Bi-State Plan for Advancing the Regional Workforce

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Executive Summary

BACKGROUND

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is national legislation signed in 2014 that is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. WIOA provides the framework for a national workforce system that is flexible, responsive, customer-focused, and locally managed. It encourages the use of regional systems to deliver services to businesses and job seekers alike.

The Louisville Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is unique in that its labor market draws from 13 counties in the two States of Kentucky and Indiana. Therefore, in the spirit of true regionalization, and looking beyond traditional geographic boundaries, in 2018, the KentuckianaWorks and Indiana Region 10 Workforce Boards jointly contracted with Community Workforce Advancements, LLC (CWA) to lead and guide them in the development of the nation’s first inter-state Workforce Development Plan.

The overarching vision of the resulting Bi-State Plan for Advancing the Regional Workforce is to create a system that utilizes partnering organizations from both States to promote improved responsiveness to the needs of the region’s employers, job seekers, and students. It includes the following five goals:

1. Provide information and appropriate employer connections to schools to align the student pipeline to the current and projected skill needs of regional employers.

2. Increase the skills, credentials, and wages of current workers.

3. Expand the size of the labor force.

4. Increase the efficiency of employer engagement and core services to employers on a regional basis.

5. Create the structure for ongoing sharing of plans, data, and outcome metrics among key regional partners.
PLAN DEVELOPMENT

In creating the Bi-State Plan, CWA utilized a methodical, inclusionary approach that included the following critical steps.

- **Workforce Development Boards Planning Meeting**—In October, 2017 a joint meeting of the KentuckianaWorks and Region 10 Workforce Development Boards to review the development of a Bi-State Planning Region. *See Attachment 1 - Planning Meeting*

- **Initial Research.** During February-April 2018, CWA reviewed current economic development, workforce development, and educational plans for each Local Area to identify areas of similarity and disparity. Additionally, CWA convened a joint planning session with representatives from both Workforce Boards to discuss the initial research findings along with best practices of other inter-state regions. They also discussed the expected outcomes for the bi-state plan and identified the primary partners and stakeholders to engage in the planning process. *See Attachment 2 – Initial Joint Planning Session.*

- **Community Surveys and Interviews.** During May-August 2018, CWA developed and released a survey to collect feedback from Workforce Board members, economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, educational institutions, elected officials, and other community leaders. Building on the information gleaned from the surveys, CWA conducted face-to-face and telephone interviews with 25 regional thought leaders to gather their insights, thoughts, and suggestions. *See Attachment 3 – Survey Results and Attachment 4 – Interview Results.*

- **Stakeholder Engagement and Prioritization.** During September 2018, CWA held an additional joint planning session to review the findings from the community surveys and interviews. Meeting participants were polled to identify and prioritize the key strategies and action steps for inclusion. *See Attachment 5 - Additional Joint Planning Session and Polling Results.*

- **Local Workforce Board Endorsement.** During October-November 2018, CWA synthesized the information into the *Bi-State Plan for Advancing the Regional Workforce* that articulates the inter-state region’s goals, key strategies, and action items to be undertaken. It was reviewed by each Local Area’s Chief Local Elected Official and was also formally adopted by each Local Workforce Board.

- **Bi-State Implementation.** It is planned that during March 2019, a joint signing event will be held to formally announce the adoption and implementation of the Bi-State Plan.
SUMMARY

This Bi-State Plan for Advancing the Regional Workforce is the first inter-state plan to be created under the WIOA and serves as a model for other inter-state regions across the nation. It represents the groundbreaking work of theKentuckianaWorks and Indiana Region 10 Workforce Boards who have come together across their individual State and federal boundaries to better prepare and serve their shared labor market.

To begin full implementation, the two partnering Workforce Boards intend to take the following steps starting in the first quarter of 2019.

➢ Host a launch meeting with regional partners and representatives of state and federal offices, as appropriate, to bring commitments of support;

➢ Create a bi-state inventory of high-value industry certifications, endorsed by regional employer associations, to serve as a foundation for advancing Goals 1 and 2;

➢ Conduct an in-depth analysis of populations “not in labor force” to inform strategies under Goal 3;

➢ Identify the current “front door” message, onboarding procedures, and service menus aimed at employers in each workforce area to identify common approaches and consider consolidation of other approaches as appropriate, as an initial step in implementing Goal; and

➢ Create a grid of common goals, with implementation strategies and specific actions, of the two Workforce Boards as a foundation for shared strategies and subsequent development of new joint strategies.
Bi-State Plan for Addressing the Regional Workforce

The KentuckianaWorks and Region 10 Workforce Service Areas comprise the 13-county Louisville Kentucky Metropolitan Statistical Area. More importantly, the greater Louisville region has a solid history of strong collaborative regional efforts addressing many critical issues including education, economic and community development. Recognizing that skill sets do not stop at state lines, regional employers are in need of a highly skilled workforce to maintain their regional and global competitiveness. Because of this and building upon this success and momentum, the two Workforce Boards have come together to complete a Bi-State Plan for Addressing the Regional Workforce.

Opportunities and Challenge

The KentuckianaWorks and Indiana Region 10 Workforce Boards, via this plan, build on the Louisville labor market area’s history of success and regional collaboration that span several decades. Partners in our shared bi-state area have been nationally recognized for shared planning, research, fund development, and innovation for workforce development, economic development, and education strategies. In short, community leaders clearly recognize that economic growth and quality of place are regional issues, and coalitions have been built as needed to seize opportunities, address challenges, and demonstrate measurable collective positive impact. The challenge is to move from episodic alliances for specific purposes to an ongoing partnership among regional partners that commits to advancing shared regional goals. Roles of local organizations must be clearly defined toward reducing unnecessary and/or confusing duplication, while still recognizing the distinct assets, issues, and relationships within each of the region’s cities, towns, and counties. A convergence of events and activities impacting the region serves to support the timing for launch of this agreement. These include business sector associations already composed of bi-state members, public secondary schools with new career pathways initiatives in both states aligned with changing graduation requirements, and the bi-state partnership in completion of a new bridge over the Ohio River. “Bridge” has emerged as a symbolic word between the two states, and the intent of this plan is to leverage that success to bridge bi-state efforts for enhancing the skills and mobility of the regional workforce to address the needs of diverse employers in all business sectors.
Vision of Success

The vision for success of this bi-state plan is grounded in a key question that has guided our efforts throughout – What can we do better as a two-board alliance than as individual boards?

The answer to the question must be a result of better responsiveness to our employers, job seekers, and students along with better efficiency and effectiveness of partnering organizations to achieve that result on a regional basis. Our vision of success revolves around four key elements:

➢ A shared data platform for labor market information and regional progress on key workforce metrics;
➢ Clear communications with our employers and the general public about job and education opportunities and related business services;
➢ Streamlining of access to services for all customers of the workforce development system; and
➢ Attraction of additional private and public funding to advance skills and credentials of the region’s workforce in alignment with the current and projected needs of our employers.

To test and refine the vision, the Workforce Boards engaged in extensive community research via surveys and a stakeholder interviews process throughout the region. Stakeholders included Workforce Board members, local elected officials, business leaders, education leaders, economic development and community development organizations. Many stakeholders contacted were experienced in bi-state activities and were instrumental in creating the major goals for implementation of our plan. The specific goals that follow grew from several guiding principles created early in the planning process: 1. Broad acknowledgement and understanding of our common ground related to the economy and development of talent to support it; 2. Value of a two-board alliance as a vehicle for growing new relationships among key regional partners and new resources to support the partners; and 3. Value to the broader region, along with the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the State of Indiana, in being recognized as one of the preeminent bi-state models of collaboration in the nation.
Goals

Through an initial meeting of key stakeholders, survey priorities were established. This was followed by a broad electronic survey of private and public leaders in the region. Based upon the analysis of these survey results, specific face-to-face and phone interviews of an additional list of community leaders, organization leaders, and industry associations were conducted. From this extensive compilation and analysis of information and input, the Workforce Boards created five broad regional goals and then met with a group of regional stakeholders to further refine priorities for joint action. As a result, agreement was reached within each major goal area on the following high-priority strategies for implementation:

Regional Goals

1. Provide information and appropriate employer connections to schools to align the student pipeline to the current and projected skill needs of regional employers.

High Priority Strategies

2. Increase the skills, credential and wages of current workers.

- Develop new work-based upskilling and wage advancement models for workers that connect employers to education and training programs in creative ways, building on proven models such as internship and apprenticeship.

- Encourage existing workers to start or complete programs for post-high school credentials attainment, with employers as partners in funding and career / wage advancement planning.

- Promote the economic and lifestyle value of in-demand mid-tech jobs by showcasing career ladders and skills development pathways leading to family-sustaining wage levels, with career exposure and learning for students and parents beginning at early grade levels.

- With support and leadership of the Workforce Boards, engage with employers in connecting to college and career readiness (CCR) initiatives of local school districts, partnering in growing employer connections, as schools seek new approaches to work-based learning (where career pathways are subsequently linked to employer engagement) required under new and emerging graduation requirements in both states.
Increase funding available for advancing credentials for adults with financial needs, via acquisition of new local sources and advocacy for state and federal funds tied to in-demand skills for jobs with family-sustaining wage levels.

3. Expand the size of the labor force

➢ Target specific working-age populations that are not in the labor force and offer information, incentives, and support structures for their entry or return to the labor force.

➢ Develop new models for capturing and re-skilling workers who are leaving the workforce for reasons that include: automation eliminating job; drug issues; under-skilled for emerging jobs; lack of work ethic; and other barriers to re-employment.

4. Increase the efficiency of employer engagement and core services to employers on a regional basis.

➢ Engage existing general and sector-specific employer associations, expand bi-state membership, and engage these groups regularly in ways that provide increased efficiencies and impact in providing information and advice to multiple educational entities in the region regarding current and projected skills and competencies needed by business/industry sectors or across sectors.

➢ Analyze the services that are offered to employers and job seekers in each workforce area to identify areas where we can streamline our customer messaging and service onboarding processes to ensure consistency across the region.

5. Create the structure for ongoing sharing of plans, data, and outcome metrics among key regional partners.

➢ Identify common goals in plans of Workforce Boards and education partners; clarify roles of all partners in assisting in goal attainment.

➢ Establish a metrics structure for the region that relates to key goals; ensure that plans and outcome measures of partner organizations are shown in relationship to key regional goals for success.

See Attachment 5 for a one-page synopsis of the Regional Goals and High Priority Strategies for Implementation.
Initial Actions to Launch Plan Implementation

The partnering Workforce Boards recognize that all goals cannot be addressed simultaneously, and that several key goals require acquisition and analysis of information to inform new actions. With that in mind, the following initial actions will be taken to implement the plan and form the foundation for selection of subsequent joint actions:

➢ Host a launch meeting in first quarter 2019 with regional partners and representatives of state and federal offices, as appropriate, to bring commitments of support;
➢ Create a bi-state inventory of high-value industry certifications, endorsed by regional employer associations, to serve as a foundation for advancing Goals 1 and 2;
➢ Conduct an in-depth analysis of populations “not in labor force” to inform strategies under Goal 3;
➢ Identify the current “front door” message, onboarding procedures, and service menus aimed at employers in each workforce area to identify common approaches and consider consolidation of other approaches as appropriate, as an initial step in implementing Goal; and
➢ Create a grid of common goals, with implementation strategies and specific actions, of the two Workforce Boards as a foundation for shared strategies and subsequent development of new joint strategies.

Structure for Advancement and Sustainability

A key to the sustainability of this initiative is an efficient and effective method of ongoing communication among the Workforce Boards and their network of partners. A high priority is the identification of common goals, followed by clarity in roles of individual organizations so as to reduce unnecessary and/or confusing duplication of efforts as roles are aligned toward goal attainment. Our partnering Workforce Boards commit to a single point of staff contact for each board who will serve as the persons responsible for tracking and oversight of implementation of this plan, which will include periodic convening of a “Core Team” as defined below.

The Core Team is composed of:

➢ From each Board: One board officer and the chief executive of each board;
➢ From key partners in a) Kentucky’s 7-County area of the bi-state region and b) Indiana’s 6-County area of the bi-state region:
➢ One chief executive (or designee) of a Chamber of Commerce from each area
➢ At least one representative from K-12 schools in each area
➢ At least one representative from higher education in each area
➢ At least one representative from economic development in each area

The Core Team will convene at least quarterly. The staff contacts at the two Workforce Boards will be responsible for development of agendas and facilitation of the quarterly meetings. Each Workforce Board executive will provide a progress report to each respective board at the first scheduled meeting after each quarterly Core Team meeting. All new action strategies will be approved by the two Workforce Boards.

Workforce Board Signatures

The Chairs of the partnering Workforce Boards hereby attest that their respective boards have reviewed and approved this joint plan. This plan takes effect on the date of signature and remains in effect until replaced or modified by agreement of both Workforce Boards.

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Human Resources Director  Practice Leader
UPS | Air Region  Plastics Jobs Network
Chair, KentuckianaWorks Workforce Board  Chair, Indiana Region 10 Workforce Board

______________________________  ____________________________________________
Michael B. Gritton  Ron McKulick
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WorkOne Southern Indiana
KentuckianaWorks Region 10 Bi-State Region

KentuckianaWorks’ WSA includes:
Jefferson, Bullitt, Henry, Oldham, Spencer, Shelby and Trimble Counties in Kentucky

Southern Indiana Region 10 WSA includes:
Clark, Crawford, Floyd, Harrison, Scott and Washington Counties in Indiana

Together these Workforce Service Areas generally constitute the
Louisville, Kentucky Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)