



The OneKC WIRED initiative represents a dynamic, entrepreneurial and innovative partnership strategically designed to drive significant economic and workforce development transformation within a bi-state region of 18 counties in the greater Kansas City area. The OneKC WIRED's initiative's goal is to integrate and

build upon a collection of currently independent activities which will lead to an unprecedented comprehensive system of economic development, workforce development, education, and training to meet the region's current and future needs, particularly targeted to the high growth/high demand industries of advanced manufacturing, healthcare, and biotechnology.

The bi-state Kansas City region has a total population of 1,904,908 with an average annual wage of \$37,691 in 2004, but with 14 out of 18 counties having significantly lower than the statewide average of \$34,834. While industry sectors such as office and administrative support or sales-related occupations are projected to remain flat or decline in the period from 2002 to 2012, there are promising increases in production occupations (10.1%), health care (9.1%) and biotechnology (17%) in the next decade. Hindering the area, however, are 1) shortages of capital in research expenditures at \$300 million compared to \$700 million annual R&D expenditures in nationally competitive regions (e.g., Boston, San Diego, Research Triangle Park); 2) an aging workforce with 400 manufacturers in the region facing the prospect of attrition and retirements (as workers are currently averaging 55 years old); 3) insufficient resources to provide training opportunities in nursing, advanced manufacturing, and biotechnology at local area educational institutions; 4) poor ranking (135th place according to Richard Florida's CreativeClass.org) in innovation; and 5) regional skill gaps analyses that indicated that soft skills and job readiness skills are deficiencies cited by regional employers.

To remain competitive and foster long-term prospects of regional growth, a comprehensive strategy for transformation is envisioned that will:

- Transform the patchwork of education and training programs across the KC region into one systemic continuum of learning that supports core competencies, basic skills, the integration of education with work, and propels individuals toward progressively higher levels of skill, responsibility and wages;
- Establish formal pathways for current and future workers to better prepare for entry and success in the biotech, healthcare and advanced manufacturing sectors;

- Increase market penetration of public workforce system services to business and industry under the OneKC Workforce brand;
- Position OneKC public workforce solutions as a “value-add” for the economic development activities of the region;
- Establish common baseline of hard and soft skill data for labor supply through the use of region-wide career readiness assessment tools;
- Increase the entered employment, retention, and wage gain of public workforce system participants;
- Achieve cost efficiencies and increased ROL of public workforce system dollars through collaboration and demand-driven solutions.

Initiatives of the OneKC WIRED partnership will serve to 1) influence the practices within the K-12 public education system to begin early in preparing young people, especially underrepresented populations, for post-secondary education and/or high quality employment and 2) reorient the public workforce system to more strategically target high growth industry sectors.

Thus, partners will be expanding capacity at local area institutions to provide for additional training slots; fostering entrepreneurship and innovation thru Leveraged Points Forums under a Technology Accelerator; creating entrepreneurship internship programs; enhancing math, science and technology training and job readiness preparation at the secondary education level; and developing asset-based strategies, such as Lifelong Learning Accounts and Regional Training Accounts. Further, institutional reforms will be instituted to develop a OneKC Regional Workforce Council that will coordinate workforce services beyond political jurisdictions to deliver industry and business outreach services more efficiently, develop regional responses to critical shortages and to support portable basic readiness credentials recognized by both states.

