



December 8, 2009

Dear Colleague:

The accompanying report entitled *Talent Drives Prosperity, A Talent Development System for the Metro Denver Region* presents an exciting opportunity for our region to consider in the alignment of programs to support regional economic growth. It was commissioned by the Metro Denver Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) Initiative to look closely at an important transition facing the region.

The recommendations offered in this report anticipate new directions available to regional business, workforce and education leaders as they look ahead to a “post-WIRED” future. The Metro Denver WIRED Initiative began in 2006 with \$15 million in funding from the U.S. Department of Labor. Over the past four years, the Initiative has focused on building regional partnerships among leaders in industry, the workforce system, education, and economic development to create a talent-development infrastructure to support some of the most important industries in our region: aerospace, bioscience, energy, and information technology-software.

The completion of the WIRED Initiative in 2010 presents an opportunity to transition to the development of a regionally funded talent development system for metro Denver that builds upon the lessons learned from WIRED. The purpose of this report is to recommend strategies for building upon existing workforce development, education and economic development programs to create an enhanced “next generation” talent development system serving the region.

The report, produced by Thomas P. Miller and Associates, is organized around five major sections. The first presents an overview of key “drivers” of the study, including regionalism and cluster-based strategies for talent development. The next section presents the findings and opportunities discovered after a review of existing talent development programs within the Metro Denver Region and a similar review of regional models from across the United States. The implications of these research findings and opportunities are described in the next section, followed by a compelling set of recommendations and finally, a call for regional action.

Thank you for your interest in the vital opportunity facing the Metro Denver Region. Talent drives prosperity and now is the time to competitively differentiate our region as a leader in talent development.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "André N. Pettigrew". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

André N. Pettigrew  
Chair, Metro Denver WIRED Leadership Council  
Executive Director, Denver Office of Economic Development



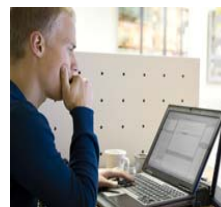
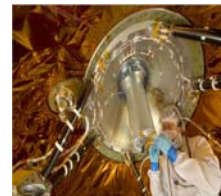
# Talent Drives Prosperity: *Transitioning to a Talent Development System for the Metro Denver Region*



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*Disclaimer - This workforce solution was funded by a grant awarded under Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) as implemented by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration. The solution was created by the grantee and does not necessarily reflect the official position of the U.S. Department of Labor. The Department of Labor makes no guarantees, warranties, or assurances of any kind, express or implied, with respect to such information, including any information on linked sites and including, but not limited to, accuracy of the information or its completeness, timeliness, usefulness, adequacy, continued availability, or ownership. This solution is copyrighted by the institution that created it. Internal use by an organization and/or personal use by an individual for non-commercial purposes is permissible. All other uses require the prior authorization of the copyright owner.*

## Executive Summary

The Metro Denver WIRED (Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development) Initiative started in 2006 with a \$15 million investment by the U.S. Department of Labor. During the past three years, the funds, time, and energy spent resulted in significant learning and network and capacity building for the coordination of regional talent development. With funding completed in 2010, a transition is occurring from dependence on federal investment to the independence of a regional talent development system built with a set of committed partners whose beliefs in regionalism, collaboration, and employer-centric solutions were reinforced by the WIRED experience.

The need for continuation of a strong management function, supported by regional resources holding the talent development system together, emerged during this project. The term “convener core” describes this function and emphasizes that it does not need to be a new organization; rather, the recommendation is the creation of a management agreement among several key players and a broader compact agreement with a broader partner coalition that establishes agreement on principles and practices in moving forward. The importance of an open door for the broader partnership needed to continue to draw new players into the talent development system. Three roles played by the convener core:

- *Convening and Promoting* – the ability to convene the right set of participants, particularly employers, and promote goals and progress visibly with the public;
- *Fund Development* – the primary focal point for the ongoing acquisition of resources to support talent development system; and
- *System Building* – the knowledge and partnerships to build an infrastructure among multiple, strong organizations that exist in the region.

As there is movement from the federally funded Metro Denver WIRED Initiative to a regionally funded Talent Development System, the recommendation is that the platform consists of three organizations that are critical for orchestrating these investments:

- *Business Investment* – led by the Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation to provide continuity in convening industry cluster-based employer panels and in ensuring joint planning with the region’s economic development leadership;
- *Community Investment* – led by SkillBuild to leverage the emerging support by regional foundations and other regional funding sources, building on the startup funding that is already in place; and
- *Existing Workforce Investment Alignment* – led by the Workforce Board of Metro Denver to continue to coordinate the deployment of existing federal and state workforce development funds available to the region, and to serve as a primary connection point to the state for statewide workforce development initiatives.

The WIRED experience has served to strengthen capacity and resolve, preparing the Metro Denver region to accelerate out of the recession stronger than other regions and serving as a model for other regions to use as a benchmark standard.

## Introduction

The Metro Denver WIRED (Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development) Initiative began in 2006 with \$15 million in funding from the U.S. Department of Labor. Over the past four years, the Initiative has focused on linking industry, the workforce system, education, and economic development leaders in Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, Jefferson, Larimer, and Weld counties to build partnerships to support talent development in four high skill, high demand regional industry clusters: aerospace, bioscience, energy, and information technology-software. The primary purpose of the grant was to address the “Colorado Paradox”- building a home-grown skilled workforce rather than relying on the infusion of a high-skilled, educated workforce relocating into the region to fill in-demand positions.

The WIRED collaboration among employers, educators, economic developers, and the workforce system has led to the creation of new programs, partnerships, and relationships supporting the development of homegrown talent necessary to promote economic growth in the nine-county Metro Denver region. From 2006-2009, the Initiative has funded 31 programs focused on educating, training, and placing individuals in jobs within the four industry clusters. Current program projections anticipate:

- Preparing more than 500 educators for instruction related to WIRED industries or STEM skills;
- Impacting 19,000 students as a result of educator training;
- Placing 800 individuals in jobs within WIRED target industries; more as the economy recovers;
- Developing more than 500 education, career guidance, and work-based programs;
- Providing industry training for more than 2,300 students and workers; and
- Delivering education or industry-certified credentials to more than 1,500 participants.

The purpose of this report is to develop transitional strategies for a permanent talent development system for the Metro Denver region, building upon WIRED Initiative successes and learning. This effort is a direct result of a recommendation from the 2010 Solutions Team, a group of regional partners charged with the task of defining transitional options for the WIRED Initiative. The process to construct recommendations for transition to a regional talent development system for Metro Denver consisted of a review of the WIRED Initiative and other existing talent development models within the Metro Denver region juxtaposed with a review of external regional models from across the United States. Proposed for the region’s consideration are key recommendations that emerged from this analysis.

### Key Terms

**WIRED** - U.S. Department of Labor initiative launched in February 2006 focused on integrating regional workforce development and economic development efforts to demonstrate the critical role talent development plays in economic transformation; 39 regions funded through three generations of grants - Metro Denver was a First Generation grantee awarded \$15 million in February 2006.

**Colorado Paradox** - a thriving, diversified regional economy with a highly educated workforce coupled with a leaky regional talent pipeline plagued by low graduation rates and lack of home-grown skilled workers to compete for high-skilled, high-wage jobs.

**Talent Development** - meeting the workforce needs of industry by training and educating individuals in high demand skills; the ability of individuals to constantly update their skills to provide employers with real-time access to needed talent.

**Workforce System** - federally funded network of federal, state, and local offices that exists to help businesses find qualified workers to meet their current and future workforce needs.

# Drivers of the Study

## Regionalism

**“The most powerful changes in America today are taking place NOT in cities or states, but in metropolitan regions. As I’ve crossed the country these past 18 months raising money for our convention, I am most frequently asked how Denver has achieved such success on a regional basis.”**

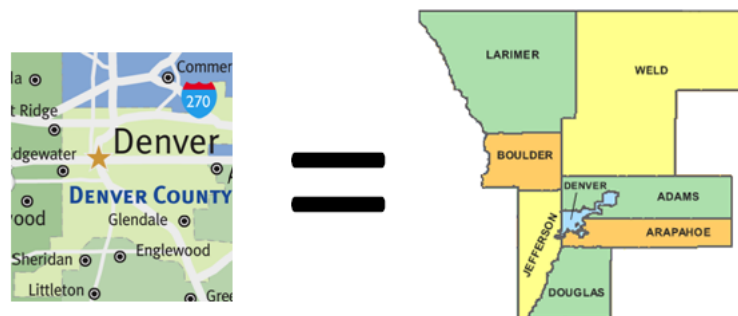
*Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper, 2008 State of the City Address*

The last 20 years have confirmed an economic transition from a national, industrial economy to a global, innovation-based economy. Traditional state, county, and city lines no longer define an economy. Regional economies have emerged, based on industry sectors and the physical infrastructure, innovation assets, and talent development systems in place to support them. The United States is now an aggregate of regional economies. As noted by a Brookings Institution article in March 2009, “America can no longer pretend that it is a single economy, nor can it imagine that it is a nation of independent, small towns, punctuated by large but isolated urban centers. It must embrace its metropolitan future—and all the wrenching change that entails.”<sup>1</sup>

Because the economy of a state or nation is the aggregate of its regional economies, increasingly federal, state, and local governments are organizing policy to encourage regional and multistate activities to support competitive primary economies based around industry sectors. These efforts summarize as:

- Moving from multiple organizations at various geographies, focused on specific areas to coordinated regional level strategies for promoting prosperity.
- Innovative responses to local challenges made possible by removing barriers and promoting public-private-non-profit collaboration vs. duplicative programs at local, regional, and state levels.

The Metro Denver region has been at the forefront of this movement. Groups such as the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce, the Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation, the Metro Mayor’s Caucus, and the Workforce Board of Metro Denver are representative of the region’s embrace of the concept of regionalism - working collaboratively to promote economic growth. The concept of a regional talent development system channels these successes in order to define a system that integrates existing assets to maximize their impact on regional growth and development.



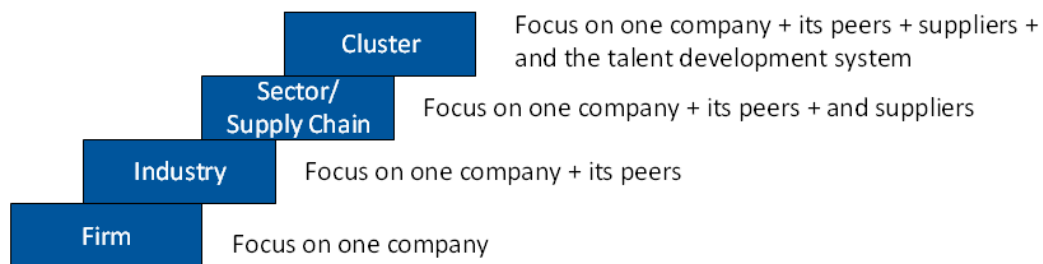
<sup>1</sup> Bruce Katz, Mark Muro, and Jennifer Bradley (Brookings Institution), “Miracle Mets: How U.S. Metros Propel America’s Economy and Might Drive Its Recovery,” *Democracy: A Journal of Ideas* (Spring 2009): p. 33.

## Cluster-based Strategies

**“A cluster is a geographically proximate group of interconnected companies and associated institutions in a particular field.**

*Michael Porter*

Cluster-based strategies developed on the notion that multiple industry sectors are important to a regional economy and form the basis of effective economic development and workforce development policy. Devoting resources to one company at a time is not efficient or effective; instead, working in collaboration with common industry sector leadership helps entire clusters become more competitive. Cluster is an overarching definition that includes not only an industry, but also all of the related and supporting entities of the talent development system. The diagram below, adapted from the Council on Competitiveness, illustrates this point.



The cluster identifies its collective needs- workforce training, research support and facilities, etc., and the talent development system responds, working in collaboration with industry leaders to design programs and solutions. These targeted partnerships fuel innovation and economic growth. Activities included, but are not limited to: higher education working in partnership with multiple companies on sector-based research projects; cluster-based certificate programs offered by the community college system providing skills applicable to multiple companies within a cluster; students learning about occupations within a sector and utilizing career pathways to obtain the education and training to meet workforce needs.

The Metro Denver WIRED Initiative embraced regional, cluster-based strategies identifying four industries: aerospace, bioscience, energy, and information technology/software. Regional Industry Coordinators worked with leadership in each targeted cluster and held cluster panels to gather input and feedback from regional employers. New relationships and formal partnerships emerged and innovative projects received funded. Examples include:

- **AEROSPACE -JumpStart into Aerospace (JSA)- Community College of Denver**  
*The program builds on a NASA-funded ACES (Access to Collaborative Education in the Sciences) project, a “2 plus 2” degree program (AAS and BS) in Aerospace Systems Engineering Technology, targeted to underserved minorities and women who have typically been discouraged or prevented from pursuing higher education. JSA is strengthening the pipeline of students engaging in the ACES program by: expanding North High School’s aerospace program into the college arena, by offering summer bridge programs; strengthening delivery of instruction through professional development, curriculum alignment, the development of contextualized curriculum and the expansion of accelerated learning formats; enhancing the capacity of educational providers to prepare students for aerospace jobs by installing state-of-the-art technology at Metropolitan State College of Denver’s aerospace facilities; and, providing real-life applications of learning through partnerships with aerospace employers.*

**Partners:** MESA, Hughes-Raytheon retirement group, Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, Shades of Blue, United Launch Alliance, NCAR/UCAR, North High School, Metropolitan State College of Denver, Open World Learning, The Learning Source, Northrop Grumman, Arapahoe Douglas Works, Denver Workforce/OED, Project Management Institute, American Society for Quality, Sundyne Corporation, Center for Space Entrepreneurship, IAAS, Career Education Center, Challenger Learning Center, SpaceTec, Colorado Space Grant Consortium, West High School, Lincoln High School, Jefferson High School, DSST, Goodwill, Suave magazine, Hispanic Business Magazine, East High School, Colorado School of Mines, Rite of Passage Charter School, AGI, League for Innovation, Trio, Career Opportunity Center, Smokey Hill High School, AIAA, and American High School.

**Accomplishments:** 615 students impacted by curriculum development and alignment

- **BIOSCIENCE - A Replicable Model for Higher Education to Engage and Prepare High School Faculty and Staff in Emerging Technologies- Community College of Aurora**  
 This project's goal is to train high school teachers in bioscience instruction using traveling science equipment kits and providing bioscience career information to teachers, students and counselors. The project is designed so that a limited number of state-of-the-art science kits are easily and equitably shared by schools in several school districts.  
**Partners:** Colorado BioScience Association, Labs at Bonfils, Allosource, Reglera, Kelly Scientific, Sciona, Inc., Lahocla, Inc., Insmid, Gambro, Encision, LANX, Microphage, Mountainside Medical, Pharmajet, Rocky Mountain Labs, Tissue Genetics, IHCtech, Clinimmune, University of Colorado at Denver, University of Colorado Health Sciences Center.  
**Accomplishments:** 59 educators trained; 7,593 students trained
- **ENERGY - Building and Sustaining a Pipeline of Process and Maintenance Technicians- Red Rocks Community College**  
 Students in local high schools receive "real world" industry-based classroom work in both the traditional and renewable energy areas while addressing established science and math learning objectives. Students also receive college credit toward the Process Technology program taught at Red Rocks Community College.  
**Partners:** Jefferson County Schools, Denver Public Schools, Colorado E-Star, Colorado Energy Science Center, Jefferson County Workforce Center, Department of Veterans Affairs, Loveland High School, Goodwill Industries, Thornton High School, Colorado School of Mines, CAEL, Colorado Center for Manufacturing and Technology, Adams County Economic Council, Colorado Department of Labor, Rockies Alliance for Process Technology, American Petroleum Institute, Suncor Energy USA, MillerCoors Brewing Company, Xcel Energy, Venoco and Ball Corporation.  
**Accomplishments:** 516 youth trained; 148 adults trained; 35 adults placed in industry employment
- **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY- Business and IT Management/Bilingual Jumpstart Initiative- Regis University**  
 Regis University is providing a novel "hybrid" degree program in business and IT management with a focus on underrepresented students, and offering the degree and services in a bilingual format. One of the major findings of WIRED's 2007 business survey was a need for individuals who had both technical and business skills.  
**Partners:** Community College of Aurora, Front Range Community College, Red Rocks Community College, Aurora Community College, Regis Learning Solutions, Alva Learning Systems, IT Implementers, Arapahoe Douglas Works, Circle of Latina Leadership, Denver Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute, Hispanic Heritage Foundation, American Association of Hispanics in Higher Ed, Hispanic Heritage Foundation's LOFT (Latinos on Fast Track), Open World Learning, and Aurora Chamber of Commerce.  
**Accomplishments:** 101 students enrolled

At the state level, industry associations, including CSIA, Colorado's technology association, the Colorado Energy Coalition, the Colorado Space Coalition, and the Colorado BioScience Association have healthy memberships. State government supports initiatives such as the SECTRS (Strategies to Enhance Colorado's Talent through Regional Solutions) Initiative and the recently released Governor's Job Cabinet Report that exemplify a commitment to sector-based strategies. Acknowledging these activities, the proposed talent development system advocates a cluster-based approach for the region.

## Sustainability

The 2010 Team recommended that to best serve the region's needs, WIRED's successor needs to be a transformational, industry-driven talent development model that promotes:

- *Program and policy connections among industry, economic development, education, and the workforce system;*
- *A dynamic framework for post-secondary and career-readiness skills development to meet local industry needs within a globally competitive environment;*
- *Optimal talent development programs for incumbent workers and the under-employed, with an emphasis on in-demand and transferable skills; and*
- *A dynamic P-20 education system that produces a robust supply of STEM- (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) competent high school and post-secondary graduates.*

*2010 Solutions Team, Metro Denver WIRED Initiative*

The impetus for this report was the work of the 2010 Solutions Team and its recommendation for a talent development system to sustain and expand the partnerships established over the past four years through the WIRED Initiative. Competencies of a successful system and a framework for action emerge through analysis in this study. However, the guidance offered will only be effective through the implementation of difficult decisions involving organizational roles, staffing arrangements, and funding structures.

A networked talent development system would enhance current processes of the established service providers supplementing those business processes by providing access to a wider field of innovative ideas and supplement the more internally focused processes now in place. The core idea is to enable collaboration among entrepreneurs, companies, industry associations, job seekers, economic developers, educators, and the workforce system and to accelerate the creation of innovative solutions.

The talent development system requires leadership, administrative, and governance functions. Most fundamentally, the leadership nurtures and refreshes the network itself, establishing and maintaining a brand identity for the talent development system. The value of the open-innovation talent development system depends on the number and quality of its participants. The principal challenge will be to provide a high quality of services to our employers. Specialized support organizations participating in the talent development system can perform these services, thus taking advantage of unique competencies and investments already in place.

## Talent Development in a Volatile Economic Environment

When the term “talent development” is used, it is something decidedly different in the way that economic development, education, and workforce development players in the region go about their daily work. The WIRED Initiative served to build the foundation of relationships for the new structure and, with the assistance of this report and the associated transition work of the WIRED Leadership Council and Executive Committee to create a blueprint for a transformational connectivity structure built on that foundation. Much as a house will not emerge as a habitable structure without a general contractor guiding the connections of heating, plumbing, and electrical systems, the structure will not be fully habitable by our employers and citizens without the general contractor function that connects the economic development, workforce development, and education functions in ways that create new efficiencies in the structure. The recommendations of this report provide guidance in the selection of the general contractor function.

The use of the term “talent pipeline” or “leaky pipeline,” used to describe the regional condition under the Colorado Paradox, is too limiting and too linear in the current economic environment. A more useful idea in moving forward with a transformed structure is the construct of “talent supply chain management” that draws from some of the methodology and technology of supply chain management in the private sector. Such a rubric recognizes the need for integration of multiple players, just-in-time delivery, cost efficiencies, and quality controls as we connect skilled individuals with employers in the region. As with the house-building analogy, this kind of thinking requires the connectedness of the major partners in the system and agreement on the quantity and quality of the products of the system.

There is an increased sense of urgency brought about by economic volatility and the need to have a system that adjusts and adapts quickly to new conditions. For example, the emergence of green economy solutions and the creative utilization of stimulus funds to accelerate the production of new jobs and new skills in the region promote the urgency to seize opportunities.

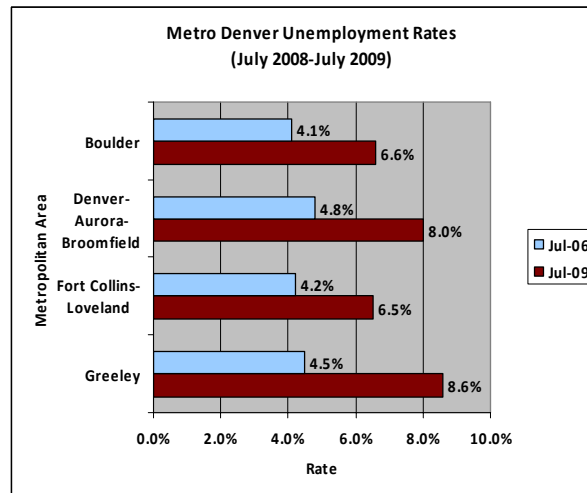
As the expected economic recovery phase begins, some regions of the nation will be better prepared to move forward quickly than others. The talent development system serves as a major differentiator for the Metro Denver region from other regions that are slower to react. While many regions are waiting for the economic rumblings to subside so they can go “back to normal,” the Metro Denver region recognizes that rumblings are part of an economic seismic shift that will continue for decades. Success will depend on building the house that can survive, remain fully functioning, and prosper under that kind of ongoing economic stress and volatility.

Various groupings form a system in the Metro Denver region focused on different facets of talent development. Viewed separately, groupings consist of competing entities, each functioning with specific initiatives and outcomes. When organized in a simplified system with one focus - meeting the talent needs of employers - the realization of the connectivity of each individual entity, each grouping emerges.

A regional talent development system can function effectively by understanding and capitalizing on the dependency and interdependence of its various entities. Action cannot stifle in a cumbersome bureaucracy. Rather, the ability for partners to act with agility, nimbly, and responsibly in a collaborative manner positions the regional economy to promote innovation, regional competitiveness, and economic growth.



When the WIRED initiative launched in 2006, the economy was growing and new job creation was occurring. Company expansions and new residential housing constructions were commonplace in the Metro Denver region. The financial industry collapse in 2008, fueled by the sub-prime mortgage crisis, devastated the economy. As an example, the City and County of Denver 2007 Budget projected a 3.9 percent growth in sales tax revenues and 5.4 percent growth in total revenues. In the 2010 Budget, sales tax revenues projections noted a decline of 7.8 percent (\$33.8 million) and total revenues a decline of 5.6 percent (\$48 million). Decreased retail activity and investment led to the downsizing and failure of many businesses leading to layoffs of thousands throughout the region. As an example, the unemployment rate in the Greeley Metropolitan Area in July 2006 stood at 4.5 percent. In July 2009, the rate nearly doubled to 8.6 percent. In the Denver-Aurora-Broomfield Metropolitan Area, the unemployment rate in July 2009 stood at 8.0 percent in comparison to July 2006, when the rate was 4.8 percent.



The volatile economic situation requires a reevaluation of the current system, building on its strengths but also recognizing its shortcomings, and demonstrating the value of a collaborative talent development system in navigating through difficult times and accelerating into recovery faster than other regions of the country. It is necessary to reevaluate current target clusters and ensure the region is on the right path to recovery.

# Methodology

The process for gathering research, analyzing collected information, and developing findings occurred in multiple phases.

## I. Literature Review/Listening Phase

A literature review of existing plans and reports related to regional economic development and workforce development provided a foundation for the project (*see Appendix A for list of reviewed resources*). Onsite and phone interviews with partners in WIRED, key talent development leaders, and employers in the Metro Denver region provided information, insights, and perceptions about WIRED activities and defining elements of a successful, sustainable regional talent development model. A list of guiding questions assisted in synthesizing common themes into findings. A data collection tool used resulted in an internal scan - a compilation of profiles of regional talent development organizations and initiatives.

An external scan of national promising practices in talent development identified functioning models from around the United States, building upon common themes that emerged from the interviews. A standardized tool for development of profiles guided the creation of summarizations of functionality of the identified talent development models.

## II. Analysis Phase

The focus of attention moved to analysis of the findings from the internal scan and insights gleaned from external talent development models. A series of working models for a regional talent development entity transferred findings into potential operating structures. A facilitated regional strategic session brought WIRED partners and sector-based employers together to discuss potential models, identify key focal points around talent development and key elements for continued engagement. Key themes emerged from this phase that led to the bedrock for building the recommendations for action.

## III. Recommendations Phase

A series of strategic sessions with the WIRED Executive Committee refined recommended components of the talent development platform. Actions needed to build the platform were then developed and presented via this report.

## Findings and Opportunities

An analysis of the information gathered during the Listening Phase from the internal and external scan led to the emergence of common findings that grouped together into key themes.

### Evolution of Economic Development

- Partnerships between economic development leaders and workforce development leaders in the region create a jointly owned vision for the Metro Denver region driven by leadership in skills development of residents and ongoing skills recruitment from outside the region;
- The term “workforce” defines a broad range of talent, not just basic skills, remedial education, and entry-level jobs – while these are still essential development issues, they must coexist with ongoing attention paid to higher skills and the escalator that allows constant advancement of incumbent workers in the marketplace;
- The engagement of employers on a cluster-by-cluster basis facilitates their discussions with each other and results in clearer definition of needs from the education and training communities;
- Education and training communities are working to meet employer needs through the development of specific programs of study. This needs to be built upon so that employers develop trust in the “system,” not just satisfaction with one “program;”
- New networks of communications exist among the region’s leaders in education, economic development, and workforce development;
- A new connectivity for program responsiveness beyond political jurisdictions is emerging; and
- There is a growing trust among the partners based on better familiarity and recognition of professional competency in other systems.

### Leadership & Ownership of Talent Development

- There is a need to draw education (K-12 and post-secondary) into the partnership in a stronger manner by leveraging its existing platforms for networking and leadership;
- A continued focus on the Metro Denver region can be embraced by the state as a model for other regions – this requires strong working relationships with the state on models for both regional planning and sector-based employer strategies;
- Stimulus funding in various forms should help in bridging to a transitional platform in the near term; however, caution is needed to not lose the overall vision of the talent development system by subjecting broader goals to the narrower, specific requirement of some of the funding streams; and
- Engaging local elected officials in the talent development system is a mechanism to serve as a point of accountability for progress reporting.

### Employer Engagement

- Regional leaders are considering how to better engage employers and their relevant industry associations as a system, not just as individual programs of the system, but exploring how to

develop a single point of contact that can bring the full range of resources to an employer, rather than representatives from multiple organizations knocking on the employer's door;

- Employers will remain engaged only if the system can prove it can meet employers' needs for recruiting more educated and prepared knowledge workers, not just a system that supplies entry-level workers. To serve employers, there needs to be a standardization of practices;
- Employer engagement is needed to bring relevance to teachers, students, parents, and the classroom for the payoff of introducing a more difficult but more relevant curriculum, particularly in STEM skills;
- Educators and workforce development leaders need assurances from employers that programs and curricula developed with employer input will result in employer hiring of students who possess those skills. Some educators are struggling to gain employer commitments for guaranteed interviews and employments in the current economic downturn;
- Sustainable cluster-based platforms for business engagement and leadership need to be very clear about roles and expectations, particularly for the employer members; business members, for example, were very engaged in panels in the early stages of the WIRED Initiative but participation dropped off after the initial planning phase, leaving some business members unclear about what was needed from them beyond that point; and
- Incentives can help employers advance existing workers to high-tech jobs – most of current incentives gear toward the entry-level pipeline or toward short-term training for laid-off workers.

### Strategies for Communication

- Consistent communication is essential for success. E-newsletters, face-to-face meetings, regional problem-solving forums, networking opportunities are ways to keep talent development partners continually connected;
- Efficiency in sharing information is critical for keeping momentum – a communication plan is important to the sustainability of any model;
- It is important to clearly communicate the roles of the workforce and education systems, both the similarities and the differences; for example, the workforce system is perceived by educators as being shortest-route, quick fix training paths to employment, not about academic rigor – finding the right connect points for the two goals to coexist through credit accumulation or stackable certificates is important;
- Social networking models are rapidly becoming the communications mechanism of choice – finding ways to creatively tap the power of these tools as a means of staying connected at different organizational layers, in between physical meetings, and across different planning platforms;
- Small networking environments have been the most effective at forging new relationships; for example, if employers and educators are to form new bonds, examination of these kinds of venues is a starting point;
- Industry wants a better clearinghouse for information about talent development activities; and

- It is important to tap into current vehicles of communication that employers and other partners utilize.

### Strategies for Connectivity

- The region needs to establish practical ways to engage other partners for integrating fresh talent into the networks;
- Better coordination in outreach to employers is needed;
- There are misperceptions about the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) and its workforce centers that they appear to be exclusively focused on the lower end of education continuum;
- There is an emphasis on preparing to scale initiatives such as educational offerings that are in demand by industry clusters. Training and education initiatives funded by WIRED can be supported by the revenue generated by tuition and fees. However, if the state legislature significantly reduces the higher education budget, there is concern that the cost of courses will be out of reach for many students;
- The regional-state relationship is both a strength and a challenge; as the region goes, the state goes; but that sometimes leads to rivalries for ownership and credit for results;
- Making the education connection at the state level is the greatest remaining challenge – possible connect points exist with the P-20 Council and Colorado STEM Network;
- Staying on the view-screens of local and national foundations and other potential funding sources is imperative;
- Different regional planning processes tend to hit local areas at the same time in an uncoordinated manner, often trying to engage the same regional players – the need exists for these to coordinate and be more powerful for use by each partner as a result of the collaboration and information sharing;
- Efforts need to be made to connect private sector education providers to goals – at present, participation from higher education is predominantly public sector; and
- Connecting islands of current innovation is critical for moving the region even more toward a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship.

### Data for Research & Success Metrics

- Investments in talent development need to be guided by market intelligence and analysis, especially regarding investments for green jobs;
- It is important to track key metrics related to education, certainly to include education attainment at different grade levels, but also funding (ex. Colorado's statewide graduation rate for the class of 2008 was 73.9 percent, Colorado Department of Education);
- A regional “metrics council” that brings together regional and state economists to focus on regional progress across key indicators can help with information sharing, filling gaps, and publicizing progress and needs (ex. Chambers of Commerce, economic development groups, colleges and universities, and CDLE regional labor market analyst);

- The creation of a ranking of funded WIRED initiatives based upon their expected leverage and strategic fit with other existing initiatives assists in identifying pathways for sustainability;
- A list of metrics can be updated to monitor the four identified industry clusters; and
- It is important to capture metrics related to STEM at the K-12 and higher education level (ex. students enrolled in tech courses, degrees and certificates awarded).

## Implications

In the course of discussions, deliberations, and analysis associated with this report, several organizing devices have proved useful in providing visuals for the desired transition structure and roles of the regional players.

The **solar system model** placed the region's employers at the center as the star with the public sector and education institution partnering organizations as the planets held in orbits by the gravitational pull of the employers. While this construct was useful in emphasizing that employer needs not the needs of the supporting public organizations are paramount in developing and maintaining a talent development system, its shortcoming is the lack of guidance on how the planets should interact with each other.

The **house-building model** emphasizes the interactions and exact timing of the silo specialties and the need for a general contractor to serve as the control device to hold the building process together. This model is useful in demonstrating the interdependencies of independent contractors while meeting the needs of the ultimate customer; however, it relies too heavily on the knowledge held by the general contractor and the command-and-control nature of the directions that the contractor must give to the specialty partners.

Perhaps the most useful construct in moving forward is the **supply-chain management model** applied to the Metro Denver region as a "talent supply chain management system." This model also starts with the employer as central customer and with a plan or blueprint to guide the actions of the suppliers. This model's power is in its reliance on metrics, quality standards definitions, and timing and methods of delivery. This model recognizes that independent suppliers (or silos of the system) run their own businesses with their own business plans but act in concert in their own best interests driven by desired outcomes tied to profitability.

In exploring the creation of a regional talent supply chain management system for reliably supplying skilled and educated employees in a timely manner to our region's existing and emerging employers, it is helpful to look for initial guidance in the core tenets of supply chain management in the private sector. CIO, a national organization supporting chief information officers, defines core elements of supply chain management (SCM):

- **Plan** - This is the strategic portion of SCM. Companies need a strategy for managing all the resources that go toward meeting customer demand for their product or service. A big piece of SCM planning is developing a set of metrics to monitor the supply chain so that it is efficient, costs less and delivers high quality and value to customers.
- **Source** - Next, companies must choose suppliers to deliver the goods and services they need to create their product. Therefore, supply chain managers must develop a set of pricing, delivery and payment processes with suppliers and create metrics for monitoring and improving the relationships. And then, SCM managers can put together processes for managing their goods and services inventory, including receiving and verifying shipments, transferring them to the manufacturing facilities and authorizing supplier payments.
- **Make** - This is the manufacturing step. Supply chain managers schedule the activities necessary for production, testing, packaging and preparation for delivery. This is the most metric-intensive portion of the supply chain - one where companies are able to measure quality levels, production output and worker productivity.
- **Deliver** - This is the part that many SCM insiders refer to as logistics, where companies coordinate the receipt of orders from customers, develop a network of warehouses, pick carriers to get products to customers and set up an invoicing system to receive payments.
- **Return** - This can be a problematic part of the supply chain for many companies. Supply chain planners have to create a responsive and flexible network for receiving defective and excess products back from their customers and supporting customers who have problems with delivered products.

See [http://www.cio.com/article/40940/Supply\\_Chain\\_Management\\_Definition\\_and\\_Solutions](http://www.cio.com/article/40940/Supply_Chain_Management_Definition_and_Solutions)

There are implications for the Metro Denver region in each of these elements of the model:

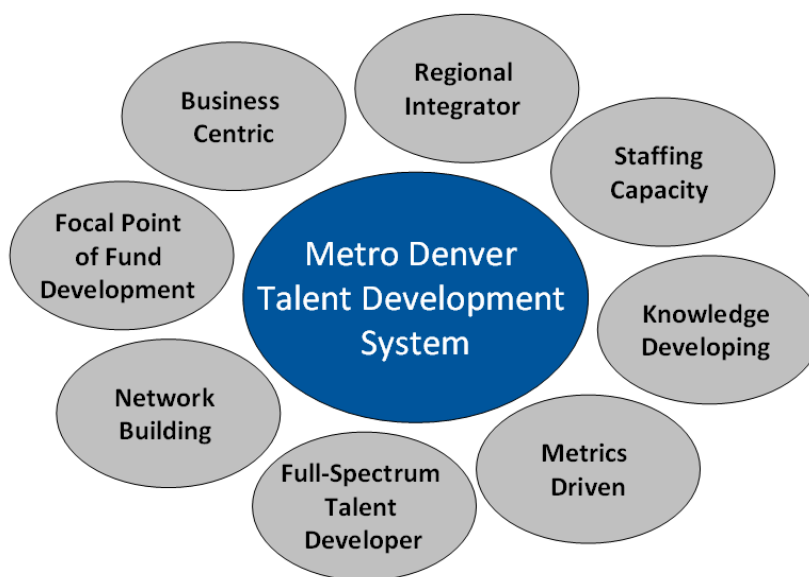
- **Talent Plan** – With the engagement of the region’s employers continuing to use sector-based planning teams, the metrics and strategies for required skill levels need to be up-to-date. The plan will include the expected supplies of talent obtained from a wide range of skill producers, ranging from the products of the P-20 system and training provided by the workforce system in Metro Denver to the continuing ability to recruit high-skilled talent from other regions of the country.
- **Talent Sources** – Employers will have access to a wide range of education and training providers in an open marketplace. As a result of more direct engagement by employers with the talent supplier network (a real strength of the WIRED process), the quality and quantity of skills will be more precisely defined and skills producers will be able to produce the skills with more efficiency and with increased reliability for job placement at the end of training.
- **Skills Training and Education (Make)** – With clarity from employers on the types of skills needed, schools and training institutions will be able to refine existing curriculum and, where desirable, tailor new training tracks to deliver skills with more efficiency, reduced cost, and shorter time frames to meet the exact specifications for filling gaps in skills for both emerging and incumbent workers. The production of skills can also benefit from new educational technologies such as distance learning, virtual reality techniques, and other interactive computer-based applications.
- **Training Delivery Mechanisms (Deliver)** – As with manufacturing suppliers, education and training providers need to know the scheduling requirements for Metro Denver regional employers’ needs. A common critique from educators is that employers describe the training they want but then do not hire the students at the end of training, at least not in a timely manner. Through stronger collaborations among employers, employer associations, and educators, we will be able to train for the emerging skill needs, find immediate employment for graduates, and subsequently advance them into the jobs that specifically match their skills.
- **Remediation (Return)** – While a key element of talent supply chain management is getting it right the first time (reducing the “leakiness” of some of the pipelines) the fact remains that a large number of existing workers are not sufficiently prepared for the types of jobs that are emerging. A large part of the total talent supply chain solution must be finding creative ways to upgrade the skills of the existing workforce, including recent graduates who do not yet have the requisite skills for mid- and high-wage jobs in the new economy.

The implementation of the talent supply chain management system still requires strong management at its core. Beyond the scheduling skills of the general contractor described earlier in the house-building model, the management system must possess core competencies to build networks and advance knowledge among the talent suppliers. The following page shows management functions along with examples of implementation quality from both the internal and external scans.

The management functions can be performed by a single entity or by a partnership of two or more organizations. The list of core competencies that follows shows the full range of functions performed by an ideal management organization. While there are examples of excellence for each of the competencies shown, no single entity emerged that excels at all of them. That leads to two primary conclusions with movement toward constructing the talent development system. First, it is unlikely that a single organization can excel at all of the competencies simultaneously, thus leading us to seek

complementary partnerships to cover as many as possible. Second, the Metro Denver Region is fortunate to have a large number of highly competent candidates for partners in the core management function. The challenge in moving forward is to gain commitments from the partners who will form the management core, and to gain acceptance by the other partners that this management structure creates the best environment for overall success of the effort.

### Core Competencies



### Business Centric

- Trusted by employer community as sensitive to business interests
- Focus on employer needs is paramount in developing solutions
- Credibility with both large and small employers, and with business associations

### External Scan Example

*Central Indiana Corporate Partnership (CICP) - a collaborative body consisting of the Presidents/CEOs of the region's major employers and higher education institutions focused on promoting economic development through targeted industry clusters in Central Indiana. The focus of CICP is to advance "big picture" priorities like encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship, building a world-class workforce and creating a pro-growth business climate. CICP has formed four initiatives - BioCrossroads (life sciences), TechPoint (technology, entrepreneurship), Conexus Indiana (advanced manufacturing and logistics), and Energy Systems Network (energy, clean technology), each with their own full-time staff and board of directors. The initiatives did not start simultaneously. Instead, they formed over time with the most recent formation, the Energy Systems Network, occurring in 2009. The participation of the highest level of leadership from employers and higher education has provided the partnership with credibility and an ongoing dialog that has led to existing industry growth and the development of cluster-based start-up companies incorporated into the supply chain with the region's major employers. Additionally, CICP working directly with the Indy Partnership- a regional consortium of county-based economic development organizations has successfully attracted employers in targeted industry clusters to locate in Central Indiana.*

See <http://www.cincorp.com/>

### Internal Scan Example

*Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation (Metro Denver EDC)- an affiliate of the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce, is the nation's first and only truly regional economic development entity in which many area economic*

*development groups have joined together to represent, and further, the interests of an entire region. Partners include 70 cities, counties, and economic development organizations in the seven-county Metro Denver and two-county Northern Colorado region.*

*The Metro Denver EDC works to create a competitive environment and workforce that attracts companies and jobs. It is backed by the region's business community, with primary funding coming from private-sector investors, as well as participating cities and counties. Strategic initiatives are developed among our partners, with final decision-making authority by an investor board of directors.*

*See <http://www.metrodenver.org/about-metro-denver-edc/>*

## Metrics Driven

- Ability to quantify and monitor outcomes-based, results-oriented success in advancing talent development goals of the region
- Experience in benchmarking against other regions
- Expertise in balanced scorecard or other aggregate information displays to make progress measures understandable for a wide array of audiences

### External Scan Example

*Gulf Coast Workforce Board (Texas) - mission is to help employers solve their workforce problems and residents build careers, so both can compete in the global economy. To judge how well the Gulf Coast of Texas competes with six similar economic regions in the nation and how it will be able to provide employers now and in the future with a competitive workforce, the Board prepares an annual Workforce Report Card.*

*See <http://www.wrksolutions.com/about/reportcard.html>*

### Internal Scan Example

*Colorado Children's Campaign - a statewide bi-partisan nonprofit organization advocating for children from the state capitol to communities across the state focused on expanding access to quality healthcare, early childhood experiences and K-12 education. The organization is involved in numerous activities including gathering and analyzing data. An annual data initiative, KidsCount in Colorado! assesses and shares information about the well-being of Colorado's children and trends that are impacting their lives.*

*See <http://www.coloradokids.org/>*

## Staffing Capacity

- Has personnel structure/procedures to support incorporation of dedicated staff for Talent Development Initiative Director
- Talent Development Initiative is a good fit with the mission and expertise of the host organization
- Ideally, administrative support staff is present that can be allocated to Talent Development Project via a cost-sharing agreement

### External Scan Example

*Dallas Fort Worth (DFW) Regional Workforce Leadership Council (RWLC) - regional partnership between Dallas, North Texas, and Tarrant County Workforce Boards and the Arlington, Dallas, and Fort Worth Chambers of Commerce serving as a convener and connector for the formation and ongoing development of regional industry clusters (aerospace, healthcare, logistics, and semiconductors/technology). Workforce boards and Chambers are assigned industry clusters and house a Cluster Manager that serves the entire region. The Chambers and Workforce Boards have memorandums of understanding*

*(MOU) in place to work collaboratively to identify skills gaps and meet the training needs of employers within each cluster.*

*See <http://dfw-rwlc.com/industry/index.asp>*

#### Internal Scan Example

*Colorado SkillBuild - housed at the Rose Community Foundation, Colorado SkillBuild is a new workforce development funding collaborative serving the construction, energy, and health care industries. Goals of the collaborative are to provide career advancement opportunities for low-skilled workers and to improve the capacity of employers in high-demand industries to identify and retain a qualified workforce.*

### Knowledge Developing

- Ability to scan for best practices from other geographic areas
- Host organization is respected by education, workforce development, and economic development in the region, allowing it to keep an up-to-date asset map of the region
- Experience in use of multiple media in making information available to a wide array of audiences

#### External Scan Example

*Joint Venture: Silicon Valley Network - a neutral forum created to bring together leaders from business, labor, government, the universities, and the non-profit sector to think outside the box and build creative solutions. The concept is to form teams that work cooperatively to address regional problems through programs and initiatives to better the Silicon Valley Region in California. The Joint Venture is involved in initiatives ranging from talent development to addressing climate change. An Investor Council of private industry leaders allocates financial support for investments in specific projects and initiatives. A Fellows Program allows distinguished faculty from regional higher education institutions to take sabbatical leave and become scholars in residence to support specific project areas. Since 1995, the Joint Venture has released the Silicon Valley Index that measures the strength of the regional economy and the health of its communities, highlighting challenges and providing an analytical foundation for leadership and decision-making. Every year a team of advisors recommends approximately 40 indicators to the Joint Venture board. More than half of these are retuning indicators tracked systematically over time; the remaining indicators are chosen for their ability to tell how the region is faring across a broad range of goal areas.*

*See <http://www.jointventure.org/aboutus/overview.html>*

#### Internal Scan Example

*Denver Metro Chamber Leadership Foundation - Leadership Exchange - brings Denver's prominent business and civic leaders together to discuss the innovations and best practices of a city facing relevant business and policy issues while strengthening the collective vision and collaboration in our own community. The city-to-city exchange unites Denver's most influential civic and business leaders with those of other cities encountering similar present-day issues. The Leadership Exchange is a dialogue of ideas, challenges, resolutions, discoveries, innovations and solutions. Leadership Exchange makes a difference in the Denver Metro community through learning from the advances and ventures of others.*

*See <http://www.denverleadership.org/Page.aspx?pkey=LEX>*

### Focal Point of Fund Development

- Initiative will serve as the primary focal point for regional fund development for workforce development efforts
- Host organization has expertise in fund development
- Preferably, host organization has track record of writing successful grant applications and scanning for grant opportunities

### External Scan Example

Greater Cincinnati Workforce Network - consists of philanthropic funders, local and state government agencies, employers, chambers of commerce, secondary and post-secondary educational institutions, service providers, and workforce investment boards in the Tri-state region. The Network is foundation-driven with leadership (chair of the Leadership Council and Executive Director) housed at the Greater Cincinnati Foundation office. The Network incorporates four regional Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) in three states (Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky) and fosters collaboration amongst industry-cluster based programming (health care, construction, and manufacturing) dedicated to developing career pathways within the region.

See <http://www.cincinnatiworkforce.org/home.php>

### Internal Scan Example

Colorado SkillBuild - housed at the Rose Community Foundation, is a new workforce development funding collaborative serving the construction, energy, and health care industries. Goals of the collaborative are to provide career advancement opportunities for low-skilled workers and to improve the capacity of employers in high-demand industries to identify and retain a qualified workforce.

## Regional Integrator

- Not viewed as tied to one political jurisdiction within the region
- Proven ability to engage multiple disciplines in employer solutions – such as education and economic development, or business/school partnership
- Track record of promoting multi jurisdiction approaches to regional issues

### External Scan Example

Region 2000 Partnership - an interwoven network of organizations with a centralized vision to provide regional development leadership within the 2,000 square miles that surround Lynchburg, Virginia. It provides a single point of contact to the public and private sector for regional planning services, economic development, marketing, and workforce training through six distinct entities:

- Economic Development Council - focused on bringing new business to our region, quality jobs for Region 2000 residents, and helping existing businesses grow and recruit a qualified workforce;
- Center for Advanced Engineering and Research (CAER) - Through master research agreements with universities and labs, the CAER delivers targeted research solutions for tech-based industries and facilitates professional development opportunities for scientists and engineers;
- Local Government Council - encourages and facilitates collaboration among Region 2000 local governments in addressing, on a regional basis, challenges and opportunities of greater-than-local significance;
- Workforce Investment Board - delivers workforce training and career services in the region through federal funding from the Workforce Investment Act;
- Technology Council - active in areas that promote technology industry growth and help prepare middle and high school students to enter high-tech jobs; and
- Young Professionals of Central Virginia - focused on attracting and retaining talent in the region.

See <http://www.region2000.org/>

### Internal Scan Example

Metro Mayors Caucus - comprised of 32 mayors from the Denver region. The Caucus promotes cooperation, consensus and collaboration as means of effectively addressing complex regional issues. To this end, the Caucus provides a non-confrontational arena for the discussion of common issues and multi jurisdictional challenges. The Caucus uses consensus based decision-making and collaboration to reach agreement and address issues of mutual concern. This commitment to consensus, unique among regional organizations, has allowed the Caucus to reach consensus on issues that have divided the region in other forums. Members reach consensus by listening carefully to each other's opinions and concerns, exploring possible options and searching for solutions that reflect the needs and values of members.

See <http://www.metromayors.org/>

***Workforce Board of Metro Denver** - a regional workforce council where the directors come together and discuss how to serve the region's employers and job seekers more effectively representing the eight workforce development regions of the metro Denver area, including Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Clear Creek, Denver, Douglas, Gilpin, Jefferson, Larimer and Weld counties.*

## Network Building

- Ability to manage a network that connects and expands partners
- Experience in using tools of social networking platforms
- Track record of success in working cooperatively with State of Colorado while keeping regionally focused

## External Scan Example

***Council for Entrepreneurial Development (CED)** - a non-profit organization based in the Research Triangle Park area of North Carolina focused on identifying, enabling and promoting high-growth, high-impact companies and accelerating the region's entrepreneurial culture. CED provides know-how, networking, mentoring and capital formation resources to new and existing high-growth entrepreneurs through annual conferences, programs and web-based resources. The organization provides access to a powerful network of investors and service providers that can provide capital and counsel to commercialize innovative solutions. CED helped build the Research Triangle Park into an international hub for biotechnology companies and is currently the oldest and largest entrepreneurial support organization in the nation with more than 5,500 active members.*

*CED is committed to playing an intermediary role- not providing space or funding but tools, events, and educational opportunities to support entrepreneurial efforts. For example, they host well-organized, well-attended conferences throughout the year that provide a platform for companies to present ideas and have access to venture capital. CED is private investor driven- not reliant on state subsidies or living grant to grant.*

*See <http://www.cednc.org/content/about/160/>*

## Internal Scan Example

***STEM-EC** - a dynamic group of committed business leaders, educators, and community advocates working to better connect industry and the K-16 academic community in efforts to graduate more students with the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) skills needed to meet the needs of Colorado's science and technology employers. Home to such companies as Qwest, Lockheed Martin Space Systems, Sun Microsystems, Hewlett Packard and CH2M HILL, the Metro Denver area is a hub for technology companies in need of talented young people to fill future jobs.*

*Created in June 2006 by the South Metro Denver Chamber of Commerce, CH2M HILL and Avaya, STEM-EC's mission is to increase the number of STEM graduates and to prepare them for the challenges of a technology-driven economy via a variety of pathways, including career and technical education, community colleges and universities. STEM-EC has set up a social networking tool for Coalition participants (see <http://www.meetup.com/STEM-EC/>).*

*See [http://www.stemcolorado.com/about\\_us.html](http://www.stemcolorado.com/about_us.html)*

## Full-Spectrum Talent Developer

- Ability to develop and maintain relationships with wide array of education providers to meet employer needs – from basic literacy to advanced degrees
- Not perceived as attached to a sub-set of the educational spectrum (such as K-12 or advanced degrees)
- Ideally, expertise in connecting existing workers to educational advancement through non-traditional vehicles such as on-line education

### External Scan Example

*Council for Entrepreneurial Development (CED) - a non-profit organization based in the Research Triangle Park area of North Carolina focused on identifying, enabling and promoting high-growth, high-impact companies and accelerating the region's entrepreneurial culture. The organization provides access to a powerful network of investors and service providers that can provide capital and counsel to commercialize innovative solutions. CED helped build the Research Triangle Park into an international hub for biotechnology companies and is currently the oldest and largest entrepreneurial support organization in the nation with more than 5,500 active members. CED is committed to playing an intermediary role- not providing space or funding but tools, events, and educational opportunities to support entrepreneurial efforts. For example, they host well-organized, well-attended conferences throughout the year that provide a platform for companies to present ideas and have access to venture capital. CED is private investor driven- not reliant on state subsidies or living grant to grant.*

See <http://www.cednc.org/content/about/160/>

### Internal Scan Example

*P-20 Education Coordinating Council - Colorado Governor Bill Ritter established the P-20 Council in 2007 to create a seamless education system from pre-school to grad-school that provides Colorado students with the skills and knowledge to succeed in the 21st century economy.*

See <http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite/GovRitter/GOVR/1187772339688>

## Recommendations

The recommendations that follow intend to outline a process for building on the current Metro Denver Talent Development infrastructure by selecting a leadership platform and management structure that will develop and oversee the initial business plan for a regional talent development system. Such a structure will need to include partner organizations and staffing that possess the core competencies enumerated in the previous section. The network of willing partners that makes up the “core” management structure is not necessarily a new entity. It represents an aggregate of individuals and organizations functioning in three key roles: trusted convener and promoter, fund developer and talent development system integrator. Several goals guide the recommendations:

- Forming a core Management Group that engages three key investors, namely, business and employers, community foundations and other regional funders, and the workforce system;
- Providing an open door to partners, old and new, who are willing and able to bring resources and leadership to sustaining the WIRED goals and who agree to work together according to a Regional Compact;
- Establishing an environment where multiple organizations and stakeholder groups find value in participation in the Talent Development system as a source of innovative idea generation, incubation of new approaches, and collaborations that produce more efficiency and regional impact; and
- Developing a central focal point for acquiring new funding sources from a wide array of government and nongovernment sources to support skills development in the region.

The talent development system framework structures and strengthens the strategic acceleration of the region’s innovation economy. Most importantly, this framework encourages widespread participation of multiple interests including state and local government, the private sector, universities, foundations, and the investment community; and develops a central focal point for acquiring new funding sources from a wide array of government and non-government sources to support skills development in the region. The creation of a talent development system should begin immediately with the organization of the core Management Group, selection of Leadership Council members, a full-time coordinator, and initial business plan completed by mid-2010.

### **Recommendation #1: Form Core Management Group for Talent Development System**

- Facilitate meetings with the Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation (Metro Denver EDC), SkillBuild, and the Workforce Board of Metro Denver to discuss collaborative agreement;
- Identify a Transition Coordinator to coordinate, facilitate meetings between the core Management Group and to provide interface, updates to WIRED staff and the WIRED Leadership Council;
- Define roles and responsibilities for each portion of the Management Group (see examples below):
  - Metro Denver EDC - convener/promoter of the talent development system with employers;
  - SkillBuild - fund coordination and development with philanthropic community; and

- Workforce Board of Metro Denver - standardization of workforce system practices to serve employer and job seekers system builder through publicly funding channels.
- Identify funding strategy and makeup of Leadership Council - recommendation is each member of the Management Group commit to seed initial investment and is allowed to appoint one-third of membership to Leadership Council which must include employer and education leaders; and
- Develop a Metro Denver Regional Talent Compact to define regional talent development goals with sign-off from Leadership Council members.

**Recommendation #2: Develop Outreach Strategy for the Talent Development System Concept**

- Distribute the Talent Development System report to a wide-range of existing WIRED partners and other stakeholders;
- Provide presentations to education, industry, and other key stakeholder groups facilitated by Transition Coordinator and members of core Management Group; and
- Select members of the Leadership Council - determined by core Management Group.

**Recommendation #3: Define Staffing and Year 1 Priorities**

- Create a full-time Regional Talent Development Coordinator position to coordinate and manage the Talent Development System - recommendation is to house this position in the office of one of the three Core Management organizations (see sample job description below);

| Sample Regional Talent Development Coordinator Job Description |  |
|--|--|
| I.   | <u>Strategic Planning</u><br>a. Maintain strategic planning document for coordination of economic development, education, workforce development<br>b. Develop document with key partners and present to Leadership Council for approval<br>c. Update on regular basis<br>d. Communicate strategic goals to partners                                |
| II.  | <u>Regional Labor Market Information &amp; Progress Metrics</u><br>a. Serve as focal point for collection of regional workforce data<br>b. Work closely with CDLE labor market staff on regional data needs  |
| III.   | <u>Industry Sector Coordination</u><br>a. Coordinate work of Industry Sector Coordinators<br>b. Identify cross-cutting sector needs<br>c. Serve as point of contact for business contact program when talent/workforce issues are identified   |
| IV.  | <u>Partner Coordination</u><br>a. Work closely with partner organizations – Workforce Board of Metro Denver, P-20 Council, STEM, higher education, K-12, others to communicate industry needs<br>b. Connect individual partners to specific employer needs as needed<br>c. Design networking opportunities for partners to interact with employers |
| V.   | <u>Project Referral &amp; Follow-up</u><br>a. Coordinate project development with partners – bring together organizations to respond to sector-defined needs<br>b. Follow up with employers on adequacy of responses<br>c. Follow up with partners as needed based on employer feedback  |
| VI.  | <u>Fund Development</u>  |

|       |   |
|-------|---|
|       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Scan for funding sources that are tied to strategic goals</li> <li>b. Identify proposal development responses to opportunities – regional teams, consultants as needed</li> <li>c. Continually define types of funding needed to support goals</li> </ul> |
| VII.  | <u>Identification of Best Practices</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Scan for best practices</li> <li>b. Connect partners and employers to successful implementation models</li> <li>c. Organize design or implementation teams as needed</li> </ul>                                   |
| VIII. | <u>Administration</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Maintain office structure</li> <li>b. Monthly reporting to Leadership Council</li> </ul>  |

- Define draft business plan and year one priorities is to house this position in the office of one of the three Core Leadership organizations - Talent Development Coordinator working with Core Leadership Group;
- Hold first meeting with Leadership Council to formalize business plan, schedule of activities, and Year one priorities; and
- Define Talent Development Metrics and compile baseline data (see sample metrics below).

| Sample Regional Workforce Metrics   | Sample Regional Collaboration Metrics   |
|---|---|
| Percentage of population 25 years or older holding educational credential (HS+)                               | Number of new jobs created as a direct result of partnering with other business organizations                       |
| Percentage of region’s population 25 years or older holding post-secondary credential (Associate’s or higher) | Number of new jobs in targeted industries, as a direct result of partnering   |
| Percentage of 12th graders graduating high school   | Utilization rate of the Workforce Centers   |
| Percent who take and pass GED   | Utilization of programs established for targeted industries   |
| Percentage enrolled in higher education who graduate with a degree in six years                               | Percentage of new jobs created with employers in high-skill, high-growth occupations                                |
| Percentage of students earning post-secondary certificates/degrees in STEM                                    | Number of new education and training programs created for targeted industries                                       |
| Total employment, new jobs created  | Employer satisfaction with responsiveness of education, training, workforce, and other business assistance programs |
| Percentages of individuals employed in targeted industries  |   |
| Individuals working in high-skill, high-growth occupations  |   |

*Adapted from the Gulf Coast Workforce Board*

#### **Recommendation #4- Expand New Website Platform to Build an Online Community for the Talent Development System**

- Develop an online community for regional talent development through the recently launched MetroDenverCareers.com
- Utilize website to build partnerships, program linkages, serve as an information exchange, provide information on training and education, and talent sourcing, recruitment and placement.

### **Recommendation #5- Develop Portfolio Management Tool for Regional Talent Development System**

- Develop specific tools and processes for ongoing selection, monitoring, and evaluation of talent development initiatives and programs in the Metro Denver region. The focus is on return-on-investment (ROI) and how to best utilize dollars from industry, foundations, and public sector to strengthen regional talent development; and
- Work with industry partners and/or consultants to institute framework for managing the portfolio.

## Call to Action

The economy is rapidly changing. That is not news. The news is that some regions of the country are preparing for the changes and some are not. The stronger regions will seize the moment and move from economic anxiety to economic confidence by building the new platforms for talent development, while the weaker regions will try to patch up crumbling structures and hope that the seismic economic shifts will subside.

The new economic development reality is that talent drives prosperity. The consensus of opinions among regional WIRED partners is that continuing to advance the goals of regional collaboration, networking, strategy alignment, innovation, and transparency of results is not a luxury in this economy – it is a necessity. The WIRED experience has served to build a foundation, engage employers and partners in new ways, develop new tools for connectivity, and prime the pump for a permanent system based on the experience. With agreement on the core competencies for the desired management role of the new structure, the Metro Denver region must now move expeditiously.

Thanks to the political leadership of the region and the blueprint for success developed by the WIRED process, the Metro Denver region is in a position to be the national leader in economic recovery coming out of the recession. The base of assets enables this with short-term stimulus funding applied strategically toward the longer-term goals.

The time to act is now. The hope is this report accelerates the actions of the partners in doing so.

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**Joan Smith** - President, Red Rocks Community College  
**Tim Taylor** - President, Colorado Succeeds  
**Scott Tibbitts** - Executive Director, eSpace: The Center for Space Entrepreneurship  
**Lynn Vosler** - Director, Front Range Community College Institute for Community and Professional Development  
**Kevin Weiner** - IT Industry Coordinator, Metro Denver WIRED Initiative

## Appendix- Literature Review

- *Alliance for Regional Stewardship Building Regional Competitiveness through Economic Innovation*
- *Council on Competitiveness, WIRED Regional Leadership Training Curriculum*
- *Governor's Job Cabinet, Report to the Governor: Economic Competitiveness through Collaboration, Talent Development and Innovation*
- *Mark Hendricks, Business Plans Made Easy*
- *Metro Denver WIRED Initiative, Developing Talent for the Region's High-Demand Jobs*
- *New Economy Strategies, Metro Denver WIRED Region- Strategic Findings: Best Practices Analysis*
- *Rob Atkinson and Howard Wial, Brookings Blueprint for American Prosperity: Unleashing the Potential of a Metropolitan Nation*
- *Russell Linden, Working Across Boundaries*
- *Stephen Goldsmith and Donald Kettl, Unlocking the Power of Networks*