

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NOTICE	NO. 19-09
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TO: STATE WORKFORCE AGENCIES
STATE WORKFORCE LIAISONS

FROM: JANE OATES /s/
Assistant Secretary

SUBJECT: Release and Availability of ETA Occasional Paper: *The Power of Partnership: American Regions Collaborating for Economic Competitiveness, 2009 Generation I WIRED Interim Evaluation Report*

1. Purpose. To announce the release and availability of ETA Occasional Paper: *The Power of Partnership: American Regions Collaborating for Economic Competitiveness, 2009 Generation I WIRED Interim Evaluation Report*

2. Background. In early 2006, ETA announced that 13 regions were to receive \$15 million grants to promote regional collaboration of a wide range of public and private organizations with the goal of transforming their regional approaches for addressing economic challenges. The grantees, selected competitively and referred to as the Generation I WIRED regions, were facing challenges from global competition and changing economic conditions. The grants were intended to bring together regional industry, education, philanthropic, workforce and economic development organizations in order to work towards economic stability and workforce growth. Thirteen additional regions were competitively selected for \$5 million grants in January 2007, followed by a final 13 which also received \$5 million grants in June 2007. This evaluation report focuses on the initial 13 regions, known as the Generation I regions.

ETA contracted with an evaluation team from Berkeley Policy Associates and the University of California, San Diego to evaluate the Generation I regions. The evaluation's objective is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the implementation and cumulative effects of strategies in the regions, including transformation of their regional workforce and economic development systems. This second interim report describes the evolution of regional initiatives across the Generation I regions, building on initial observations described in the evaluation's baseline report, published in May 2008.

3. Publication Description. The report describes the evaluation's key findings related to context and governance, collaboration and partnerships, activities and funding, measures of progress, and transformation of the workforce investment system. Those findings include:

1. Effective leadership, with leaders taking on the roles of champion, catalyst, and integrator, was commonly spread among several individuals within a region. Over the

past year, many regions consolidated or streamlined their collaborative structures and teams as their goals matured. Others made changes in their governance structures to sustain and institutionalize successful activities.

2. New relationships formed through the regional initiatives yielded concrete, ongoing benefits to many organizations. Regional stakeholders identified strategies that were most successful in fostering collaboration and identified these new partnerships as among a region's most valued assets and most sustainable outcomes.
3. Most regions had moved from start-up activities to an operational phase. While much of the strategic planning efforts had concluded, the regions continued to learn and adjust their programs accordingly. Only two regions changed the types of industries they targeted due to the economy's negative impact on their primary industry partners. In both cases, the shift resulted in an increase in the number of workers being trained.
4. Metrics used to gauge regions' progress continue to evolve and are organized into three categories—education and training, capacity-building, and economic indicators. Across all 13 regions, the total number of individuals who began education/training courses with grant funds was 31,499. Of those who started education/training courses, 61% had completed training by the end of 2008. Twenty-five percent of those who completed training went on to employment within a targeted industry. Of the nine regions that provided data, 5,429 educators were trained; regions estimate that 88,146 students will be trained by these educators each year.
5. The talent pipeline remains a chief concern in all the regions. Several had planned to offer programs in science, technology, engineering and math for K-12 students, however, clarification of allowable uses of grant funds led most of them to shift their focus to increased career awareness activities targeting older youth.
6. The national economic downturn and evolving ETA guidance regarding performance measurement and allowable expenditures presented the regions with the complications of dwindling public resources, diminishing industry investment, limited philanthropic support, and disallowed costs while also presenting new opportunities for regional collaboration. Several regions found opportunities to strengthen cooperation and expand into new markets and emerging industries.
7. With respect to increasing linkages between industry, education, economic development and the workforce investment systems, and efforts to transform the workforce investment system into an integrative, forward-looking talent development system, the evaluation team found clear signs that transformation is occurring in specific local areas, if not across the entire region, or in some components of the system. In other regions, state-level modifications of policy and structures have facilitated the regions' efforts.

4. Inquires. To view an abstract of this publication as well as to download the full report, visit the ETA Occasional Paper Series Web site at: <http://wdr.doleta.gov/research/keyword.cfm>.