

Big Ideas for Workforce Innovation: Alignment for Economic Mobility



Major Themes:

The brief provides examples of alignment for economic mobility in California. Out of these examples emerge several themes:



Job-seekers, workers, and employers can experience a more seamless service delivery system when partners align behind-the-scenes.



Aligned partners can respond to economic and social change by drawing adaptably upon their respective strengths as needs arise.



Successful alignment efforts build upon relationships and trust cultivated over an extended time period.



As partners identify common goals and align service strategies, they position themselves to leverage complementary funding streams and to jointly pursue new resources.



Employers can benefit from aligning their talent development strategies with coordinated workforce, education, and economic development partnerships.

California's 2016-2020 Workforce Development Strategic Plan under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) articulates a vision to align program content with the state's industry sector needs, and to align and integrate programs and services to economize limited resources and facilitate skills-attainment.

Alignment in this context goes beyond cooperation and coordination of services. The California Workforce Development Board (State Board) encourages regional partners to embrace the common goal of economic mobility for Californians through a deliberate and systemic integration of activities, structures, and investments toward this vision. Alignment does not happen in an instant; rather, it is a continuum of efforts that occur over time, improving efficiencies and resulting in tangible outcomes for job-seekers, workers, and businesses.

The shift in California toward alignment of workforce strategies is evident in the ways Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) are engaging businesses, partnering with community colleges, integrating services at America's Jobs Centers, and using data to inform programs. Workforce, economic development, training, industry and other public and private partners are uniting at a regional level to design and deliver these aligned services, leverage investments, and establish the collaborative structures and processes necessary for their on-going success. The State Board has issued a series of funding opportunities (see sidebar) to seed innovation and alignment across public systems, across strategic initiatives, and across boundaries that have defined this work for decades.





Alignment in Action:

Examples of Alignment for economic mobility throughout California

Alignment of workforce system partners to engage and respond to the needs of industry

The East Bay Advanced Manufacturing Partnership aligns the efforts of more than 250 manufacturing companies, 4 workforce development boards, 10 community colleges, and other training, workforce and economic development members to address three shared priorities: enriching the current applicant pool, improving the talent pipeline, and highlighting public policy that advances the manufacturing sector. The Partnership leverages a variety of complementary grant-funded initiatives, including the region's Slingshot project. Since the first East Bay Manufacturing Summit in October 2015, collaborative efforts have begun to bear fruit. The Partnership has formed connections between registered apprenticeship programs and the non-profit Swords to Plowshares to respond to employers' interests in recruiting and training veterans. Laney College has received employer input on a new Quality Control Analyst program to address an unmet training need. And, responding to manufacturers' wishes to market career opportunities to young people, the Partnership has entered conversations with the National Association of Manufacturers to replicate a successful model of contextualized STEM education in Bay Area middle schools and high schools. These and other initiatives are geared toward generating substantive responses to the most pressing needs facing the manufacturing sector.

Alignment of service providers to create a more seamless customer experience and improved outcomes for job-seekers

The San Bernardino Workforce Development Board is working with Chaffey College, the County's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, and business leaders to streamline clients' movement into and through training and into higher-skilled jobs. An integrated service delivery model – developed with Workforce Accelerator Fund resources – utilizes a universal intake form, joint orientation at a single location, a single assessment tool, and a release form that enables data sharing across the partners. Employer input on the common process has resulted in increased referrals of incumbent and dislocated workers to training and smoother transitions of skilled graduates into jobs. Staff cross-training is solidifying the efficiencies in this service design.

The South Bay Workforce Investment Board partners with El Camino College to align both systems and their case management personnel around the success of youth ages 18 to 24 in the Air Conditioning & Welding Career Advancement Academy program. In a relationship seeded by State Board funds, WIOA case managers visit the college campus to orient WIOA-eligible students and connect them to internships and employment resources, while the college's coordinator and peer mentors maintain close communication with WIOA-funded personnel and extend their presence to the internship sites. WIOA-eligible students receive free tuition, fees, uniforms, safety

equipment, and bus passes, in addition to 30 hours of career readiness training and a 200-hour paid internship arranged by the LWDB. Now with funding from the California Career Pathways Trust (CCPT), the partnership among education, industry, and the LWDB has expanded to provide work-based learning in the high schools and teacher professional development on engaging industry in the classroom.

Alignment of industry, workforce and education partners to accelerate completion of credentials and improve job placement outcomes

In 2011, the Sacramento region launched its first State-funded Regional Industry Cluster of Opportunity (RICO) initiative to foster the adoption of clean technologies and Zero Emission Vehicles (ZEVs). Prior to RICO's implementation, the region organized around training for "green" jobs, only to be disappointed by the recession and an overestimation of the actual hiring demand. The RICO coalition, led by Sacramento Employment and Training Agency, American River College, Sacramento Clean Cities, Valley Vision, and others, pivoted toward building the consumer awareness and technology adoption that were critical to the future of the green economy, while remaining attuned to workforce needs. With time, employment demand grew, and industry, workforce and education partners – already listening to each other, unified around California's clean energy goals, and now funded by the CCPT – began a deliberate investment in training pipelines. Businesses helped to develop new course curriculum in alternative fuels and ZEVs at the high school and college levels, defining new pathways into growing occupations. The coalition that nurtures this talent pipeline will continue to respond to the changing needs of the region's technology-driven industries.

Alignment of regional leadership to increase efficiency through common policy efforts

Los Angeles County's Community College-Workforce Development Board Collaborative identified a fundamental challenge to their regional efforts in the misalignment among priority industry sector definitions and classifications. This lack of consistency in terminology impacts regional coordination and the adoption of common regional workforce and economic development strategies. The Collaborative's LWDBs took the lead on a regional policy initiative to establish uniform definitions of in-demand sectors based on the nationally-recognized North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). By adopting consistent NAICS terminology in all labor market profiles, presentations, and workforce development initiatives, the region's agencies and systems will take an important first step toward alignment among workforce and economic development efforts.

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