

Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development Selected Regions

Global competition is typically seen as a national challenge. In reality, the front lines of the battlefield are regional, where companies, workers, researchers, entrepreneurs and governments come together to create competitive advantage. That advantage stems from the ability to transform new ideas and new knowledge into advanced, high-quality products or services—in other words, to innovate. And those regions that are successful demonstrate the ability to network innovation assets—people, institutions, capital and infrastructure—to generate growth and prosperity in the region’s economy.

While many regions have made considerable progress in integrating talent and skills development into their larger economic strategies, there are regions that need additional technical and financial assistance. Similarly, economic regions no longer correspond to state, county, local workforce investment area or municipal boundaries.

As part of President Bush’s new Competitiveness Agenda, the Labor Department has competitively selected 13 economic regions from across the country to assist in the networking of their regional assets. Each region will receive approximately \$15 million in funding over a three period and will be provided on-going expertise from several of the leading organizations in the field of innovation. The goal in each of these regions is to expand employment and advancement opportunities for American workers and catalyze the creation of high-skill and high-wage jobs in regional economies.

The following regions have been selected for the Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) Initiative:

Coastal Maine – 11 counties including Augusta, Bangor, & Brunswick

Northeast Pennsylvania – 9 counties including Scranton, Allentown, and Reading

Upstate New York – 9 counties including Rochester and Finger Lakes region

Piedmont Triad North Carolina – 12 counties including Greensboro & Winston-Salem

Mid-Michigan – 13 counties including Lansing, Flint, and Saginaw

Western Michigan – 7 counties including Grand Rapids

Florida’s Great Northwest – 16 counties including Tallahassee and Pensacola

Western Alabama & Eastern Mississippi – 17 counties in Ala. including Tuscaloosa and Selma & 19 counties in Miss. including Meridian and Starkville

North Central Indiana – 14 counties including Lafayette

Greater Kansas City – 10 counties in Missouri & 8 counties in Kansas including Topeka

Denver Metro Region – 8 counties including Denver, Boulder, and Ft. Collins

Central & Eastern Montana – 32 counties covering mostly rural areas

California Innovation Corridor – 13 counties including Oakland, Los Angeles, and San Diego

