

News Release



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Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao announces \$65 million for workforce innovation in regional economic development *'WIRED' Initiative's third generation of regions to receive seed funding*

WASHINGTON — Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao today announced the U.S. Department of Labor's third generation of *Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED)* regions. Each of the 13 self-identified areas successfully competed for \$5 million to be awarded over a three-year period.

"The *WIRED* program recognizes that local economies often transcend geographical boundaries," said Secretary Chao. "These grants are catalysts to mobilizing the diverse array of stakeholders in a community to focus on developing the human talent that will be key to any successful regional economic plan."

The department launched *WIRED* in late 2005 with a competition among the nation's governors. In February 2006, 13 competitively selected regions were awarded a total of \$195 million to transform their economies. In January 2007, 13 additional regions, which also were among the best nationally, were presented awards to reposition their regional economies. Today's announcement launches the third generation of selected regions.

Generation III *WIRED* projects are as varied and unique as the regions themselves. For example, rural Minnesota will use its know-how and ingenuity in agriculture to grow emerging bioscience and renewable energy industries. Central New Mexico will combine the capabilities of industry, research and development at its universities, and national laboratories to become a focal point for clean energy and advanced manufacturing. Oregon's Northern Willamette Valley will align regional services to respond to needs for talent in advanced manufacturing and other industries.

"These 13 regions join 26 others in transforming their regions into innovative, entrepreneurial economies, and preparing their workers with the education and skills necessary to be successful in the 21st century global marketplace," said Assistant Secretary of Labor for Employment and Training Emily Stover DeRocco. "We are already encouraged by the results of the *WIRED* strategic partnerships, demonstrating that talent development can drive economic transformation."

WIRED's Generation III regions include: five counties in central New Jersey; 25 cities and counties in southeastern Virginia; 15 counties in central Kentucky; 18 counties in southeastern Mississippi; 12 counties in south central and southwest Wisconsin; 36 counties in south central and western Minnesota; 14 counties in southeast Missouri; 10 counties in south central Kansas; eight counties in central New Mexico; four counties in southern Arizona; eight counties in south central Idaho; seven counties in greater Portland and Salem, Ore.; and five counties in Washington's Pacific Mountain region.

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