



Workforce Boards of Metropolitan Chicago Executive Summary: Strategic Plan for Program Year 2010

Introduction

Eight years ago Workforce Boards in the metropolitan Chicago region recognized that their economy is regional – the workforce and employers are not restricted to working and hiring based on local workforce areas as defined by the Workforce Investment Act and State. The eight Workforce Boards formed a consortium - The Workforce Boards of Metropolitan Chicago (WBMC) - to address workforce and economic development issues on a regional basis. They recognized that each had responsibilities and priorities unique to their local areas and labor markets, but there were issues that they could be more effective and efficient in addressing as a region. They identified their primary role as convening and fostering collaboration with workforce development stakeholders, economic development entities, and the employer community. Their approach for engaging the employer community was through sector based strategies designed to identify and address workforce needs of employers. The importance of a skilled workforce was the foundation for engaging economic development. Stakeholder engagement was primarily enlisted through the identification, development and deployment of effective workforce development strategies that produce a skilled workforce for the region's high demand occupations.

Eight years later, the landscape has changed considerably. Regionalism is generally accepted as the most effective approach for workforce and economic development. As the economy has worsened, attention on and funding for workforce development activities has increased; organizations that previously were not interested in, involved with, or invested in workforce development have now emerged as "experts" or "leaders" regarding workforce development. And, the prospect of WIA reauthorization has provided an opportunity to discuss how legislative changes might build on successes as well as address shortcomings of the current workforce development system.

Priorities – Moving Forward

The WBMC maintains that there is no other entity - legislated or otherwise – that is better positioned to oversee the workforce system and drive economic growth through development of a skilled workforce than Workforce Boards. Further, the WBMC suggests that discussions related to WIA reauthorization would be more productive if they focused on how to expand the leadership role of Boards over the workforce system and increase resources for workforce development.

The WBMC's annual strategic planning provided the member Workforce Boards an opportunity to reexamine priorities and in doing so redefine its mission and goals. Discussions supported development of a strategic plan that builds on the strengths and experience of the consortium and recognizes the importance of their work to the region's development of a highly skilled workforce and economic vitality. The WBMC's revised mission statement, goals, and activities to be undertaken in the coming year follow.

WBMC Mission

As a consortium of Workforce Boards, the WBMC is a leader in driving workforce development and economic growth in the metropolitan Chicago region through development of a skilled workforce. Workforce Boards will accomplish this by articulating priority industries for the region, maximizing investments in workforce development, and developing a talent pool that meets the needs of the region's employers.

Goal: Provide leadership to regional workforce development activities and serve as an advocate for the workforce system.

- Continue to provide leadership on workforce development issues in the Chicago Metro region through regional initiatives and partnerships.
- Comment on and respond to reports and publications on workforce development strategies.
- Update WBMC materials describing “who we are” and “why we are important”; better articulate the role of local workforce boards.
- Share information on regional policy and initiatives with key groups (DCEO, USDOL, IWP)
- Continue to be a proactive participant in regional workforce development initiatives spearheaded by other organizations.

Goal: Convene and foster collaboration between workforce system stakeholders, the education system, economic development organizations, and employers .

- Map organizations (e.g., governmental, industry, policy, etc.) within the region that interface with or are part of the region's workforce and economic development system and determine which the WBMC should outreach for the purpose of developing partnerships.
- Identify opportunities for leveraging with new organizations.
- Convene regional stakeholders for the purpose of strategizing on how to address regional workforce development challenges, opportunity for collaboration, and initiatives to be undertaken.
- Provide ongoing support for initiatives that the WBMC has previously supported.

Goal: Implement an industry cluster strategy to drive future workforce and regional economic development and development of employer partnerships.

- Conduct study that includes mapping the region's industries, identifying key regional industries that provide opportunity for economic growth, and identifying academic

resources and local, state and federal funds that can contribute to development of key clusters.

- Identify partners and funding to support regional industry cluster study.
- In partnership with employers, identify workforce competencies required for the region's primary industry clusters; ensure that the region's employment and training system supports development of a skilled labor pool.

Goal: Increase workforce intelligence by identifying, collecting, and disseminating regional, state, and national data and information.

- Develop process to identify, gather, and synthesize national and regional information.
- Develop regional American Recovery and Reinvestment Act performance report (e.g., adults and dislocated workers).
- In partnership with MEGA, continue to develop and issue economic indicator reports.
- In partnership with regional stakeholders, identify funding available for workforce development and metrics to measure performance/outcomes; identify process for collecting and sharing data.