

# INTERVIEW FINDINGS AND OPTIONS FOR REGIONAL INITIATIVES

This memo summarizes findings from the key informant interviews and presents a set of options for regional initiatives by SEWIB. During March and April, Mt. Auburn conducted a series of interviews with a number of stakeholders in workforce development. These included WIB chairs and chief elected officials, higher education institutions, other training providers, chambers of commerce, economic development agencies, regional planning commissions, social service agencies, and labor organizations. Interviews with representatives of 38 organizations were conducted (see attached list).

Drawing from what we learned in those interviews as well as previous research and discussions in the course of this project, we have proposed a set of options for a regional workforce development agenda. These options are conceptual rather than detailed. We are recommending that at this point you select three or four items for priority action. The next step will be to develop those options in greater detail. This will include a more in-depth analysis of the issue, identification of successful program models where relevant, and development of an implementation plan. Other options could remain part of an agenda but would be left for further action at a later date. The agenda would be prepared as a final report that would also include a summary of findings from our research.

## Findings

***While Southeastern Massachusetts is not widely viewed as a coherent region, there is growing acceptance of the concept of regionalism.***

At this point there is not a strong regional identity for Southeastern Massachusetts, although it is growing. There is increased acceptance of the need for regional collaboration, but regions are generally defined at a lower geographic level than the entire Southeastern region. The Cape and Islands are still seen as very distinct. Within the rest of the region, there seems to be general agreement with the notion that there are three sub-regions with distinct economic characteristics – South Coast, Tri-Cities, and South Shore. Even within these sub-regions, a lot of local parochialism remains, particularly among municipalities that are competing for tax revenue.

There was not a strong sense among those interviewed about labor force flows across WIB boundaries. Substantial flows between Fall River and New Bedford are evident. Some noted the pull of workers northward because of the tendency of wages to rise with increased proximity to Boston. Some also pointed to the health care sector as having a more regionalized labor market. (We are still waiting for town-level data to come out to do this analysis. County-level data does indicate some degree of cross-WIA mobility. For example, seven percent of Bristol County residents work in Plymouth County while the reverse flow is six percent).

The people we spoke to were somewhat receptive to a more regional focus, although there was a feeling of overload from all the new initiatives. There were very mixed feelings about the Governors' regional competitiveness councils, for example. There was a general view that regional initiatives might be advantageous, but there should be a strong rationale for undertaking them.

Interestingly, the most concrete effort around regional collaboration covering essentially the entire SEWIB region involves the region's six higher education institutions. They have formed a group called Connect, which meets to discuss common issues and to look at ways to better integrate higher education in the region, including development of more articulation agreements. Connect is also sponsoring a study to document the economic impact of its member institutions on the region. The governor's proposed higher education reform package, while unlikely to be passed in its current form, reinforces the idea of these six institutions as a common regional asset. To some extent, the student bodies of all these institutions cut across WIA boundaries.

Another regionwide effort involving higher education is Bridgewater State's establishment of a regional economic development council. The council, which includes economic development officials from the entire region including the Cape, is in the process of developing an agenda for working with Bridgewater State on common research and policy issues.

In the past, one factor that has brought the region closer together has been the development of new transportation infrastructure, including the interstate highways and commuter rail. The impending completion of the Route 44 improvements as well as the proposed commuter rail extensions (if completed) will help to further knit the region together.

***The sense that the region is at an economic turning point creates an opportunity for new initiatives linking workforce development and economic development.***

There is a widespread sense that the region is at an economic crossroads. The region is experiencing substantial population growth and changes in its economic and demographic structure. While the changes occurring are complex and the challenges they pose differ somewhat in sub-regional areas, workforce issues are a central concern across the board.

Public officials and economic development agencies in and around the traditional urban centers want to reposition the region from one seen as dominated by declining industries to one that is dynamic, growing, and attractive to new economy industries. On the Cape there is a sense that even as the region imports a lot of seasonal low-skill labor, many of the Cape's less-skilled lower-income residents are being forced to leave the area because they can't afford the area's increasing housing prices. These concerns are spilling over into other parts of the region as middle-income people escaping from the higher-priced Boston housing market bid up the price of housing. Increasing the incomes of long-time residents is seen as an important way to minimize displacement. And as

South Shore communities like Quincy and Plymouth have become less bedroom communities and generated more of their own economic activity, labor force issues have become more important there as well.

In the context of all of these changes, there is a growing understanding of the critical importance of raising workforce skill levels. This has led to heightened attention to public education and the workforce development system. With this increased attention comes and opportunity for high profile initiatives and collaboration between workforce development and economic development actors.

***The business and economic development communities recognize workforce development as a critical issue.***

In spite of the economic downturn, employer and economic development organizations are still placing a very high priority on improving the region's educational and workforce development systems. Chambers of commerce are very concerned about and very engaged in public education and workforce training issues. Chambers and economic development organization uniformly consider workforce quality among the highest priority economic development issues for the region, and this has driven them to get move involved in initiatives such as the South Coast Education Partnership. This provides an opening for more intensive WIB engagement with the business and economic development communities.

***There are concerns that the general public is not fully aware of or prepared to meet emerging workforce challenges.***

Although public officials and economic development and workforce development professionals we talked to are very concerned about workforce issues, they also fear that there is not enough general public awareness or support for workforce development. It is felt that many people don't understand the changing forces reshaping the region, the implications for residents and workers, and the importance of a skilled workforce to the region's future. These concerns relate to broader "big picture" workforce development issues such as maintaining the quality of public education, preparing young people for the changing job market, and retaining talent within the region.

Many of these concerns revolve around public K-12 education. It is felt that many people still don't understand the importance of high quality public education to preparing a sufficiently skilled workforce, and there is not enough emphasis on preparing non-college bound students for the world of work. The aging of the population in some areas, notably the Cape but also the South Shore, is seen as a factor declining support for public education. The state's current fiscal crisis has raised fears about further erosion in public education funding.

***Basic skill deficiencies among entry-level workers are a high immediate concern in the business community throughout the region.***

With respect to immediate workforce issues, a lot of concern was expressed about the skill deficits among entry-level workers. This was a common refrain throughout the region. Entry-level workers are seen as often lacking basic literacy in reading, writing and math. There is also a concern about lack of skills in information technology, a growing need among a wide range of employers. A second major concern is about poor job readiness and workplace skills – punctuality, communications, critical thinking, teamwork, etc. Low high school graduation rates and lack of English language skills are also noted as a concern in some parts of the region. Lack of higher-level occupational skills is a lesser concern – many employers feel that if employees have basic literacy and job readiness, they can train them for particular positions.

***Some industries of common interest emerged from the interviews.***

The views of economic development and workforce development professionals about what industries are most important to their respective areas, while not adding anything new to the data, did confirm where common interest and focus lies.

The health care industry was most frequently mentioned as a focal point of workforce needs throughout the region. There was a sense that demographic shifts were likely to increase demand for health care workers. Those interviewed recognized that there are a lot of training resources for the health care industry and a number of new initiatives to address the industry's workforce needs, but also generally felt that more scale and integration of activities and more employer engagement was needed. There was a particular interest in addressing opportunities for career ladders in the industry.

Manufacturing and distribution were considered important focal points for workforce development in all parts of the region except the Cape and Islands. No particular focus within manufacturing emerged. It is highly dispersed and characterized by a lot of small firms clustered in industrial parks. The sector focus was wide-ranging – medical devices, food processing, textile and apparel, jewelry. There was a sense that workforce development needs centered more on general skills upgrading tied to increasing quality and productivity than on unique training needs within particular segments of manufacturing.

Tourism and hospitality were mentioned most frequently with respect to the Cape and South Shore but were considered of growing importance in other parts of the region. One workforce issue that was raised was the need for more employees able to fill full-time, middle-management positions.

Marine technology was seen as an emerging sector with considerable growth potential on the South Coast, and Cape, and the South Shore. There was also some discussion of the workforce needs of the educational sector in terms of both professional and para-professional positions.

***Knowledge of how the workforce development system works and what resources are available is very limited, even among important constituencies.***

There was a general lack of understanding of the workforce development system in the business and economic development communities. Many of these interviewed felt they had insufficient knowledge of the different resources in the system or how it functions as a whole. Even some WIB board members admitted to this. Many noted that the WIBs aren't generally known or understood in the business community. There was a widespread desire for more information.

Economic development professionals and training providers noted that it is difficult for employers and jobseekers to access information about job training and other workforce development resources. Information channels are not well-established, with a lot of information being passed on informally. There is no one place to go to get information or to sort out what resources are appropriate for particular needs. For instance, if an employer wants to provide a certain type of training to his employees, he can not go to a single source for information to determine what organizations provide that training, whether a higher education institution, community-based organization, or private company. This tends to be very frustrating for employers. Consolidating all this information in one place and making it user-friendly would be an important service.

***There is a disconnect between workforce development and economic development fields.***

While there is a lot of interest in workforce development in the economic development community, economic development professionals acknowledge a real disconnect between the two fields. Economic development agencies are aware of the WIBs and the resources available, and generally have a good opinion of the WIBs, but acknowledge that the connections should be stronger. They tend to refer companies to WIBs or specific training programs but don't get more intensively engaged. They recognize need for more intensive interaction and integration of activities. They feel they aren't providing much input into workforce development planning or working closely enough with workforce development organizations in ensuring that newly locating or existing companies get the services they need. Some also note that there are serious gaps in the services available and/or ease in accessing services for certain types of businesses, such as newly locating companies and smaller companies.

The chamber are particularly interested in becoming more engaged in workforce development so they can help their members make connections and get the services they need. They don't feel that they currently have the tools to do this. Working with chambers may offer an untapped potential for the WIBs, for example, using chambers as an intermediary to funnel information and assist companies in obtaining services.

The disconnect between workforce development and economic development is more than a lack of contact. Those working with jobseekers and those working with employers sometimes have differing perspectives on labor market and economic

development issues. Employers are concerned about entry-level workers who lack basic skills, while organizations that train and place entry-level workers talk about the low quality of entry-level jobs. Both sides need to see the connection – employers will have a hard time attracting workers with skills if they don't offer good employment opportunities, while workers can't expect career opportunities if they don't bring basic skills to the workplace. Efforts must be made to integrate these two points of view so employers can get entry-level workers with the right skills but also provide opportunities for works to develop additional skills and advance into higher-paying positions.

***A number of gaps in workforce development programs and activities were identified.***

Among those most widely noted throughout the region:

- Lack of good information on regional labor market trends. One issue frequently mentioned was the implication both for workforce supply and demand of the aging of the population.
- Severe shortages of ABE and ESOL training.
- No employer-based entry-level training programs.
- A poor fit between the resources and services available and the needs of small employers (although the BEST manufacturing training program was seen as a successful example of aggregating training for multiple small employers).
- Problems with the Workforce Training Fund. It is seen as too bureaucratic, difficult for smaller employers and groups of employers to use. Some of those interviewed noted the problem of two approval levels – local and state. They felt it would be better to give the local WIB more decision-making authority;
- Lack of programs and services to support longer-term career advancement for lower-skilled, entry-level workers.

***The system is seen as too fragmented, both functionally and geographically.***

There was a strong sense that workforce development resources in the region could be better integrated and coordinated. The system remains fragmented on a number of levels. These include

- K-16 continuum. The need for better connectivity between K-12 and higher education, between community colleges and universities, and between basic skills training and occupational training were all noted.
- Coordination of complementary services. The need for better integration of training and support services was expressed. Training providers aren't necessarily equipped to provide the more intensive services needed by hard-to-employ populations.
- Geographic connections. Employers and higher education institutions expressed concerns about having to work with more than one WIB on the same proposal, program, or initiative.

- Scale of services. There are questions about whether the division of particular services such as ABE/ESOL among so many providers is the most efficient method of delivery.

There was a sense that there is too much competition for training dollars and lack of clarity about respective roles of various actors. More broadly there is a need for an overarching strategic focus rather than reacting to immediate needs or funding opportunities.

***There is widespread concern about inadequate and dwindling workforce development resources.***

There is widespread concern that workforce development resources aren't adequate to the task. The concerns included the deficits facing the public school systems and the declining funding for school to career programs. As noted, ABE and ESOL programs were seen as seriously underfunded. The higher education system also faces cutbacks. These cuts heighten concerns about competition for scarce resources. There was a sense that more collaboration and less competition across the region could make the region more competitive for workforce development funding, particularly with the Romney administration's increased emphasis on organizing regionally. There also was a sense that there is a need to leverage more resources from employers, at the same time engaging employers more in the design of programs and making the system more accountable to them. A need to identify and tap into non-traditional funding sources was also seen.

***Lack of transit options is seen as a barrier to work.***

The issue of transportation to work was discussed in many interviews. A number of people identified this as a problem. A number of dimensions to this problem were noted. One is the dispersal of employment to many locations that aren't served by fixed route transportation system, including industrial and business parks often located near highway interchanges. A second issue is lack of service for workers working second or third shifts. A third issue is the disconnections between the route systems of the four regional transportation authorities (Brockton, Greater Attleboro, Southeast, and Cape). While it is possible to develop routes that cut across district lines, this does not often occur. This creates problems for people who live within the boundaries of one transportation district but work in another.

There is a sense that much of what is needed is smaller-scale, more flexible transit options to address these problems. These solutions will likely require employer involvement. Some innovative efforts are being made in this regard, e.g., through the establishment of transportation management associations (TMAs) on the Cape. There may be an opportunity to extend this model to other parts of the region. Some larger employers have developed purely private solutions (e.g., providing van services from transit stops), but this has not been widespread.

Major new regional transit investments, e.g., new commuter rail, are seen as long-term at best. It appears that the Romney administration may be backing away from new

commuter rail lines in favor of urban mass transit investment. In any case, while these will help to link the region together to some degree, they in themselves may not be a good vehicle for intra-regional journeys to work because of their orientation to Boston and the small number of stops. They may help when combined with some kind of a feeder system.

Transportation planning is primarily the responsibility of the region's three regional planning agencies, working in collaboration with the regional transit authorities. Part of their responsibility is addressing barriers to transportation to work. But with all the other transportation issues they address, this may not always be a priority. Consequently it may be helpful for the WIBs to engage with them on this issue to ensure that it is given sufficient attention. There is already some cross-district collaboration on transit planning among the regional planning agencies. For example, the Cape Cod Commission has invited the two other regional planning agencies to be involved in its transit task force.

*There is a keen interest in more opportunities for learning and information exchange.*

There is a lot going on in workforce development across the region. However, there are not a lot of venues where practitioners and other stakeholders can exchange information, learn about innovative models, discuss ways to work together better, etc. Many of those interviewed thought there should be more opportunities for stakeholders to come together, learn, and network.

## **Options for Regional Initiatives**

Based on the interview findings and other research and discussions in the course of this project, the following initiative options have been developed for consideration. As noted, they are conceptual rather than detailed. We recommend that SEWIB select three or four priority options for further development. These could constitute an initial SEWIB agenda.

### **1) Regional Human Capital Awareness Campaign**

SEWIB could take the lead in an educational campaign aimed at raising public awareness about the importance of human capital to the economic future of Southeastern Massachusetts. This would lay out the economic challenges and opportunities facing the region and describe the role of human capital and workforce development in meeting these opportunities and challenges. The campaign could convey a number of important themes and messages:

- Identify economic, labor market, and institutional factors that link the Southeastern region together while recognizing intra-regional differences;
- Describe the changing national and international economic environment and the economic and workforce challenges it poses for the region;

- Describe the region's current and emerging labor force and how it measures up to the needs of employers in a high-performing economy;
- Emphasize the importance of investment in the workforce development system and lifelong learning in developing and maintaining a skilled labor force.
- Make the connection between a skilled labor force and regional economic prosperity.

The campaign would have a number of objectives. These include developing a more widespread and shared understanding of human capital development issues in the region, promoting a stronger regional identity, building support for regional human capital investments, and raising the visibility of the WIBs as leaders in regional workforce development planning and policymaking. It would be aimed at important constituencies, including the business community, local political leaders, local taxpayers, and parents.

The campaign could use a number of approaches to getting its message across. These could include:

- A series of Powerpoint presentations to business, civic, government, educational and other organizations throughout the region;
- A media initiative aimed at regional print media;
- A series of workshops or seminars aimed at specific constituency groups;
- Recognition of exemplary public and private workforce development policies and programs.

## **2) Regional Learning Opportunities**

Many people interviewed mentioned the need for more opportunities for interchange among workforce development practitioners and between different stakeholders in the workforce development system. They saw a need for more information sharing about what is going on in the region, more opportunities for networking and relationship-building, more learning about innovations in the workforce development field, and more brainstorming and problem-solving around common issues. Developing mechanisms and venues for such interactions would be an important service to the region and would help to build regional identity and relationships.

One particular need in this regard is for more interaction between workforce development and economic development actors. Learning activities could be designed to promote exchange of information and relationship building among these two groups. There is also potential for more interaction between practitioners in the five WIAs. This could include sharing information about exemplary programs and reviewing experiences with various approaches. Specific practitioner groups (e.g., school-to-career administrators, ABE teachers, case managers, etc.) could also conduct shared professional development activities on a regional basis.

Learning activities could take a number of forms, including meetings and conferences, video/web-based conferencing, web sites, and publications. SEWIB could

take the lead in soliciting input on topics and format from various constituency groups and in planning, sponsoring, facilitating, and/or providing logistics for the various activities.

### **3) Workforce Development Resources Information**

One issue that came up repeatedly in interviews was the difficulty of obtaining information about the full range of available workforce development services and determining which services most appropriately meets the employer or jobseeker's needs. Employer organizations often raised this issue but it is also a problem for jobseekers who may want to fully understand their training options.

Compiling and disseminating this information on a regional basis makes a great deal of sense since many vendors cover more than one WIA. This is true of the higher education institutions but also private vendors. In addition, many training providers are available to provide training on-site so their office locations aren't relevant.

One way to address this need would be to develop an interactive web site where employers or workers describe what services they are looking for and get a list of appropriate vendors. Information could be broken down by industry, occupation, job title, etc. Another possibility would be a more hands-on matchmaker service for employers where a trained expert reviewed their needs solicited and reviewed bids, helped with the contract, and conducted follow-up to see whether the client was satisfied. This might involve vendors signing up to become members, being screened for quality of services, and paying a fee for a successful match.

This resource could be a tool for employer organizations who want to help their members get training services. Chambers or other employer organizations could work with individual employers or employer contortia to find appropriate training resources. Chambers could link their web sites to a training resources web site or could take a more hands-on role in assessing member needs and finding the appropriate training resources.

SEWIB could take a lead role in designing the initiative and spinning the operations off to an appropriate entity.

### **4) Restructuring and Expansion of Adult Basic Education**

A number of factors have converged to make this a timely moment to address adult basic education. Employers throughout the region identify poor basic literacy and workplace skills as the most serious barriers to employment for entry-level workers. Current resources meet only a fraction of the needs. Many ABE and ESOL programs are oversubscribed and have long waiting lists, and the advent of MCAS will place further demands on these overburdened resources. And state-level policy initiatives are likely to lead to a significant restructuring in the delivery of ABE and ESOL programs.

There is currently a critical need to step back, look at the larger picture, and develop a longer-term, more comprehensive and strategic approach to addressing this issue. There is also a need to engage more stakeholders, particularly the business and economic development communities, and tap additional resources. This approach would

shift the focus on how to divide an ever-shrinking pie to how to increase the pie while devising ways to deliver services in a more efficient and coordinated fashion.

SEWIB could take a leadership role in tackling adult basic education issues more systematically on a regional basis. It could convene key stakeholders, oversee a planning process, and promote the development of a strategic framework for funding and delivering services. This might include the following:

- Analysis of demand at the regional and sub-regional levels, and the development of corresponding service level targets;
- Consideration of the respective roles of the higher education institutions and community-based providers;
- Greater integration with other entry-level training services (e.g., computer literacy, basic job readiness skills, occupational training);
- More employer-based “contextual” ESOL and ABE for entry-level and incumbent workers;
- Identification of models and best practices, both within and outside the region. For example, the Cape currently is the only region in the state with an ABE collaborative;
- The development of new service delivery models;
- Supplemental funding strategies.

## **5) Regional Workforce Development Initiative in the Health Care Sector**

Of any industry sector, the labor market in the health care sector appears to have the strongest regional character. There are a relatively small number of large employers and a significant amount of workforce mobility across WIA boundaries. The health care sector provides a large number of jobs in diverse occupations with potential for career advancement. There continues to be strong demand for labor, particularly in certain occupations such as skilled nursing. And demographic trends are likely to lead to increasing workforce demands in the future.

There is already a considerable amount of training infrastructure for the health care industry. While partnerships have been developed between employers and training providers, and among some training providers, training activity remains fragmented and a lot of programs are very small. The small scale of programs is a deterrent to industry buy-in. And while some attention has been paid to establishing career ladders, there are additional opportunities to be exploited.

SEWIB could take the lead role in developing a regional health care training strategy. The purpose would be to comprehensively analyze both regional workforce demand and workforce development resources related to health care, and develop a more comprehensive strategy for meeting aggregate demand levels, filling education and training gaps, further coordinating and integrating training services, and promoting career advancement through partnerships with employers and training providers.

An important component of this approach would be to develop better coordination among the region's higher education institutions. These institutions constitute the core of the training infrastructure for the health care sector. Some institutions have particular specialties that could be tapped on a regional basis. There have already been some cross-institutional program offerings on a limited basis. In addition, there is a need for better integration of associates' degree and higher-level programs.

Another possible component would be career education and career exposure programs for K-12 students. A regional initiative would provide opportunities for more effectively marketing health care career opportunities on a regional basis and for the development of common programs for use by multiple school systems.

By promising to address workforce development needs more comprehensively on a regional basis, this initiative may present an opportunity to more fully engage large regional employers and training providers than more piecemeal efforts by individual WIBs. A related benefit would be the ability to allocate training resources more efficiently and tap additional funding resources.

## **6) Joint Training for Smaller Employers**

Some of the region's major industries, including manufacturing and tourism, are dominated by small employers. Smaller companies are less likely to have the scale, capacity or resources to conduct training internally in an effective and cost-efficient manner. All these factors create barriers to training. One of the most commonly mentioned training issues in our interviews involved providing training to smaller companies.

Some models of joint employer-based training, including the successful BEST manufacturing consortium, and some hospitality training initiatives sponsored by the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce, have been developed that enable training to be provided by aggregating demand among employers. SEWIB could look at ways to build on these models to more effectively serve these smaller employers.

There are at least two ways to address this need. One is to help small employers in close proximity with like training needs to develop training consortia, in partnership with existing business and economic development organizations. These could be ad hoc for a single purpose or longer-term involving multiple training engagements. They could also focus on both training for newly hired and incumbent workers. One criticism of the Workforce Training Fund is that it only covers incumbent workers and that there are no other state resources to assist companies to train newly hired workers.

The formation of consortia could involve the use of employer organizations as intermediaries. The region's regional chambers of commerce, for example, are very interested in helping to address the workforce development needs of their membership. With the right tools, they may be able to identify groups of employers that have common training needs, and then help these employers to jointly contract for training services. This includes having a good source of information about training resources and the ability to make the right match with employer needs. This would require an information mechanism like that described in Option 3 above. Employer groups would have to be

willing to make the necessary time and resource commitments. It is possible that employers could be charged a small fee for this service to help defray the costs.

A second and more ambitious way to support training activities of smaller firms is to develop joint training facilities in convenient locations. Proximity and convenience of training is a high-order concern for smaller companies. Joint training facilities could be developed in industrial parks for use by small manufacturing and/or distribution employers. These facilities could be available to groups of employers for a variety of training needs. Some industrial parks already have business associations, which could be used as a vehicle to organize training consortia. Companies could contract with community colleges or proprietary training providers to provide on-site training. Facilities could be fitted with commonly used equipment and might also have distance learning facilities. In this vein, there is currently an effort to develop a joint training facility at the Dever Development Center adjacent to the Taunton Industrial Park. This might serve as a prototype for a new initiative. Alternatively, employer training consortia could jointly use the facilities of one or more member employers.

## **7) Emerging Sector Workforce Initiative -- Marine Technology**

One industry cluster that is widely seen as offering potential for future growth in the region is marine-related industries. The region has a rich history in the marine industries, including fishing, seafood processing, boat-building and repair, and other segments. More recently, the region is emerging as a center of marine technology. Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute is one of the country's premier marine research institutes, and UMass Dartmouth is another center of marine-related research. The concept of a marine technology corridor spanning the South Coast and Cape Cod is being promoted. Some see potential for production activities spinning off to other parts of the region. The potential for further development of marine trades on the South Shore has also been identified.

While this cluster is not a particularly large employer, it has been identified as an emerging cluster and is particularly relevant to the region's interest in repositioning itself as a more technologically advanced and higher skilled economy. It also has the potential to provide both skilled production jobs and high-level engineering and scientific jobs. It may provide opportunities for living wage jobs for people with high school or associates degrees but also provide jobs at higher levels that would help to attract and retain talented young people to the region.

The region's economic development organizations (such as the South Coast Development Partnership and the Cape Cod Economic Development Council) have a lot of interest in this industry's potential. It may be worthwhile for the workforce development community to become more engaged with the economic development community to plan collaboratively for building and strengthening this cluster. This collaboration could provide a model of how the workforce development and economic development communities can work in tandem to plan for emerging industry needs and strengthen the region's economy. This would reinforce the principle that cluster

strategies need to have workforce strategies embedded in them from the outset – not merely as an afterthought

SEWIB could work with economic development actors to identify emerging areas of activity in this cluster, identify the labor force and training needs, and develop new initiatives to address these needs as they grow. This could start with career awareness programs in the public schools and involve skills at all levels from production and service to technical and scientific. This effort could provide a model for collaboration between economic development and workforce development in other emerging clusters.

## **8) Capacity-Building for Community-based Organizations**

There is a strong recognition that more needs to be done to promote labor force attachment, skill development, and career advancement for low-skill workers. Community-based and faith-based organizations have a mission of serving low-income communities and have gotten increasingly involved in workforce development, but often have limited resources and capacity. As the workforce development system evolves, additional thinking needs to be done about how to take advantages of the particular strengths of these organizations in finding the appropriate role for them in workforce development.

An issue that came up in many interviews, one that may relate to defining a role for community-based organizations, is about how to promote career advancement among low-skill, entry-level workers. These individuals don't always know their career choices and face many barriers to advancement. While incumbent worker training programs are one answer, many people do not necessarily progress within a single company or even a single industry. Moreover, occupational skills training is only part of the equation. People need to understand what their career options are, what their interests are, and what they need to do to balance career development with other aspects of their personal and family lives.

Training providers such as community colleges may do a very good job of providing ABE, ESOL and occupational skills training, but may not have the capacity to provide career counseling for low-income individuals with many employment barriers. One-stop centers, which are dedicated to universal services, also don't build relationships with and provide the intensive case management that may be necessary for this population. Often, community-based and faith-based groups, have the strongest relationship with these individuals and the desire to support them more intensively, but don't have the resources or capacity to do so.

SEWIB could develop an initiative to support community-based organizations to provide stronger career development services. This could involve initial job placement services, intensive case management, retention assistance, career planning, and/or career advancement support. There may be a number of benefits to a regional approach. This includes joint research and development of program models, gaining regional philanthropic funding, joint staff training and professional development, and establishing linkages with regional higher education institutions and other regional actors.

## **9) Public Transportation Initiatives**

The dispersal of employment outside the central cities has made the use of transit to get to work much more difficult. Many new jobs are in industrial parks or off of highway interchanges. Fixed route services are provided to some of these locations, but generally aren't structured to bring people to work where employment is highly dispersed. Another problem is that fixed route services often aren't available to workers who work 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> shifts.

Regional transportation planning and transit services are somewhat fragmented. The region has three regional planning agencies, two of which cut across WIB boundaries, and four regional transit systems, three of which cut across WIB boundaries. These entities have sought to address the problems of journey-to-work to some extent. Yet problems remain. Because of the regional nature of transit services and the overlaps between planning agency, transit authority and WIB boundaries, the WIBs are likely to have a greater influence over transit policies and services in collaboration than on an individual basis.

The greatest immediate opportunity to address transit issues for workers likely involves the development of unconventional transit models outside of the traditional fixed route systems. These include ride sharing, van pooling, on-demand transit services, etc. SEWIB could undertake an initiative to research and advocate for such initiatives. It could work in conjunction with regional planning agencies, transit agencies, and employer organizations to explore these options and to promote the implementation of appropriate models.

The Cape Cod Commission is currently working on a model known as transportation management associations. These are employer-based small-scale transit services that bring workers to the workplace and make provision for transportation home in case of emergency. They can be coordinated with fixed route systems. It is possible that this model could be replicated in other parts of the region.

Other transportation issues that SEWIB could address include the development of more cross-jurisdictional agreements among transit agencies where warranted by commuting patterns and improvement of transit services to workforce training sites.

## **10) Regional Workforce Development Foundation**

Funding for any new activity is problematic. To conduct any new initiatives of significant scale, SEWIB will have to consider new funding strategies. It is particularly important to find ways to increase the involvement of the employer community. A regional fundraising initiative could enable SEWIB to expand the overall level of workforce development resources available to the region. A regional entity might be able to better tap contributions from large corporate employers, utilities, and other private sector funders interested in regional approaches to workforce development as well as funders who experience many competing demands for funding. A funding mechanism with a regional focus may also be able to leverage other New England regional or

national philanthropic funders with relevant funding priorities. A regional entity might also make the region more competitive for certain federal or state grants.

SEWIB could consider establishing a regional education and workforce development foundation that would solicit funding for a variety of workforce development activities. An alternative to establishing a new foundation would be to work with the region's existing community foundations to develop funding initiatives targeted to workforce development. There are at least two community foundations in the region, the Community Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts and the Community Foundation of Cape Cod.

## **11) Other Possible Initiatives**

Other ideas emerged from the interviews that might also benefit from regional collaboration:

- Labor market research: SEWIB could establish of a joint research unit to conduct research on topics of regional significance;
- Labor market information: SEWIB could develop information mechanisms to better track labor force demand and supply and labor market transactions;
- Entrepreneurship. A number of people mentioned that, in light of the importance of small businesses and entrepreneurship throughout the region, entrepreneurial training should receive more attention as an element of workforce development.
- School to career. There are a number of ways that regional efforts might support the school to career activities of individual school systems. This could include the introduction of web-based career exploration and diagnostic tools, the establishment of summer internship or enrichment programs (someone suggested a computer camps), and the organizations of professional development activities.
- Education sector. This is a sector with large-scale employment throughout the region. There are many employment opportunities at all skill levels – administrators, teachers, teacher aides, school bus drivers, security, food service, maintenance, etc. Supplying the schools with a sufficiently skilled labor force provides job opportunities and supports the functioning of a critical workforce development resource.

## **Next Steps**

The next step is to review and prioritize options. In prioritizing options, you should consider not only what makes the most sense programmatically but what organizational implications your choice has for SEWIB – what resources and organizational structure will be required.

Following the selection of priority options, this Mt. Auburn will further develop these options. This will draw from:

- Conducting a second set of interviews and/or focus groups with key interests/stakeholders;

- Gathering any additional pertinent information;
- Identifying exemplary program models.

Once this research is completed, a report describing SEWIB's agenda, including the priority initiatives, will be completed. An initial implementation plan will be developed for each of the priority initiatives.

## **List of interviews**

1. Attleboro Chamber of Commerce: Lorraine McCarthy, President
2. Bridgewater State College: Stephen Andrade, Director, Corporate and Professional Development
3. Bristol Community College: John Sbrega, President; Cheryl De Angelis, Community Services' Programs; Robin Smith, Business and Industry Center
4. Bristol County Training Consortium: James Calkin, Director
5. Brockton Area WIB: Mayor John Yunits; Patricia Williams, Chair; Sal Pina
6. Brockton One-stop Center: Brian Donnelly
7. Brockton 21<sup>st</sup> Century Corporation: Roberta Allen, Manager of Small Business Programs; David Bloodsworth, Downtown Manager
8. Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce: Wendy Northcross, CEO
9. Cape Cod Commission: Gay Wells, Economic Development Officer; Lev Malakhoff, Senior Transportation Engineer; Clay Schoefield, Transportation Planner
10. Cape Cod Community Action Program: Cheryl Bartlett
11. Cape Cod Community College: Kathleen Shatzberg, President; Lois Andre, Director, Education Resource Center; Sue Miller, Associate Dean, Health, Business, and Extended Studies; Phyllis Whitney, Director, ACCESS
12. Cape Cod Economic Development Council: Daniel Dray, Administrator
13. Cape & Islands WIB: Roland Dupont, Chief Elected Official; Sally Bowles, Chair; David Augustinho
14. Catholic Social Services: Lucy Vieira
15. Commonwealth Corporation: Jane Saunders
16. Fall River Area Chamber of Commerce: Peter Kortright, President
17. Fall River Office of Economic Development: Kenneth Fiola, Executive Vice President; Joseph Raposo, Director of Business Development
18. Lifestream Employment and Training: Paul Correia

19. Lower Cape Cod Community Development Corporation: Gwen Pelletier, Executive Director; Elizabeth Bridgewater, Director of Economic Development Programs
20. Massasoit Community College: Al Asiaf, Director of Special Operations; Barbara Finkelstein, Vice President of Faculty and Instruction; Elaine Stewart, Dean of Workforce Development and Community Education; Margaret Vaughan, Director of Community Education
21. Metro South Chamber of Commerce: Christopher Cooney, President
22. New Bedford Area Chamber of Commerce: James Mathes, President
23. New Bedford Economic Development Council: Robert Luongo, Executive Director
24. New Bedford WIB: Mayor Frederick Kalisz, Jr.; Tony Sapienza, Chair; Len Coriaty
25. Old Colony Planning Council: Pasquale Ciaramella, Executive Director; Bruce Hughes, Economic Development Specialist; Charles Kilmer, Transportation Planning
26. Orleans Chamber of Commerce: Kyle Hinkle, Executive Director
27. PACE: Bruce Morrell
28. Plymouth Area Chamber of Commerce: Robert Dawson, President
29. Town of Provincetown: Jon Gilmore, Director, Department of Community Development
30. SER/Jobs for Progress: Frank Cabral
31. South Shore Chamber of Commerce: Terry Fancher, General Manager
32. South Shore Community Action Program: Pat Daley
33. Southeast Manufacturing Consortium: Maria Carey Lallemand
34. Southeast Regional Planning and Economic Development District: Stephen Smith, Executive Director
35. Southeastern MA Central Labor Council: Lisa Lemieux
36. Taunton Chamber of Commerce: Diana Shearstone
37. Taunton Industrial Development Commission: Richard Shafer, Director
38. UMass Dartmouth, Paul Vigeant, Assistant Chancellor for Economic Development; Lisa Joaquin, Worker Education Center