California Innovation Corridor

The California Space Authority (CSA) will lead a 13 county economic region comprising the "California Innovation Corridor" in a partnership effort to increase entrepreneurship, support manufacturing value chain and supplier competitiveness, and foster accelerated development of an innovation-oriented technical workforce.

The California Space Authority is uniquely positioned to lead the Innovation Corridor's region-wide transformational workforce strategy. CSA is a nonprofit organization serving the needs of industry, government, academic, economic development and workforce stakeholders. CSA has spent the last eight years building awareness and consensus in the Corridor around issues in close alignment with the WIRED objectives.

Economic analysis of the Innovation Corridor revealed three issues of great concern: 1) region-wide entrepreneurship activity is seriously under potential; 2) the region has suffered staggering manufacturing job losses; and 3) the region is experiencing a critical lack of availability of technical workers. According to the "Innovation-Entrepreneurship NEXUS" study, the areas in the Innovation Corridor are not even among the top 25 most entrepreneurial in the U.S. The highest ranking area in the Innovation Corridor is San Jose at 37th. Though the California Innovation Corridor has always been equated with entrepreneurship, this study indicates that the region is no longer capturing anywhere near the potential of its innovation infrastructure.

Additionally, the California Innovation Corridor has been significantly impacted by "flat world" globalization. While manufacturing is alive and large, it has lost 438,500 jobs between 1990 and 2004. That is a reduction of 26.4 percent of total manufacturing in the Innovation Corridor. There was also significant mass job loss at the end of the internet bubble. Almost overnight, 210,000 jobs were lost, nearly all of them in high tech sectors. Full recovery from the dot.com crash is not projected until 2010, according to the Silicon Valley Manufacturing Group.

The "Workforce Transformation" or WIRED initiative offers several benefits for focusing on building sustainable entrepreneurship and creation of the next generation of innovators and technicians, while addressing the complex issues surrounding current U. S. global competitiveness in the manufacturing supply chain.

The workforce transformation initiative will also create new synergies among the three major systems by including education, employment, and economic development partners in all of the strategic goals and most of the strategies, as well as all phases of the project. As an industry-led proposal, the insights and leadership from industry stakeholders help remind public education, employment, and economic development professionals that they are there to use resources to create positive change.

Continued on back

Participation from all systems ensures that the multi-perspective lessons learned will help transform the manner in which these systems work together and work with business and industry, in achieving sustainable, globally competitive economic growth in the Innovation Corridor. While the three strategic goals can be seen as addressing innovation and economic development, workforce training, and education, most of the strategies within each goal are cross-cutting.

The California Space Authority-led workforce transformation initiative includes the California Employment Development Department and several partnership stakeholder groups as members. Ten private sector partners will serve as advisory and focus group members designing, developing, validating programs and projects. Nine workforce investment boards will support and/or perform skill needs analysis, training gap assessments, training collaborations and linkage to dislocated workers. Eleven economic development partners will inventory regional innovation assets, identify candidate companies for projects and creation of an economic development model for innovation support. Thirteen education/academic partners will support an employer and university consortium, curriculum and program development, apprenticeships, and internships. Four federal lab and R&D centers will play a liaison role in linking innovation assets to entrepreneurship. Fifteen other business, financial, and workforce support partners bring expertise to the project.