State of Ingenuity Thought Leaders on Regional Economic Development

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Regional Economic Development Leadership

Course PSPA 692: SOI Region 2025 Industry Opportunities: What do the Numbers Miss?

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State of Ingenuity Thought Leaders on Regional Economic Development:
Where are We Now, Where are We Going, and
Where Do We Need to Be?

INTRODUCTION

Northern Illinois University (NIU) is one of 13 education and economic development partners in a consortium in northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin, working to improve the region’s effectiveness in entrepreneurship, job creation, and small business development. This effort is funded by a grant from the Economic Development Administration of the US Department of Commerce. The grant is entitled State of Ingenuity (SOI).

Northern is one of five education partners that include two universities and three community and technical colleges. During the final phase of the project, NIU convened three webinars with panels of leading thinkers in all six counties within the grant purview. All panelists were asked specific questions relating to (a) economic assets and strengths in their respective area, (b) challenges in the economic landscape, (c) a vision for economic development in the next decade, and (d) SOI as a region in concept and in practice. In addition to the webinars, an Idea Lab was convened at the conclusion of all of the webinars. The purpose of the Idea Lab was to garner visionary and critical ideas for continuing to improve economic development in the region.

Webinars were held on Friday, March 7, 2014 at both Gateway Technical College and Blackhawk Technical College. Members of the Gateway panel were from Racine County. Members of the panel at Blackhawk Technical College were from Rock and Walworth counties. On Friday, March 14, 2014, the third webinar was held at NIU-Rockford campus. Members of the panel were from Winnebego County. The Idea Lab was convened in the afternoon of Friday, March 7, 2014 and included thought leaders from half of the six counties. What follows is a summary of each panel discussion as well as the Idea Lab.

RACINE/KENOSHA PANEL

Assets

Members of the panel at Gateway saw their prime geographic location as their first asset. Racine County is located in what is called the Chicago Corridor, being mid-way between Chicago and Minneapolis. This positioned them to have more economic resources and activities at their disposal, as well as more suppliers and contractors.

Other key indicators of the area’s strengths are a good education system and quality of life. When speaking of the education system in the county, panelists saw initiatives at all levels of education that improved knowledge for business enterprises. They spoke of Junior Achievement in high schools, as well as resources available to new businesses to help them access the
Additional economic strengths included the manufacturing base. Tens of thousands of jobs were lost in the previous decade and during the Great Recession in manufacturing. And, yet, the County still boasts 18 to 21 percent of the workforce in manufacturing jobs. These are small- and medium-sized companies that add value to the economic condition of the community. Addressing the needs of these businesses is important. And, the technical college leadership does a great job of asking these businesses what they need and then conducting classes to respond. One of the new initiatives is a high school CNC summer boot camp in manufacturing for juniors. Students here learn CNC in the boot camp, continue into their senior year, and then are hired by a CNC employer. There are also boot camps for adults, where services such as transportation and child care are provided. Also, businesses new to the community as well as start-ups have a liaison person assigned to them to help them navigate government-related issues.

Leadership was another asset. Panelists spoke extensively of the importance of leadership. Racine County inculcates people new to the community in the Leadership Academy. One of the concepts discussed is something they call ‘non-turf’ leadership. When new people come into the fold, they are given an orientation in community knowledge. Economic development people said people who come to town need to know this is a non-turf community. If they don’t work together collaboratively, they might find themselves out of a job. Part of the leadership culture is also called intentional networking. All of these efforts build trust and improve relationships.

Some of the leadership comes from large and small companies in the community. Panelists spoke of company engagement and how important it has been to the community. They pointed out that not all communities are so fortunate as to have the extent of company engagement that exists in this area.

The final component of economic asset is a good quality of life. All of the above-listed assets are quality of life issues. In order to attract new business and community members, potential residents need to see what they like in the community. Quality of life addresses social life as well. Racine is fortunate to be adjacent to Lake Michigan. It has social activities and has a vibrant waterfront. All of this is important to business development.

Challenges

Key challenges are discussed first. Some of challenges for the sub-region are not ones that are unique to them nor do they have control over them. But, they do impact the economic vitality of this area so they are briefly mentioned here.

A good transportation system is desperately needed by this county. Although the county sits in the middle of the Chicago Corridor, there is no mass transit or good transportation options other than vehicle traffic for people to come to the county for work or play. So, this is a major
challenge to attracting future growth in population and business, particularly, for attracting young people. Wisconsin historically loses talent to cities like Chicago and Minneapolis. There needs to be a reversal of this loss if the county is to prosper.

For new business start-ups and entrepreneurs, banks have been slow to lend. This lack of access to capital impedes business growth in the area. For those business that do get started, their owners lack important business education on the specifics of business operations. The new businesses are knowledgeable about the technical aspects of their business, but, when it comes to information technology and human resource issues, they are in the dark. This is dangerous to their future. They need to know more than how their equipment works.

In spite of all of the efforts of leaders in the community to network and build relationships, communication issues still exist. Walls between people and entities survive. This is particularly true of walls between public entities and private business. Public officials and private businesses do not always see eye to eye. In some cases, they are downright hostile toward each other. Further, public entities themselves have walls between each of them. These walls create the kinds of turf wars that are counterproductive to business development. People need to listen to each other, even if they do not agree. Which brings the discussion of external challenges to the over-arching theme of political entities and politicians in general being unwilling to compromise. The People’s business does not get done without compromise. This creates toxic a atmosphere and fewer people in the pipeline who want to run for office.

The final major challenge for the sub-region is the lack of certain skills in the workforce. According to members of the panel, the Great Recession created enormous job loss in their area. Tens of thousands of people lost their jobs. These were people who were basically unskilled. They have been pushed to the side ever since, unable to find employment because of their skill level. Long-term unemployment is unhealthy for the workers as well as the community.

But, these people could still make a contribution. These are people who, if appropriate employment is not available, can be involved in community service of some kind. Some of the skills they may lack are often called ‘employability’ or soft skills. They include oral communications, critical thinking, problem solving, and respect for diversity. This more ‘holistic’ training can be provided by colleges or community-based programs, in addition to the technical education provided by technical colleges. Companies can be part of the solution here as well. They can be incentivized to offer paid internships during the period of education, training, or community service.

Thoughts about the Future

This panel saw the need to continue efforts with what they call ‘non-turf” leadership. Again, this concept means that people needed to look to the ‘greater good’ of this sub-region, rather than making decisions based on politics. They saw good things in the relationships that have been developed through SOI. For instance, in the future, they will take advantage of the
relationship they have established with UW-Whitewater and their Small Business Center. They also believe the relationships others have established as a result of SOI will be important to their everyday economic activity.

In the future, there will have to be more land available for economic development. Post-recession, the area is running out of vacant buildings. The sub-region has to be ready with available buildings when companies come to town. It will not be enough to look to finance new buildings then. The buildings have to exist, and planners have to be pro-active.

Finally, in the future, there will have to be more micro-enterprise lending. This will be needed to grow micro-entrepreneurs. These entrepreneurs will build a network, and the business resources will be available to take them through each step of business start-up. Banks must have a sense of shared responsibility, along with government and private business, to build new businesses that will hire new employees and expand the employment base in the area.

Thoughts on SOI as a ‘Region’

All panelists acknowledged the difficulty of looking at ‘regional’ initiatives in practice. They believed the reality is that there is still going to be competition among counties in the region. Many of the panelist were getting paid to bring companies into their own communities. However, they also believed there were things that could represent a cooperative effort. These things included creating and maintaining a sound infrastructure, good water usage, and air quality.

One panelist saw elements in the SOI initiative that made the counties a ‘region.’ She pointed out that SOI was brought together based on struggles all of the communities had with floods. So, a natural disaster actually brought all of the partners together. Also, in looking at the blue collar workforce of the six counties, there is commonality there as well. The challenges in re-tooling the workforce are the same. Finally, there was an acknowledgement that some things work better on a regional basis. These things include marketing and attracting foreign investment.

When asked what it would take to have the area viewed as a ‘region,’ panelists stated a Regional Champion would be needed. This person would have a dedicated position and work full time toward bringing the sub-regions together, attempting to instill a sense of shared responsibility for good outcomes in the region. There was a recognition that the true impact of economic development efforts is not always seen immediately. Time may be needed to see the value of the SOI work done in the region over the last three years.
THE ROCK/WALWORTH PANEL

Assets

In beginning the discussion of assets in the region, the Rock/Walworth panel members cited the location of the area as the Heart of the Midwest, reviewing the same facts as other panels about being located between Chicago, Milwaukee, Madison, and Minneapolis. They also cited the I-90 corridor as a transportation hub. I-90 was important to economic expansion, particularly for a region that has so much manufacturing. In the northern Illinois part of the SOI region, expansion of this highway to three lanes is complete. Plans exist to do the same for Rock County in Wisconsin.

The next asset, also cited by the Racine panel, is the educational system and its connection to the business community. The two counties in this sub-region are currently concentrating on building career and technical education in K-12. And, Blackhawk Technical College is developing an Advanced Manufacturing Training Center in Milton on the north end of Rock County. Walworth County residents would take advantage of this training center as well.

The significant presence of manufacturing in the area, small and medium-sized companies, promotes economic vitality in the area. In spite of the massive job loss experienced in the region between 2008 and 2011, the area is rebounding nicely. This rebound is being led by the manufacturing sector of the economy. There is great diversity of Tier 2 and 3 manufacturers in the sub-region, with production in heavy equipment, instruments, and food processing.

Business leaders moving to a community care about more than the labor force. They care about quality of life. CEOs want to know about the quality of health care system and what recreational opportunities exist. Two natural assets in this sub-region, the Rock River and the Rock River Trail, officially part of the Ice Age Trail, represent major assets. These two assets were seen as draws for everyone, but young people in particular, to re-locate to the area. Young single people, as well as young families, want to have recreation in the community. Good health care systems are critical to attracting all populations to the area and to have them stay in the community. Mercy Health Care System has facilities in both Rock and Walworth counties, and the Beloit Health Care System, Edgerton Hospital expansion, and the new St. Mary’s Hospital all contribute to a good quality of life.

Challenges

Even with the many assets of this sub-region, it is difficult to recruit new residents, particularly young people, to this area. Young people would prefer to live in larger cities like Rockford or Madison. This will be a major challenge for the future as the population of Wisconsin continues to decline. And, it will raise major talent recruitment issues for companies.
As good as the educational systems are as they relate to connections between K-12 and the business community, deficiencies still exist. Growing percentages of minority group students, particularly Latinos, have performance levels lower than for other groups of students. The Latino community is growing substantially in this sub-region, but, their educational outcomes continue to be in the lower quartile. The success of this sub-group of the population is critical to the future workforce. Great improvements need to be made in their educational performance so that they can be integrated into the workforce. This group, in particular, represents the future of the workforce in this area.

One of the other major challenges in this sub-region is the unskilled labor force. Since the closing of the last automotive manufacturer plant in the area, hundreds, perhaps thousands, of workers are left with low skills that do not command the hourly wages they are accustomed to receiving or that the remaining manufacturers need. Manufacturing jobs are much more sophisticated today and require postsecondary technical education. This is the skills gap. Trying to get these workers back into the labor force in middle income jobs will take the best minds in the sub-region. In particular, the challenge will be to get them back into manufacturing.

Thoughts on the Future

Members of the panel from Janesville looked at the Rock River as an underutilized asset that over the next 20 years would be more developed and represent a bigger draw to the area. Beloit has done an impressive job building on the presence of the river as a tourist attraction. This asset goes to the issue of quality of life and recreational opportunities.

The future means that there will be more specialty companies rather than large manufacturers. There will be a rebound in construction, both commercial and residential, more Information Technologies companies, and, generally, businesses that require a higher skilled workforce. This higher skilled workforce will be needed in agriculture as well, as the business and technology needs of farmers expand. And, with all of these increased needs for a highly skilled workforce, career and technical education will play a bigger role. Businesses will continue to be involved with and have a greater presence in education. There will be more alignment between education and workforce development. This will require postsecondary institutions to be nimble and have greater flexibility in responding to business needs.

Finally, there are major areas in the geographical sub-region that need to be cleaned up in order to be used for re-development. At present, converted farm land is being used for re-development. But, with the price of farm acreage increasing, developers will look at other land within the area to use for development. This clean up activity will be good for the area.
Thoughts on SOI as a ‘Region’

Members of this panel talked about the history of the sub-region, at least Rock County, and the challenges individual communities and municipalities within the county have had in working together. This is the same issue raised by the Racine/Kenosha panel. While they believed this situation has improved because of improved leadership, they thought that working with other counties a good distance away with no good transportation routes was a tough sell. They thought it boiled down to access by vehicle, and, therefore, Kenosha and Racine were not a natural part of the Region under these conditions.

However, they saw the value of working, in particular, across the state line into Rockford. Also, they pointed out that University of Wisconsin-Whitewater in Walworth County already had a presence in downtown Janesville, and there is a bus line between Whitewater and Janesville. So, there are some pre-existing relationships that might help.

With regard to the Rockford/Belvidere and Rock/Walworth areas being part of the Region, panelists saw more synergy. The ‘labor shed,’ or the area from which employees travel to work, includes all of this area already. In Janesville area employment, approximately 60 percent of employees are from Wisconsin cities and 40 percent are from Illinois cities. Thus, here, workforce availability is a common theme. And, where there is common ground, sub-regions can work together.

THE ROCKFORD/BELVIDERE PANEL

Assets

Much like the other panels, this panel also saw the geography and location of the sub-region as an asset. They acknowledged their proximity to two major interstate highways and saw the infrastructure in the area, transportation routes in particular, as an asset to economic development.

Second, they saw the large number of educational institutions in the sub-region as an asset. There are 75 higher education institutions in the Region. This gives residents many higher education resources to access. There would be no reason why residents could not find an institution in which to build new skills for the regional workforce.

There is an initiative in this sub-region called Alignment Rockford. This program was developed in response to a poor school system reputation that dissuaded new businesses from coming to town. The sub-region developed industry sector academies in the K-12 system, which build career pathways and better align education with business needs. This is a fairly new
development that is reaping rewards. Manufacturing tours occur throughout the year, and Career Days at the schools have 150 employers, a major increase from previous years.

Further, businesses are now embracing new technologies. Also, a Maker Space for entrepreneurs has been funded and will spawn new ideas. And, not unlike other panels, quality of life surfaced as a sub-region asset. They saw the natural resources in the area, such as the Rock River, as a tourism attraction.

Challenges

This sub-region has a substantial employment base in aeronautics. This is a highly regulated, sophisticated industry. It requires a workforce with sophisticated work skills not rote assembly line skills. There is an even bigger skills gap in this industry than in others. Therefore, the transfer of skills from those who lost their jobs in automotive manufacturing to aeronautics is not a natural one.

The younger generation coming through the pipeline is not inspired to look to manufacturing jobs for a career. This is, in part, a problem with parent attitude and counselor inexperience in comprehending the importance of and diverse nature of the jobs in manufacturing.

Finally, panelists acknowledged that not having a collective vision is a problem. It has been difficult to collaborate and see industry alignment. Usually, these are ‘people’ issues that can be rectified with the right leadership. Developing and identifying future leaders is a challenge if you do not have new people becoming community members.

Thoughts on the Future

Looking into the future, panelists saw the need to expand their current efforts in economic and workforce development. They had laid the foundation for economic development within their own sub-region, with initiatives such as Alignment Rockford and Women in Manufacturing, which extended into Rock County. They saw the value of looking for expanded economic development initiatives beyond this area.

There are many opportunities to look to other sub-regions for economic development. One example is to look for additional supply chain businesses, for instance. There are probably other tools within the SOI Region that all counties could use. In particular, panel members saw the need to network beyond their current borders. They knew that business expansion and outreach still depends on personal relationships that build trust. While they have personal relationships in their own backyard, they have not built those relationships beyond Rock County into Walworth, Racine, or Kenosha counties. This extended networking would take some thought, but, could yield good results.
Thoughts on SOI as a ‘Region’

According to the panelists, the ‘region’ they are more naturally accustomed to thinking about is that region between Chicago and Milwaukee. So, the SOI region is not a natural one in their minds. Racine County has been used by this sub-region for recreational purposes, not for economic development. With regard to Rock County as part of the ‘region,’ there already is a natural commuting pattern between the two. Traditionally, many people who work in Rock County live in the Rockford/Belvidere area. Often, it’s the cost of gas that prohibits people from coming into Rockford to work. As the cost of a gallon of gas reaches $4.00, the issue of the cost of commuting becomes more prominent. It depends on a person’s income level.

Also, with regard to Rock County to the North, some of the biggest supporters of Women in Manufacturing come from Janesville. There is already a foundation of a support system that crosses the state line where trust has been built. So, this would be a natural fit for further collaboration.

Racine and Kenosha counties are not naturally part of the labor shed. But, this does not mean that resources for business start-ups, entrepreneurs, and small and medium-sized businesses could not be shared for the economic improvement of the area. The SOI ‘region’ is a blue collar region, and this fact could help in defining what part of SOI moves forward. One of the ideas that was generated was having bus tours in Racine and Kenosha counties, similar to what is being done with Rock County, where members of the business community in northern Illinois get on the bus and go to these other companies. Networking events across the borders are still necessary.

**COMMON THEMES OF THOUGHT LEADERS IN THE SOI REGION**

Panel members who participated in the webinars in each of the SOI sub-regions saw common assets as well as challenges and threats. They all believed the geographic location where they reside is a prime spot for economic vitality. They point to their very existence in a corridor that links Chicago to Milwaukee and Milwaukee to Madison and Minneapolis. Each one of these destinations takes between two and four hours by motor vehicle. There are good highways, such as I-90, I-43, and I-39 that represent transportation pipelines for business and pleasure traffic.

However, this motor vehicle transportation asset was not fully developed in parts of the SOI Region, and this fact represented a challenge, particularly, for Wisconsin partners. While plans have been made to enlarge the I-90 highway to accommodate the expanding vehicle presence, highway construction is two years away. Further, while trucks and passenger vehicles will appreciate the expansion of lanes on I-90, more needs to be done to expand alternative modes of transportation.
A commuter train presence would greatly assist in drawing new residents to the Region and increase tourism. It would allow residents to still work in the major metropolitan areas, but live in a communities in the Region that have a good quality of life. They would also spend money in their own communities.

Quality of life was cited by all panels as an important asset. Some panel members observed that young people will sometimes look for a good place to live first, and then attempt to find employment. With work becoming more project-based and often virtual, commuting every day to work is not the standard model anymore for many employees.

When discussing quality of life, panel members also stated that school systems and health care are critical factors in determining where companies re-locate. Additionally, access to recreation resources and cultural events are important. Thus, having water resources, such as the Rock River and Lake Michigan in the eastern part of the Region, as well as biking and walking trails were seen as critical assets.

Finally, each panel member cited the importance of education and training for the current and future workforce. Some believed economic development and workforce development could not be separated any longer. Education and training needed to be aligned with the needs of the business community. All believed the business community needed to be at the table when training and education were discussed and ideas generated for future training and internships.

**IDEA LAB – TAKING SOI INTO THE FUTURE**

**Discussion**

Northern Illinois University incorporated the concept of an ‘Idea Lab’ at the conclusion of the panel discussions. For the uninitiated, an Idea Lab has been described as a group of people who discuss the best ideas and thinking on key issues. In this case, the ideas and best thinking focused on SOI regional economic development into the future.

All panel members saw value in taking some aspects of SOI into the future. However, they believed there must be a shared vision of the purpose of the collaborative and the structure. There would have to be work done around themes common to all counties in the region. There were common themes identified throughout the webinars. These will be discussed below.

Thought leaders in SOI believed there might be more of a natural micro-region within the current SOI region, for purposes of continuing to work together. For instance, they believed that because of logistics of transportation, Rock County south to Rockford sub-region was a better fit for finding common ground around economic development.
However, they acknowledged that certain relationships may have already been built during SOI years that do not fall into this sub-region. These established relationships could continue into the future to improve economic development, regardless of their geographical distance. These could actually be some ‘small wins’ that are desperately needed for any continuing collaborative effort to move forward.

Rockford/Belvidere thought leaders talked about their initiative called Alignment Rockford and how it was driven in response to a crises. As previously stated, here, the community came together and made substantial progress in improving the performance of students in the school district and built career academies around needed competencies in the business community. These panel members compared this crises-driven initiative with SOI. SOI was not crises-driven. Therefore, they believed leaders would need to see a compelling reason to collaborate.

Reiterating common themes impacting SOI into the future, panelists spoke of (1) developing leadership, in particular ‘non-turf’ collaborative leadership, within the Region, (2) developing talent for the workforce, and (3) entrepreneurial development focused on small companies, identifying the financial and other resources needed to be successful.

The Region and Its Leadership: Why and How?

The current SOI geographic region represents an area in Illinois and Wisconsin that is geographically juxtaposed to be ‘open’ or ‘white’ space between the major metropolitan hubs of Chicago, Milwaukee, Madison, and Minneapolis. Significant government or private activity focuses on these major metropolitan areas. No current alliance other than SOI focuses on this six-county area. While there are alliances surrounding distinct issues of tri-state transportation and water, there is no governmental effort, state or federal, to tie these six counties together in future economic development of the area. Thus, this Region is ripe for development.

Second, there is a ground swell of organic leadership that has been developed in SOI. Panel members and SOI participants referred to this as sort of a ‘lava flow’ beneath the surface to leverage available business resources to the benefit of each partner. This collaborative leadership is not often apparent, and is, in fact, underground, moving toward resolution when there are Border Wars happening above, or political or other forces are stalemated. These organic leaders are available and willing to identify a Regional Champion.

Panel discussions when focused on challenges acknowledged that people involved in SOI have many responsibilities in addition to SOI. What would be needed to move forward would be a person who could devote 100 percent of their time to continuing this effort. SOI partners, along with public and private entities, would identify and select this person. Currently, companies in the Rockford/Belvidere give some of their employees release time to work with Alignment Rockford. Private industry could continue this practice in the SOI Region by adding human resources to work with the Regional Champion to build relationships within the Region where they do not exist. This represents a true sacrifice for companies that impact the bottom line. But,
the needs of the Region into the future are great as well. The threat of an ill-equipped workforce will adversely impact the bottom line of these companies into the future.

**Increasing the Talent Pool: How?**

Two economic development initiatives were highlighted by leaders. The first was workforce development. In spite of identifying substantial educational resources within each county, the absence of a skilled workforce in the future represents one of the greatest threats to the region. Particularly with regard to underrepresented groups within the region, all saw a dire need to focus on these groups in order to grow a thriving area. Second, the need for more assistance for small business was seen as a critical component of moving into the future.

In looking at the skills needed in the SOI Region, manufacturing occupations that use sophisticated technology rose to the top of the list. Looking at this issue into the future, thought leaders believed institutions and organizations needed to have a more flexible training system at satellite centers, focusing training on the industrial credentials needed by business.

Adult education needs to take center stage for those who, with some remedial training, could move into internships and entry level jobs on a career ladder. Also, a massive joint recruitment program to target returning veterans for advanced manufacturing jobs would be a common need.

Finally, the current initiative sponsored by Women in Manufacturing in Rockford could be used to recruit more minorities, particularly women of color, into manufacturing jobs. Dinners of Influence are currently held with single mothers who have undergone 18 months of job training at the Rescue Center. Many of these women are women of color. To initiate programming for the additional technical training for these women could also represent a ‘small win’ needed to keep the Region focused on improving the presence of underrepresented residents in manufacturing.

**Supporting Entrepreneurs and Small Business: How?**

In addition to building talent in the Region, there are needs of entrepreneurs and business start-ups that are not being met. While small, new businesses know about the technologies of their business, they lack knowledge of business operations. This absence of education in business management can doom a new business. It is incumbent on the SOI partners moving forward to find a way for business owners to conveniently and flexibly get the education they need to help their business not only survive, but thrive.

Additional support is needed in the Region for small businesses whose owners may have new product ideas, but, they don’t know how to proceed. They may need to see a prototype of a product. They may need to talk to others about commercializing and bringing their new product on-line. They may need to know how to approach banks for capital. While a Maker Space exists
in Rockford, additional resources are needed to expand these Spaces in the Region. The SOI Regional Champion could have all of these resources at his or her disposal and work with a liaison in each community to provide services to each new business or to existing businesses that want to expand their product line.

**CONCLUSION**

For the SOI Region to survive, there must be a group of open-minded people who see the value of this regional approach to economic development who are led by a Regional Champion. They must see every new employer arriving anywhere in the Region as a ‘win.’ Good relationships and leadership catapulted SOI to this point, and they will continue to show the way for future endeavors. One of the small ‘wins’ that would be part of the future is a workforce development initiative, in particular for the manufacturing sector, that includes the integration of underrepresented minorities into the work force.

While building talent in the SOI Region, efforts will also continue to assist entrepreneurs and business start-ups with education, capital, and space resources. Resources will be identified to seed more Maker Spaces and access more bank loans. Educational and training initiatives with flexible modes of course delivery will be identified to help start-ups and small and medium-sized businesses with the education they need to improve their operations.