

BRIEFING PAPER: WORKFORCE INNOVATION



OVERVIEW

Promoting the prospect of economic recovery creates the opportunity to address some longer term challenges facing the U.S. economy. **To build the next generation of prosperity, we need workforce innovation: the integration of education, workforce development and economic development.**

KEY POINT #1:

With investments over a period of 4 years, the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (DOLETA) created a network of 39 innovating regions across the country. DOLETA selected these regions in a national competition to promote workforce innovation under a program called Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED).

These regions provide a valuable laboratory -- a network of "hot spots" of workforce innovation -- to teach leaders throughout in the U.S. "what works".

As leaders of WIRED regions across the country, we come from varied backgrounds. Our message is a simple one: Move ahead with regional approaches to our new challenges.

KEY POINT #1: With investments over a period of 4 years, the U.S. Department of Labor created a network of 39 innovating regions across the country. These regions provide a valuable laboratory to teach other regions in the U.S. "what works".

KEY POINT #2: We can "link and leverage" many of the proven strategies and spread them across the country. The new approaches to workforce innovation are emerging in these regional "hot spots".

KEY POINT #3: Creating innovative, flexible education and training options requires collaboration across many organizations within regions. We have learned how federal policies can support workforce innovation to strengthen our national competitiveness.

These regions have learned how to connect

Building regional strategies takes new approaches to leadership: Command and control approaches do not work in today's fast-paced, global economy. We need regional leaders who can cross organizational and political boundaries, leaders who know how to inspire trust and get complex projects underway. The WIRED regions understand these dynamics and can teach them to others.

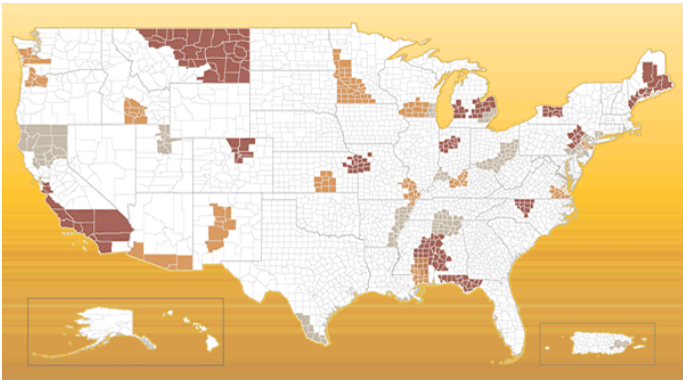
These regions have learned how to leverage

The federal government, standing alone, will never transform our workforce. Our economy is simply too big and complex. The federal government works best as a partner to support workforce innovation.

Workforce innovation requires aligning different parties to common goals. When alignment takes place, partners co-invest. Federal dollars leverage other investment. This task is not easy, but when it comes to workforce innovation, the WIRED regions represent the leading edge of new practices.

These regions have learned how to measure

Workforce innovation requires new approaches to accountability and metrics. WIRED regions understand accountability, and they have been



experimenting with new approaches to measurement that encourage experimentation and innovation.

These regions have learned to innovate

These regions are effective learning labs. The regional leaders can help guide the next generation of federal policy in workforce innovation. Workforce innovation is a complex challenge, and WIRED leaders are experienced guides.

KEY POINT #2

We have the opportunity to “link and leverage” many of the proven strategies taking place in these regions. The new approaches to workforce innovation are rapidly emerging in these “hot spot” regions.

Education and training represents the safest bet in economic development. The connection between education and earnings is strong and getting stronger. Yet, the U.S. economy's education performance is lagging. (One simple metric: Over 30% of all high school freshmen starting in September 2009 will likely drop out of school.)

As the Baby Boom generation begins to retire, skill shortages will become acute. Looking beyond the current recession, we need to transform the Nation's education, economic development and workforce development systems. The new approaches to workforce innovation are emerging in these regions.

KEY POINT #3

Creating innovative, flexible education and skill training options requires collaboration across many organizations within regions. We have learned how

federal policies can support collaborative approaches to workforce innovation.

Regions are the defining geography of global competition. No single county or organization can learn fast enough to go it alone. Within regions, we have the assets we need to compete globally -- if we align, link and leverage these assets.

The integration of education, workforce development and economic development is taking shape, as regions experience the power of collaboration. These regions are creating new education and workforce initiatives that tie directly into the needs of expanding companies, entrepreneurs and regional economies.

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Our regions can help Congress define the next generation of federal policies to support workforce innovation.

CONCLUSION: NEXT STEPS

The leadership of the WIRED regions stands ready to assist Congress and federal policy makers as they develop new approaches to accelerate workforce innovation. Leaders in these regions can:

1. Conduct briefings on new approaches to workforce innovation, including preparing the workforce for new opportunities in green jobs, clean technologies and renewable energy.
2. Illustrate the latest approaches to re-engaging displaced workers.
3. Demonstrate the emerging integration of K-12, workforce development, community colleges, and research universities.

Connect with leaders of these innovating regions at <http://iregions.net>