

South Central Idaho



South Central Idaho encompasses 11,502 square miles - of which 63 percent is under control of federal, state or local units of government. Approximately 37 percent of the land is available for agriculture, residential, commercial and/or industrial developments. The eight-county region is home to 34 incorporated communities with a 2000 U.S. Census population of 162,397 people and a current labor force estimate of 94,358.

Economically, the region has historically aligned itself with a resource-based economy – primarily production agriculture and associated food processing. Over the last seven years, a regional economic diversification effort has attracted a variety of new industries to the region – including Recreational Vehicle manufacturing, a large computer tech-center, plastics extrusion and metal machining. Successful growth in each of these new businesses has resulted in the development of additional supporting companies and has established new industrial clusters that are driving the need to transform the workforce training and talent development systems.

The regional labor market and economic landscape have dramatically changed from the region’s early days as an agricultural dynamo. Career and job choices not available seven years ago are now present in the region and the labor force system is struggling to make up the ground. Advances in technology across all economic sectors require a transformation in the education and training of the region’s future workforce and how the region provides retraining for the existing labor pool to meet the needs of these high-wage, high-skill and high-growth positions.

The proposed WIRED project is driven by three critical areas of need:

- 1) **Immediate** – addressing current workforce demands;
- 2) **Mid-term** – gearing up to meet emerging industry training demands; and
- 3) **Long-term transformation** – updating our economic/workforce training agenda to keep the region economically viable.

The South Central Idaho partnership includes:

- State entities – Idaho Department of Commerce and Labor/One-Stop System and the Workforce Investment Board. The State of Idaho brings the technical resources of the Regional Economist and the program tools and impacts of the Workforce Investment Act, the State’s Workforce Development Training Fund and the hands-on client services of the local One-Stop Centers.

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- Region IV Development Association has expertise in directing resources to infrastructure development (capital, physical and human) – with experience in operating small business finance programs, constructing public infrastructure and implementing workforce development initiatives. RIVDA also brings the voice of the local elected officials to the discussion.
- The College of Southern Idaho is the State’s leader in designing and delivering targeted workforce training programs. CSI’s track record of success and responsiveness to industry needs provide that critical link between program planning and actually having trained people ready to place in jobs.
- The Southern Idaho Economic Development Organization (SIEDO) brings the regional economic development marketing organization to the table – providing insight about the potentials for future business recruitment and their associated workforce needs.
- Cassia County School District/Cassia Regional Tech Center provides the voice for secondary education programs in the technical trades.

Representation from the private sector includes:

- Business Plus, Inc., a business funded/business membership economic development company providing direct capital to local business projects and identifying entrepreneurial opportunities.
- Two manufacturing companies from the opposite ends of the region offering different perspectives on the needs for a trained workforce, as well as collaboration opportunities for entrepreneurship to resolve outsourcing issues.
- Blain County/Hailey Chamber Executive Director providing insight to business development and talent training needs in northern counties.