – and the nation's need to create more high-quality and high-wage jobs for improved wages and economic growth – Economic Development Districts (EDDs) and states will need to not only align strategies, but also collaborate with local workforce investment boards funded by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), educational institutions, and employers.

Understanding an area's key industries, worker skills, and the available workforce will help cultivate an ecosystem of stakeholders prepared to confront an ever-changing economic and workforce landscape. States and EDDs should pursue strategic alignment in workforce development, building on the following lessons learned.

About the Issue Brief Series

Alignment of state and EDD planning activities leading to collaborative program execution is an important way to increase the chances of regional and state economic success. Awareness alone is not enough; alignment is the critical next step in working together to solve a region's economic challenges. Misalignment of strategies can result in divergent priorities and uncoordinated efforts that may undercut program success or lead to duplicative activities.

Creating a culture and process centered on alignment supports coordinated economic strategies and investment which can help facilitate improved economic outcomes, sustained economic growth, and enhanced equity throughout the nation's economy.

This issue brief is one of a series of nine reports that will help inform efforts to increase alignment, collaboration, and co-investment between states and local EDDs, as well as their public and private stakeholders. The first issue brief provides an overview of all issue briefs along with an explanation of how case studies were identified.

The Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness specializes in providing practical, data-driven solutions so decisionmakers can create more equitable opportunities for their states and regions. We achieve this by helping regions build capacity and leverage their strategic assets with an emphasis on talent, innovation, and networking.

LESSON HIGHLIGHTS

ALIGNING MANUFACTURING INITIATIVES

Alignment Lesson	Case Studies Demonstrating Alignment
<p>Lesson 8.1 - States and EDDs: Leverage successful training programs and models to convene stakeholders around strategic discussions on workforce development. Both states and EDDs can leverage successful workforce programs as a starting point to catalyze broader discussions about aligning workforce development activities. Understanding why a workforce program succeeds can present a “north star” toward which stakeholders at the local, regional, and state levels can direct their collaborative activities. In this context, states and EDDs can demonstrate strong leadership to organize diverse stakeholder networks of local workforce investment boards, educational institutions, and employers, among others.</p>	<p>The Clearwater Economic Development Association and the State of Idaho have found success utilizing the Talent Pipeline Management Model (TPM). Both EDD and state recognized the opportunity to leverage TPM as a value proposition on which to build collaborative relationships and catalyze strategic alignment in workforce development. This ultimately contributed to the strengthening of a regional workforce development ecosystem.</p>
<p>Lesson 8.2 - EDDs: Leverage partnerships to expand the scope and reach of workforce development efforts. Workforce-related challenges cannot be tackled by a single institution or organization. Connecting with all partners expands internal capacity for programming and offers important perspectives on the holistic challenges and opportunities that are present in a particular area. While aligning workforce strategies is important for initial goal setting and coordination, public and private partnerships can translate those plans into concrete actions.</p>	<p>The West Alabama Regional Commission used its local and state connections to direct statewide resources toward regional initiatives and strategies. The EDD’s ability to leverage state workforce resources enhanced its ability to generate impactful outcomes with limited internal capacity.</p>
<p>Lesson 8.3 - EDDs: Work with states to plan for long-term regional workforce needs. The end goal of regional workforce development is not just to bolster workforce quantity and quality in the short term but to increase the economic mobility of residents, leading to greater economic outcomes in the community. This long-term perspective is important to properly align talent and career pipelines with the needs of industries and training institutions as economic conditions evolve.</p>	<p>Recognizing that today’s K-12 students are tomorrow’s workers, the Greater Peoria Economic Development Council intentionally pursued a long-term workforce strategy that focuses on youth career exploration and education. To this end, it has partnered with the State of Illinois and other stakeholders to spearhead a career pathway program targeting the region’s middle and high school students.</p>

LESSON 8.1 - STATES AND EDDS:

LEVERAGE SUCCESSFUL TRAINING PROGRAMS AND MODELS TO CONVENE STAKEHOLDERS AROUND STRATEGIC DISCUSSIONS ON WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.

Comprehensive workforce pipeline development and preparation requires multiple approaches. While aligning education and training with industry needs and talent recruitment is the most often utilized approach across Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) plans, planners and policymakers have also shifted focus to new and incumbent worker training, work-based learning opportunities, and career pathway development.

The Clearwater Economic Development Association (CEDA), as illustrated below, focuses a large part of its workforce development efforts on its Talent Pipeline Management Model – a model designed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation which aims to close gaps between supply and demand by advancing employer leadership in high-performing industries. This model has strengthened CEDA’s relationships with regional stakeholders and fostered an ecosystem conducive to joint planning and collaborative alignment.

CASE STUDY

Building a “Coopetition-based” Workforce Ecosystem

Clearwater Economic Development Association’s Talent Pipeline Model

Clearwater Economic Development Association is one of five EDA-designated Economic Development Districts (EDDs) in the state of Idaho. CEDA utilizes several state, regional, and local partners to execute its CEDS plan, including entities such as the Idaho Rural Partnership, Nez Perce Tribe, and Lewis-Clark State College.² The CEDA CEDS includes 12 workforce development strategies to meet industry labor demand and shares the vision of the other EDDs in the state to promote continued prosperity.³

CEDA has particularly strong partnerships with the Idaho Workforce Development Council (IWDC) and the Idaho Department of Commerce. Originally, regional WIOA funding was a driver for the CEDA-state relationship and while funding is no longer available from that source, the relationship built from this funding flow laid the foundation for a strong partnership.

The State of Idaho formalized its alignment with CEDA on workforce development in 2018 when the state provided CEDA with a sub-award to organize and manage a part of Idaho’s Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) program, an initiative by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation to build scalable and sustainable talent supply chains.⁴

TPM remains one of the biggest drivers of collaboration between CEDA and the state. The funding provides the facilitators needed to train multiple cohorts in the healthcare, manufacturing, hospitality, and trucking industries. The key word for the success of the TPM project has been “coopetition.” Although industry leaders are in competition for both customers and talent, the TPM program emphasizes the need to cooperate to fill talent gaps. Given that talent gaps persist across regions, those in leadership positions must function as conveners to bolster regional economic prosperity and bring different voices to the table.

Once there is agreement on program direction and outcome, addressing the collective issues affecting the region’s talent pipeline is a much smoother process. As implementation partners, the state and CEDA are engaging in a systemic approach to employer leadership and engagement that addresses the skills gap and generates a return on investment for all.



“We have a lot of pipes that are being built... what I’m hoping is that TPM (talent pipeline management) connects all those into a pipeline because there are some disconnects right now.”

WAYNE HAMMON,
CEO, Idaho Associated Contractors



Commercial Driver Trainee

2. <https://clearwater-eda.org/resources/>

3. <https://clearwater-eda.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/CEDA-2020-25-CEDS.pdf>

4. https://clearwater-eda.org/news_article/idaho-wdc-awards-ceda-funds-to-address-workforce-issues/

CASE STUDY (Cont.)

Building a “Coopetition-based” Workforce Ecosystem

Clearwater Economic Development Association’s Talent Pipeline Model

While TPM funding fuels much of the collaboration between CEDA and IWDC, organizational relationships also bolster the partnership. For instance, the commercial truck driving training program came to fruition after CEDA staff had a conversation with the IWDC Director about the benefits the program would have for their largely rural region. As a result, CEDA established a truck driving school in southern Idaho in collaboration with the Lewis-Clark State Workforce Training and the Commercial Driver School which has served over three cohorts thus far and will soon be expanding into the region’s tribal areas. The Commercial Driver School is a private partner that not only provides certifications but also facilitates ongoing job placement assistance for graduates. The involvement of these stakeholders illustrates the importance of utilizing both public and private partners to help accomplish shared workforce development objectives.⁵

Going forward, the expansion of the TPM partnership will continue to formalize the relationship and alignment between CEDA and the state. Yet CEDA’s more informal relationships with stakeholders are also important for continued coordination and communication efforts. Through normalizing a “coopetition” mindset, regions can more effectively tackle joint issues and understand regional needs.

Having gained the region’s trust as convener through their years serving the community, CEDA’s collaboration with IWDC is a great example of how state-regional alignment can enhance regional workforce ecosystems.

5. Clearwater Economic Development Association: <https://clearwater-eda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2022-23-CE-DA-Annual-Review.pdf>

LESSON 8.2 - EDDS

LEVERAGE PARTNERSHIPS TO EXPAND THE SCOPE AND REACH OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS.

While CEDA has both the resources and the capacity to serve as a convener and key partner in their region, many EDDs are not in the position to take such a leading role. Nonetheless, there are still opportunities for less-resourced EDDs to support state and local workforce efforts.

In contrast to CEDA's strong partnership with the State of Idaho, the West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC) has positioned itself as a supporting partner for state and regional workforce developers. While WARC does not lead the charge due to its small size, it still plays an important niche role in supporting Alabama's workforce development ecosystem by promoting rural perspectives that help secure larger development initiatives throughout the region and state.

CASE STUDY

A Small EDD Supporting Big Initiatives

West Alabama Regional Commission

In Alabama, WARC's primary alignment with the state has been through the area's workforce council. Workforce councils are entities of the state and drive regional workforce issues while working specifically towards workforce development goals in the counties they serve. WARC's executive director is a member of the Region 3 Workforce Council, which facilitates WARC's ability to influence and shape regional and statewide workforce initiatives. In this capacity, WARC has been particularly active in facilitating discussions between community members and local employers to identify and address workforce challenges.

While WARC's small size limits participation in some workforce development-related activities, the commission is still able to provide subject matter expertise and insights about its communities to help shape larger decisions. For example, EDA awarded Stillman College a \$2.7 million grant to develop a cybersecurity and information technology training center in September 2022, matched with \$100,000 in state funds. This center expects to create new jobs in the region and serve as a training and development hub for Western Alabama. Stillman College cites WARC as a key partner in this grant and identified WARC's regional planning efforts as instrumental in the formation of this project.⁶ Some other examples of WARC's regional planning efforts include reports on community sewage systems, rural roads and bridges, and Regional Hazard Mitigation in West Alabama.

Over the past few years, WARC has also increased planning at the local level with assistance from the EDA-supported University Center at the University of Alabama Center for Economic Development, engaging multiple counties and communities in developing action plans focused on economic tools that enrich their regions. Many of these communities had never gone through a planning process before and as a result have gained new skills that will help further collaboration and dialogue at the local level.⁷ As a key intermediary, WARC's regional planning expertise is essential for aligning and elevating state, regional, and local priorities throughout the state.



“This transformative grant will help create 100 jobs in West Alabama, equip our students with critical skills, and position our community for future economic growth.”

TERRI SEWELL,
Congresswoman (AL-07)

6. Stillman College: <https://stillman.edu/2022/09/eda-grant-to-fund-geneva-renovation-cyber-training-center-at-stillman/>

7. West Alabama Regional Commission: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ab3d0eb5ffd20954c674922/t/632f27a9e043ad0f8ff91fba/1664034738942/2022-2026+W+AL+Economic+Development+Playbook.pdf>

LESSON 8.3 - EDDS

WORK WITH STATES TO PLAN FOR LONG-TERM REGIONAL WORKFORCE NEEDS.

WARC is actively bolstering the workforce pipeline in its area by understanding regional planning needs and paving the way for others in their region to do the same. Yet the end goal of these efforts is not just to bolster workforce numbers but to increase the economic mobility of residents, leading to greater economic outcomes in the community. This long-term perspective is important to properly align talent and career pipelines with the needs of industries and training institutions.

The formation of career pathways at earlier stages of education can help ensure that youth are positioned for success before or by the time they reach adulthood, leading to greater access to opportunities.⁸ The Greater Peoria Economic Development Council (GPEDC) in Illinois understands the importance of this early investment in career pathways and talent pipelines and the need to work with regional partners to make an impact.

8. American Institutes for Research: <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/WDEMP-Importance-of-Workforce-Development-Brief-April-2021.pdf>

CASE STUDY

Paving Pathways to Careers for the Future of the Workforce

Greater Peoria Economic Development Council

Over time, GPEDC has built strong partnerships with workforce development-related initiatives. In total, the council covers five program areas: Business Attraction, Business Assistance, Start-ups, Rural Economic Development, and Workforce Solutions. The Workforce Solutions Division aims to develop and retain a skilled workforce across the five counties in the region. In 2014, the Mayor of Peoria convened a group of education and workforce stakeholders to pilot strategies that connect local students to career opportunities. In just two years, this coalition of public and private partners mapped out sixteen career pathways in public schools, added twelve new early college credit courses, recruited hundreds of students to engage with critical industry courses, and connected more than 70 students to internships at over 20 local companies. GPEDC was an integral part of this coalition and is currently spearheading many of these Greater Peoria Pathways (GP Pathways) initiatives.⁹



Students at CareerSpark

With these partnerships established, GPEDC is now working to scale up the GP Pathways program and outline a regional career development framework for middle- through high-school students. To accomplish this, the council hosts a large-scale annual event called CareerSpark, which provides career exploration opportunities for eighth grade students.

CareerSpark is a state-funded program that engages volunteers, industry partners, and educators. During the academic year, eighth-grade students gather at the Civic Center to interact with local professionals, act out careers through hands-on activities, and lay the foundation for their high school studies. Once in high school, students explore local employers through an online interactive expo, create a career plan, and gain valuable skills to help land the right job for them. The program also showcases the region's most critical industry clusters and employers, including manufacturing, healthcare, innovation, and technology. By 2020, more than 5,000 middle and high school students had participated in the program.¹⁰

GPEDC is taking this talent development programming one step farther by utilizing a TPM cohort model like CEDA's in partnership with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). Through the TPM, GPEDC is launching a pilot program focused on sector partnership strategies for the healthcare, manufacturing, and transportation/distribution industries, ultimately enhancing the pipeline for careers that programs such as CareerSpark promote. For the council, DCEO functions as a navigator that brings companies together and provides "boots on the ground" to listen to industry needs within a region. The most recent program pilot – in manufacturing – formed two collaboratives with eleven manufacturers to participate in surveys and focus groups. GPEDC is looking to the regional workforce alliance to include more industry stakeholders in the future and continue to grow the economic mobility for residents in their community.¹¹

9. Greater Peoria Economic Development Council: <https://gppathways.org/about/>

10. Greater Peoria Economic Development Council: <https://greaterpeoriaedc.org/working-for-you-working-for-the-region/>

11. Greater Peoria Economic Development Council: <https://greaterpeoriaedc.org/addressing-workforce-shortages-in-health-care-manufacturing-and-distribution/>



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