

South Central – Southwest Wisconsin



The South Central – Southwest GROW region is composed of twelve counties including the cities of Madison, Janesville and Beloit. Since 2005, the Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin and Southwest Wisconsin Workforce Development Board, along with leaders from a wide variety of educational, business and economic development partners from throughout the region have joined together to more carefully examine ways to grow the regional economy while preserving and enhancing the quality of life for the residents.

The key challenge in transforming the region is concern over talent. The looming worker shortage, dislocated workers, inadequate education credentials and workers with language barriers create a significant challenge to the continued growth of the regional economy. In addition, the workforce development system is straining to keep up with demand for new, retrained and up-skilled workers.

To address these needs, key partners including two Workforce Development Boards and related public officials, four technical colleges, the University of Wisconsin system, five School to Work Consortiums, Capital Regional Collaboration Council, Southwest Wisconsin Economic Development Coalition, industry partners and community-based organizations will combine resources to strengthen and improve regional collaboration and build the talent, infrastructure and investment needed to support the region's high-growth and emerging industries.

The efforts of the partnership will focus on the following areas:

1. Sector Development – Structural changes in manufacturing and agriculture have increased global competition and altered the nature of jobs in the industry. This creates a need for workers with a broad range of skills.

In response, the region will develop a modular, career pathway-based, industry driven training program to support the high growth and emerging fields in these sectors. The goal is to create, organize, and launch new degree and certificate programs in sustainable and entrepreneurial agriculture, laboratory sciences, and utility-based energy. By creating sector-based skills pathways supported by industry, education, and workforce and economic development, this program will have both an immediate and longer-term impact on how companies hire and train employees.

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2. System Development – To keep pace with the skill development needs of the region’s targeted industries, a robust and regional infrastructure is required to support talent development.

Specific projects include expanding technical facilities / training tools through shared technology-based facilities for health care and advanced manufacturing such as Sim Lab, robotics training centers, and mobile maintenance trainers; improving distance learning capacity through networked “Workplace Skills Centers” at One Stops; and creating job learning opportunities for both project partners and the region’s citizens.

3. Talent Development – Many potential workers demonstrate deficiencies in basic workplace and technical skills and are unable to replace retiring workers in high-skill jobs across a range of industries.

Specific projects include the development of Workplace Skills Centers that focus on applied basic skills and foundational industry skills; the creation of industry-based internships and youth and adult apprenticeship models; and the establishment of Career Pathway Academies.

The overarching goal is to achieve alignment, integration and synergy among the workforce, economic and educational systems’ resources to build a sustainable infrastructure to support talent development, giving Wisconsin the tools to strengthen vital talent development systems.

