

PROFILING SIX NEXT GENERATION SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

A Benchmarking Project of the Institute for Networked Communities (INC)



WHAT'S INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- *Seattle Healthcare Industry Leadership Table (HILT)*
- *Kingman and Mohave Manufacturing Association (KAMMA)*
- *Northern Colorado Manufacturing & Health Sector Partnerships*
- *Northeast Louisiana (NELA) Healthcare Alliance*
- *Calumet Manufacturing Industry Sector Partnership (CMISP)*
- *MADE in Central PA Manufacturing Partnership*



INTRODUCTION TO NEXT GEN

Next Generation Sector Partnerships mobilize business leaders from a single industry sector in a shared regional economy to work with one another and with a coordinated team of public partners to strengthen their industry and their communities. Next Gen Partnerships are based on the premise that access to good jobs depends on two critical dynamics: first, industry sectors must be growing and thriving, with businesses sustaining or creating new, quality jobs. Secondly, education, workforce training, economic development and government must stay finely attuned to the needs of those industry sectors in order to effectively create access to those jobs by community members. The key to getting both right is fostering strong networks that connect business leaders and public partners to simultaneously do both. This requires that business leaders be fully engaged partners, not just interested stakeholders, in the work of strengthening their industry and region. It requires public partners to shed practices of program and mission territorialism and embrace a new level of program and policy coordination.

That's why Next Gen Partnerships put at the center a critical mass of engaged business people from a single industry in a shared regional economy. They attract business leaders who share the belief that the success of their companies, industry and region are all interdependent. When mobilized into action teams and focused on specific, shared priorities, they can have a powerful effect on focusing and rallying public partners around a common agenda for common benefit. This model of public-private partnership exists in nearly 20 states across the U.S.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Benchmarking Project was generously supported by Ascendium Education Group. Ascendium Education Group is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization committed to helping people reach the education and career goals that matter to them. Ascendium invests in initiatives designed to increase the number of students from low-income backgrounds who complete postsecondary degrees, certificates and workforce training programs, with an emphasis on first-generation students, incarcerated adults, rural community members, students of color and veterans. Ascendium's work identifies, validates and expands best practices to promote large-scale change at the institutional, system and state levels, with the intention of elevating opportunity for all. For more information, visit <https://www.ascendiumphilanthropy.org>.

The Institute for Networked Communities (INC), home to the national Next Gen Sector Partnership community of practice, is grateful to Ascendium for their support. INC is also grateful to our community of practice who continually invest back into shared learning and continuous improvement. Specifically for this project, INC thanks the 13 different partnerships who shared their successes, struggles and lessons learned as they have and continue to build their own Next Gen sector partnerships. Ultimately six of these were selected for full profiles in this final product, but the time and insights by all 13 contributed to our overall understanding of the critical ingredients that make these partnerships work while also highlighting both the challenges and wins along the way:

- Northern New Jersey Manufacturing Partnership
- Western North Carolina Manufacturing Partnership
- Greater Upstate Manufacturing Partnership (South Carolina)
- Berk County Manufacturing Partnership (Pennsylvania)
- Northwest Pennsylvania Manufacturing Partnership
- Lane County Technology, Food & Beverage, Construction and Wood Partnerships (Oregon)
- North State Manufacturing, Healthcare and Digital Media Partnerships (California)
- MADE in Central PA Manufacturing Partnership (Pennsylvania)
- Calumet Manufacturing Industry Sector Partnership (Illinois)
- Northeast Louisiana Healthcare Alliance
- Northern Colorado Manufacturing and Health Sector Partnerships
- Kingman and Mohave Manufacturing Association (Arizona)
- Seattle Healthcare Industry Leadership Table (Washington)

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ABOUT THE BENCHMARKING PROJECT

After a decade in action and with almost 100 partnerships in nearly 20 states, the Next Gen community of practice has both grown and diversified. Over the years, Next Gen partnerships have learned and evolved to tackle challenges with their region's best interests in mind. The principles mirror those of Collective Impact and similar initiatives but specifies that business and industry must take a central and active role in the shared work. Ultimately the model assumes that what's good for a company must also be good for the regional economy, inclusive of the people and communities that make it up. This work is imperfect and messy but it is driven by continuous improvement and a commitment to collaboration by otherwise siloed initiatives. Building off Next Gen's toolbox and in partnership with the Ascendium Education Group, the Benchmarking Project set out to document the lifecycle of six partnerships across the nation. The Project is not an evaluation; it is an assessment of the common factors that make these partnerships work. These profiles outline the strategies, structures, challenges, wins and the pieces in between for six unique partnerships, target industries and settings. Accompanying these profiles is a Benchmarking Framework, organized across categories of potential impact and offering examples of success indicators in each. These profiles and the framework are intended to add to the growing set of guiding tools to other regions and partnerships endeavoring to close the gap between public and private actors both interested in shared economic vitality.

The six profiles in this compendium identify each region's motivations for launch, mechanisms for change, moments of transformation, measurable results, major ingredients for success, and plans for the future. While the profiles follow the same outline, the stories are quite distinct, demonstrative of unique starting places and varying strengths and weaknesses along the way. These six were purposely selected for profiling based on the following criteria:

- First, an ability to demonstrate a before-after picture in the context of private sector leadership and public partner coordination;
- Second, at least early signals of impact on students and jobseekers, public system efficiencies, business and industry stability, and improvements to the regional economy or its communities; and
- Third, a crosscut of geographies, demographics and stages of development.

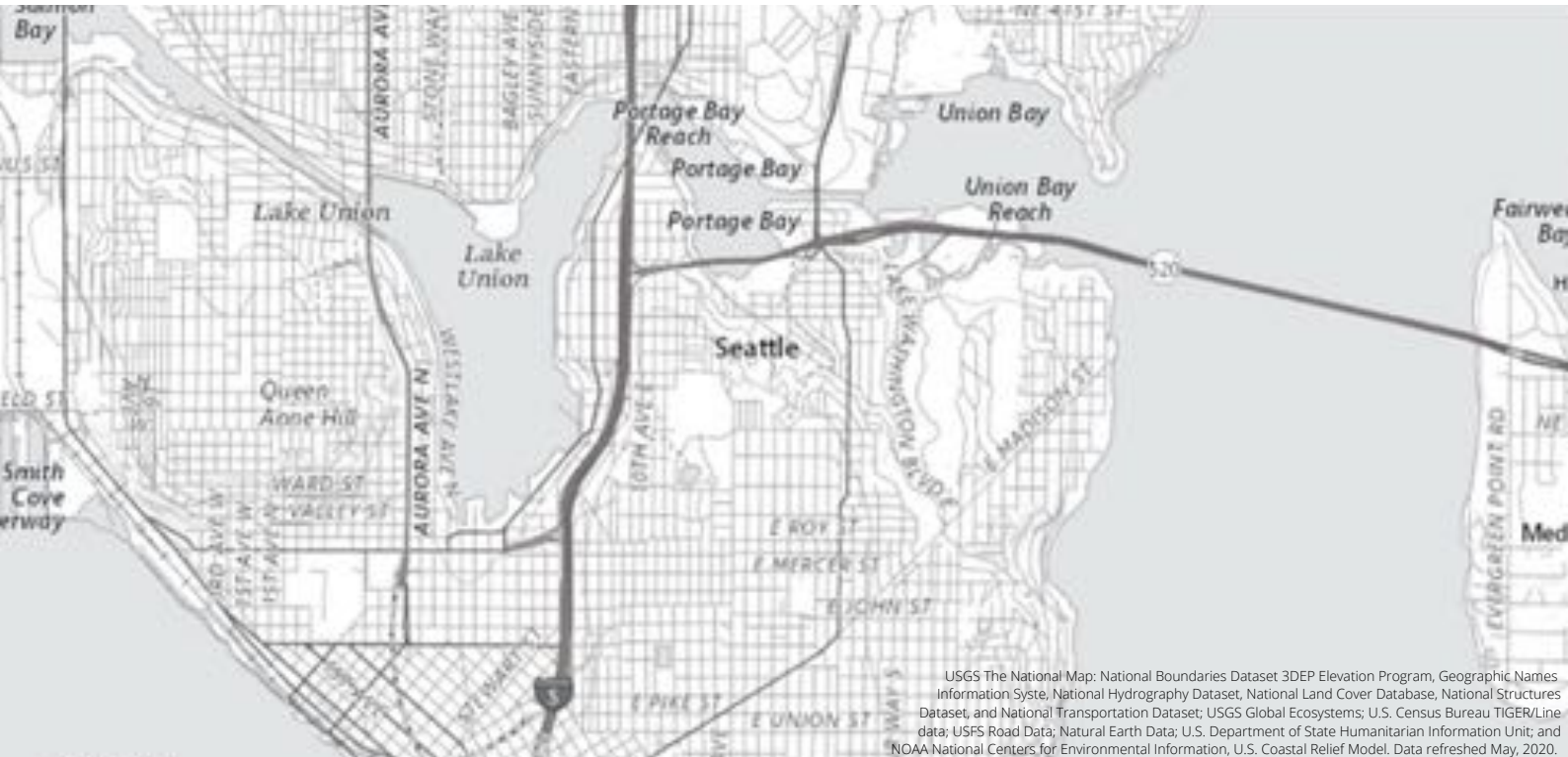
Together these six regions demonstrate that this work is that of constant cultivation and continuous improvement. Without exception, each region demonstrated the critical role of business and industry leading from the center, as well as almost dogged maintenance of coordinated responses and solutions from public and community-based partners.

PARTNERSHIPS:

- Seattle Healthcare Industry Leadership Table (HILT)
- Kingman and Mohave Manufacturing Association (KAMMA)
- Northern Colorado Manufacturing & Health Sector Partnerships
- Northeast Louisiana (NELA) Healthcare Alliance
- Calumet Manufacturing Industry Sector Partnership (CMISP)
- MADE in Central PA Manufacturing Partnership

PROFILING THE SEATTLE-KING COUNTY HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP TABLE

A Benchmarking Project of the Institute for Networked Communities (INC)



USGS The National Map: National Boundaries Dataset 3DEP Elevation Program, Geographic Names Information System, National Hydrography Dataset, National Land Cover Database, National Structures Dataset, and National Transportation Dataset; USGS Global Ecosystems; U.S. Census Bureau TIGER/Line data; USFS Road Data; Natural Earth Data; U.S. Department of State Humanitarian Information Unit; and NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information, U.S. Coastal Relief Model. Data refreshed May, 2020.

SEATTLE-KING COUNTY HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP TABLE

By: Lindsey Woolsey

This case study is one in a series of Next Generation Sector Partnerships profiles from across the country. Its primary purpose is to give practitioners insights into the key milestones and critical ingredients for success to-date that have shaped the journey of the Seattle-King County Healthcare Industry Leadership Table (the HILT). Its intended audience is the diverse mix of business, education, workforce development, and economic development leaders who are committed to the work of taking their communities to a new level of shared prosperity. The profile is organized into six sections: motivations for launch, mechanisms for change, moments of transformation, measurable results, major ingredients for success, and the future of the partnership moving forward. This profile is unique from the others in this series in one key way: the process and practice of establishing a Next Gen Sector Partnership in the Seattle region has been embedded into a deliberate workforce system transformation effort that in many ways reflects not only the tenets of Next Gen Sector Partnerships, but the principles of networked governance. This case profile offers a snapshot of the successes, intent and trials along the way.

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- *About HILT*
- *Motivations for Launch*
- *Moments of Transformation*
- *Measurable Results*
- *Ingredients for Success*
- *Future of the Partnership*



ABOUT THE SEATTLE-KING COUNTY HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP TABLE

The region surrounding Seattle, stretching north and south along the I-5 corridor as well as west across the Puget Sound and east to the Cascade Mountains, is the most populated region of Washington State. It is home to most of the state's big cities and industries, including seaports, airports and companies like Boeing, Starbucks, Amazon and Microsoft. The region surrounding the Puget Sound has a population of about 4.2 million people, half of those residing in the Seattle area and King County. The region is also home to a booming healthcare sector that clusters around the I-5 up into Snohomish County and down into Pierce County. Healthcare jobs account for 10 percent of total employment. These jobs support a high-quality and specialized healthcare service sector, as well as an essential network of hospitals and community clinics that serve a diverse and high-need patient population. That's why when the region's education, workforce training, economic development and city and county system partners underwent a major re-commitment to creating a worldclass workforce development system in 2017-18 they chose Healthcare as a test run for building a shared business sector partnership. The resulting Healthcare Industry Leadership Table (the HILT) launched in May 2018 by executives from a half dozen hospital and clinic organizations, borrowing principles and practices from the Next Gen Sector Partnership model.

Fast forward to early 2021, amidst a persistent COVID-19 pandemic, the Healthcare Industry Leadership Table (the HILT) also persists. It is led by a team of six healthcare organizations representing large hospital systems (Kaiser Permanente, Seattle Children's Hospital and Swedish Medical Center), community clinics (Healthpoint Community Clinics and International Community Health Services) and long term care facilities (Aegis Living), and has a reach of over 70 healthcare provider organizations in the region. Wrapped around those organizations is an array of public and community support systems who view the HILT as a go-to source for information about the industry as well as a way to directly plug their own resources and programs in where needed to support the industry's needs, particularly for a skilled and diverse workforce.



Above: "Downtown Seattle Skyline" by Joe Mabel. Licensed by Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International.

The purpose and vision of the HILT is to be a network of diverse, small and large healthcare providers in the region who come together to share and take action on improving access to a skilled healthcare workforce. Since its launch, the HILT has made improving equity and diversity in the region's healthcare workforce a set of guiding principles across its committees and activities. This work has become even more critical during the COVID pandemic, where not only rates of cases, hospitalizations and deaths are higher in Black, Indigenous and Persons of Color (BIPOC) populations, but their economic hardship is also exacerbated due to historic economic marginalization in low wage occupations hard hit by pandemic job losses.

The HILT's ability to not only withstand the pandemic but persist during it is attributable to three factors:

- A committed set of industry leaders from the healthcare industry who despite being pulled into crisis mode still re-surface together in order to guide the priorities of the HILT and use the HILT to their collective advantage;
- A competent set of public partner conveners (staff from the Seattle-King County Workforce Development Council and a highly credible community based partner organization, Seattle Jobs Initiative) who manage multiple workstreams and consistently provide essential backbone support to the network; and
- A magnetic draw created from the participation of industry by otherwise siloed public systems who both need the healthcare industry to help guide their healthcare-related programming and have the ability to serve the healthcare industry with resources and services if guided appropriately.

MOTIVATIONS FOR LAUNCH: A WORLDCLASS WORKFORCE SYSTEM

For the Seattle area the concept and practice of engaging the business sector to inform workforce solutions is not new. Seattle has a long history of sector-like strategies, most notably the design and use of Skill Panels by the region's then Workforce Development Board (now Workforce Development Council) beginning in the early 2000's, which much of the country at the time quickly emulated. Skill Panels were an effective way to get information from a sample (a Panel) of businesses in a target industry in order to inform how to use workforce dollars in a demand-driven way. But over 15+ years, while many other states experimented further with sector partnerships, three problems persisted: one, too many people in the region were not benefiting from the economy; two, there were fewer federal dollars for workforce development and more cuts anticipated; and three, effective workforce development programming was rarely brought to scale, and more rarely institutionalized.

It was these problems by 2017 that triggered a partnership of King County and the City of Seattle to put into play a regional workforce strategy initiative group of high-level leaders from industry, economic development, workforce development, higher education, secondary education, community organizations, philanthropy and government. They posed one question: What will it take to create a worldclass workforce system in King County? The resulting Regional Workforce Strategy Group (the "Group") spent the year designing policy and structural responses to that question. The Group presented their recommendations to the then Mayor of Seattle and the County Commissioner in January 2018. In addition to a focus on systems coordination commitments, significantly stronger diversity and equity goals, jobseeker and employer alignment, and talent pipeline connectivity, the Group made a clear structural recommendation directly related to business engagement: a set of shared industry tables (sector partnerships) that aggregates business input and business participation in the workforce system.



These "Industry Leadership Tables" (ILTs) had two intentions: first to significantly increase business involvement and investment in workforce solutions systemwide; and second to create access to a critical mass of businesses in a critical industry by the many colleges, school districts, workforce training programs, economic development offices, philanthropic institutions and community based organizations who need employer partners to carry out their mission to support jobseekers and students. The first would require building a true business network within critical target industries in order to facilitate and aggregate priorities of an industry sector, including garnering strong business leadership to lead it. The second required solid commitments by often duplicative, competing public systems to wrap around a shared ILT instead of creating their own employer groups or tables for their own programming. The end goals were simple: reduce the death by a thousand cuts scenario created when multiple systems and programs engage the business sector independently, and create the space and conditions for the business sector to step in and step up to solve their workforce needs together.

MECHANISMS FOR CHANGE: EARLY COMMITMENTS TO A SHARED PROCESS

With the recommendations made by the Group to the Mayor and County Executive came a new expectation for the Seattle-King County Workforce Development Council to play a pivotal role as a broker and backbone organization for system transformation. Over the next two years, this required strategic restructuring of the policy board, staffing changes and continued check ins with systems partners to confirm ongoing commitment (and to build trust) to the many elements of the transformation plan. Deliberately built into the restructuring period was the launch of the HILT, the region's first ILT, as an experiment and a prototype of coordinated business engagement. The agreed-upon structure of the HILT was derived from a scan of national sector partnership models and processes to build them. With an eye toward maximizing coordination of workforce development with education and economic development, and the desire to tilt business engagement from the traditional customer relationship to a bolder partner relationship, the Next Gen model rose to the top.

An early and important shift in process was the discipline with which public partners used to jointly arrive at the shared target sector, one that answered a pivotal question: Which industry warrants our coordinated engagement in the form of a formal ILT? Answering this question required looking at regional labor market and economic data by the diverse set of stakeholder systems already agreeing to a shared approach. This included the Workforce Development Council, Seattle Colleges, Highline College, Bellevue College, Seattle Metro Chamber of Commerce, Seattle Public Schools, King County, City of Seattle, the Port of Seattle, the MLK Labor Council, the United Way of King County, Seattle Jobs Initiative, the YMCA, Washington STEM, Seattle Region Partnership, and SkillUp. All of these were considered the top organizations most likely to be reaching out to industry for workforce needs, and therefore made the most sense to come together to select a shared target.

The final selection of Healthcare was made based on three criteria: the industry provided a significant number of overall jobs in the region; healthcare provides a wide range of entry-, mid- and high-level jobs, thereby offering a stronger potential for career pathway development; and it represented the strongest candidate for direct connections and impacts on the well-being of the region's communities. Additional criteria included the readiness and willingness of healthcare providers to help spearhead the initiative as well as a relatively low level of existing healthcare initiatives or healthcare groups already convening.

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“Looking back to 2018, the selection of a target industry itself was somewhat groundbreaking. We'd never done that before. All of us already worked with Healthcare, we all had and have our own programs, and we sorta like to do things on our own. To put a stake in the ground that we were going to build a shared table, and then actually put names of executives in healthcare organizations that we personally knew into a shared hat. It was a first for us.” – **Gilda Wheeler**, Senior Program Officer, WA STEM.

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MOMENTS OF TRANSFORMATION: LEADERSHIP, FOCUSED COMMITTEES, A BIG EVENT AND A PANDEMIC

The launch meeting brought over 30 healthcare executives together to work out a shared action agenda. They left with seven priority areas, including shared recruitment and talent development; internal training and advancement pathways; coordination of quality patient care; policy and regulations; technology adaptations; housing and transportation; and racial equity. Perhaps typical of Next Gen Sector Partnerships everywhere, the first six months after launching, healthcare partners sifted and sorted through their shared priorities, both perceived and real. Champions emerged in certain areas faster than others; some priorities faded away; others became natural rally points. An early indicator of success was a relatively quick relationship built with a non-profit organization called HealthierHere, the region's designated entity for a statewide Accountable Communities of Health initiative. HealthierHere focused on the coordination of whole-person health, including the collaborations required to integrate behavioral, primary, emergency and long-term care, a critical area of interest in early HILT conversations. The relationship between HealthierHere and the emerging HILT network, brokered by community and long-term care clinic leadership, resulted in a clear agreement that HealthierHere would be the forum for care coordination and policy discussions, thus clearing the path for HILT to focus explicitly on the workforce and talent issues that healthcare providers wanted to prioritize. While this early development may seem inconsequential, it signaled a spirit of purposeful alignment for the HILT and future ILTs.

From there the HILT grew. In its first year, the HILT tested its muscle as simply a forum for shared best practices, specifically focused on the internal training and advancement practices of hospitals and clinics. Quarterly meetings, hosted by a different healthcare organization each time, became forums for sharing and planning committee work. Lunch & Learn webinars on shared priority topics became regular events in between. Out of these activities came three outcomes: a sifting and sorting of shared high-demand, critical occupations; a bolstered focus on the need to advance low-income, entry-level positions to better opportunities; new relationship and networking developments between otherwise very separate healthcare worlds, that of large hospital systems and community-based clinics. This proved an important foundation for HILT to begin self-identifying as a healthcare employer network, one that in its next years would increasingly activate around shared issues.



In its second year, the HILT hit a stride. “Flag bearers” emerged around key issues, including the International Community Health Services partnering with Swedish Medical Center to map out the Medical Assistant pipeline and strategize ways to ramp up MA apprenticeships. This required conversations and strategizing across traditionally separate MA training organizations, including the 1199SEIU Joint Training Fund, the Washington Association for Community Health, Seattle Colleges and the WDC. Seattle Children’s Hospital partnered with CountryDoctor, a community clinic, to dig deep into the issue of affordable workforce housing for healthcare workers. The resulting HILT Affordable Housing Strategy Group was critical to informing a “Housing First” initiative out of the Mayor’s office, raising awareness about the need to focus on essential healthcare workers ability to be stably housed near their places of work, and designing two innovative concepts for a healthcare workforce emergency diversion housing fund and a pooled housing fund connected to training and career advancement opportunities. The City of Seattle Office of Housing and Washington Center for Nursing, as well as graduate students from the University of Washington’s Masters in Health Administration joined forces to navigate this issue and partner with the Strategy Group.

MOMENTS OF TRANSFORMATION: CONTINUED

Meanwhile in October 2019 the HILT's Talent Pipeline Committee, championed by leadership from Kaiser Permanente, Swedish Medical Center and Navos Mental Health & Wellness Center rallied support from 21 healthcare employers, 18 school districts, six community colleges, the University of Washington, the Workforce Development Council, Washington Alliance for Better Schools, Washington STEM, the Washington Center for Nursing, HealthierHere and the City of Seattle Office of Economic Development to design and implement a "Chart Your Path to a Healthcare Career" event for over 450 middle and high school students from school districts with high proportions of students of color and immigrant communities. This event, designed and sponsored by the healthcare businesses that make up the HILT, physically hosted by the SeaMar Community Health Centers Museum of Chicana/Latinx Culture, and supported by such a diverse network of support partners, was a huge shift for the HILT. It demonstrated momentum and drive and created a sense of excitement and achievement across a complex public-private collaboration. It laid the groundwork for much bigger plans for 2020 by the Committee, including plans to replicate the event twice per year, the addition of a region-wide speakers bureau to organize and match healthcare professionals with class rooms and schools, a virtual clearinghouse of "day-in-the-life" videos featuring healthcare occupations, and plans for a healthcare professional-student mentorship program targeted at BIPOC students.

Shortly after the regularly scheduled HILT winter quarterly meeting in February 2020, Seattle became ground zero for the COVID-19 pandemic, recording the first known-case in the country. HILT committee work pressed on, however much in part to the conveners and public support partners staying focused on committee priorities while healthcare partners navigated the crisis. Planning for MA pipeline research and fundraising continued, the Affordable Workforce Housing Strategy Group partnered with UW graduate students to conduct a feasibility study of housing innovation funds, and the Talent Pipeline Committee pressed forward with planning virtual speakers bureau activities. HILT conveners also spent time acting as brokers of COVID-related information across public and industry partners.



By the time the Spring quarterly meeting arrived in May 2020, the landscape was much different. Healthcare leaders who had led the committee work in the winter agreed to lead and re-purpose the May meeting into a COVID response sharing session. Held for the first time via Zoom, it was the most well attended HILT meeting to-date. The two-hour meeting provided key updates on committee work, and spent the remainder of the time in facilitated discussion and breakouts among hospitals, clinics, long term care facilities and public partners about critical staffing changes and strategies during the pandemic. It became clear that the HILT was seen as a go-to network for essential information sharing, and a place to re-prioritize shared issues. This proved ever truer over the 2020 summer when Seattle was plunged into Black Lives Matter protests. HILT launched an official leadership team (the HILT "Captains") who for the remainder of 2020 re-prioritized the HILT into five areas of focus:

- Sharing journeys to becoming anti-racist organizations, now evolving into discussions focused on shifting the healthcare industry itself into an anti-racist industry;
- A renewed focus on the nursing shortage, particularly minority nurses, including partnering on federal grants to increase BIPOC nursing opportunities;
- A continued focus on talent pipeline development with a funding plan to create a three-county student experience connecting platform for virtual events, speakers bureau, day-in-the-life videos and mentorship matches;
- A strong focus on solving the shortage of qualified behavioral health professionals, a problem exacerbated by the COVID pandemic, loss of jobs and stress of BIPOC marginalization; and
- A commitment to robust, consistent and relevant communications via quarterly Information Exchanges between the healthcare industry and the 14 community colleges and two nursing schools in the region about staffing needs, healthcare programming relevance and public-private strategies to support student clinical placement training during and post-COVID.

MEASURABLE RESULTS: A FOUNDATION FOR COLLABORATION AND SCALE

Apart from the number of initiatives undertaken by the HILT in its less than three years, there are a few factors that may best describe its story.

First, as a true aggregator of otherwise separate endeavors and resources. Hardly anything healthcare related does not find its way to the HILT, whether state legislation driven by the Washington Healthcare Authority, a summer scrubs camp by the Area Healthcare Education Center, or a researcher at Seattle University with an interest in the nursing pipeline. It all finds the HILT, and the HILT becomes a broker of expertise, resources and collaboration.



“Before we just all just engaged with industry for our own small scale purposes, and we got out exactly what we put in, small scale impact. With the HILT we are starting to see the signs of big impact and bigger reach when we aggregate. We couldn’t do that without a strong industry partnership. More and more healthcare organizations are leaning in and getting active. It’s just the beginning.”

– **Liesel Schilperoort**, Co-convener, HILT and Project Manager, Seattle-King County WDC



Second, emerging signs of real impact. Next Gen Sector Partnerships around the country often try to track and demonstrate impact across a few categories: on jobseekers’ and students’ abilities to navigate the industry and get good jobs; on public programs’ abilities to find efficiencies while realizing higher effectiveness; on an industry’s ability to stabilize and thrive; and on the regional economy itself. The HILT can point to emerging signs across each of these:

- the number of students reached and the quality of that outreach;
- real input to workforce programming around actual demand;
- A collaboration across otherwise siloed organizations that deliberately eliminates duplicative efforts;
- Areas of focus that are pre-competitive for otherwise competing healthcare organizations, such as focusing on talent pipeline and affordable housing;
- A forceful self-reflection and commitment by the industry to anti-racism, knowing this is the root of creating an inclusive regional economy.



“This is our network, and it’s up to us to make happen what we need to make happen for our patients, our people and our communities. There aren’t any other forums I know of besides the HILT that could get us there. But we do need to get there, together.” – **David Jackson III (DJ3)**, Director Talent Pathways & Learning, Healthpoint Community Health Clinics, HILT Captain



No doubt however that HILT leadership wants more. HILT captains express a shared desire to activate more quickly around shared priorities. Finally, evidence of shifts in systems change and networked governance, characterized by a replacement of hierarchy, public vs. private paradigms, top down management, and siloed behavior with the alternatives: a brokered network, a public & private paradigm, enablement management and leveraged behavior. Before the HILT launched, the Regional Workforce Strategy Group knew that an ILT model, if honored by systems and facilitated skillfully, should lead to deeper alignment of public system and business investment beyond just the spirit of collaboration. They also knew that a decision-making body would be necessary for joint accountability.



“It’s the body of systems leaders in our region that will hold responsibility for the inspired vision and the practical commitments to each other to not go it alone. If we’re to build this level of partnership with each other and the private sector, it’s that body that will be required.”

– **Chancellor Shouan Pan**, Seattle Colleges, Member 2017 Regional Workforce Strategy Group



In August 2020, as part of the ongoing workforce system transformation, the Industry Engagement Committee (IEC) launched for the purpose described by Chancellor Pan three years before. The IEC is staffed by the WDC, chaired by the Seattle Metro Chamber, and includes leaders from across the education, workforce development, economic development, labor, community based organizations, King County, City of Seattle and smaller cities in the region. While the IEC and it’s mission is and will continue to be long in the making, it is a strong foundation for continuous improvement and codification of the shared ILT model.

MAJOR INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS: PATIENCE, PERSISTENCE, AND PLAYING BALL

Public and employer partners alike reference a set of critical ingredients to success so far for the HILT, all related to the process and structure by which the network gets work done. Co-conveners (the WDC and SJI) are clearly identified as just that, conveners. They do not chart the course of the HILT; they facilitate, broker connections across systems, programs and partners, and they act as backbone support. They do this with neutrality (keeping their organization's agendas out of the mix), and consistency. "Captains", the healthcare employer leadership team, are responsible for guiding the fleet, drawing directly from their own organization's needs, opportunities and goals and drawing from what they hear, pull and also facilitate from their 70+ peer organizations that make up the majority of the region's healthcare employers.

Priorities are organized into volunteer committees or workgroups, spearheaded by "flag bearers" from healthcare employers and co-supported by the HILT conveners and additional public support partners with appropriate expertise and resources to drive that priority forward. The full HILT convenes quarterly to update and move forward committee work, to refresh priorities, and to deliberately facilitate sharing across healthcare employers and with public stakeholders. Additional events such as Lunch & Learns and now quarterly Information Exchanges with education are scheduled and designed to create purposeful sharing opportunities of high quality, relevant information. All of this requires exceptional workstream management, consistent follow-through and strong "just right" levels of network communication. While it sounds like a well-oiled machine, conveners Ryan Davis and Liesel Schilperoort agree it takes a dogged commitment to collaboration, attention to detail, an ability to build trusting relationships with industry and public partners, and a will to keep the ball in play.

THE FUTURE OF HILT: HEALTHY SKEPTICISM AND BIG OPPORTUNITY

The Seattle-King County region has pressed forward with its goals of regional transformation, the ILT model being just one part of the effort. The shifts and agreements by the region's largest and most influential systems in workforce development, education, economic development and government are evident. In fact, if the goal was to find a mechanism to supercede traditional disconnects and turf protections by the many workforce-related organizations and systems in the region, some believe this is it. Seattle has made attempts in past years to create just such a mechanism, even creating whole new organizations intended to be the neutral entity to link industry to public systems, with mixed results. But no doubt skepticism persists among some public partners, and onboarding of new partners to the concept and practice of shared ILTs is still a more common occurrence than not. On the industry side, healthcare organizations see the HILT as an effective and important forum for shared information, dialogue and cross-pollination of ideas and practices. They see it potentially becoming the network that bridges gaps and common interests across large hospital systems and smaller community clinics, which can often be adversarial especially related to talent. But they also want the HILT to move to action quicker and more often, yet have struggled to self-identify the levers, or capacity, to do so. This skepticism on both sides does not yet bouy the will of the partners involved; to the contrary, regional conversations seem to hinge collective hopes on just how big of a role the HILT might play as the world moves into a second year of COVID unknowns.

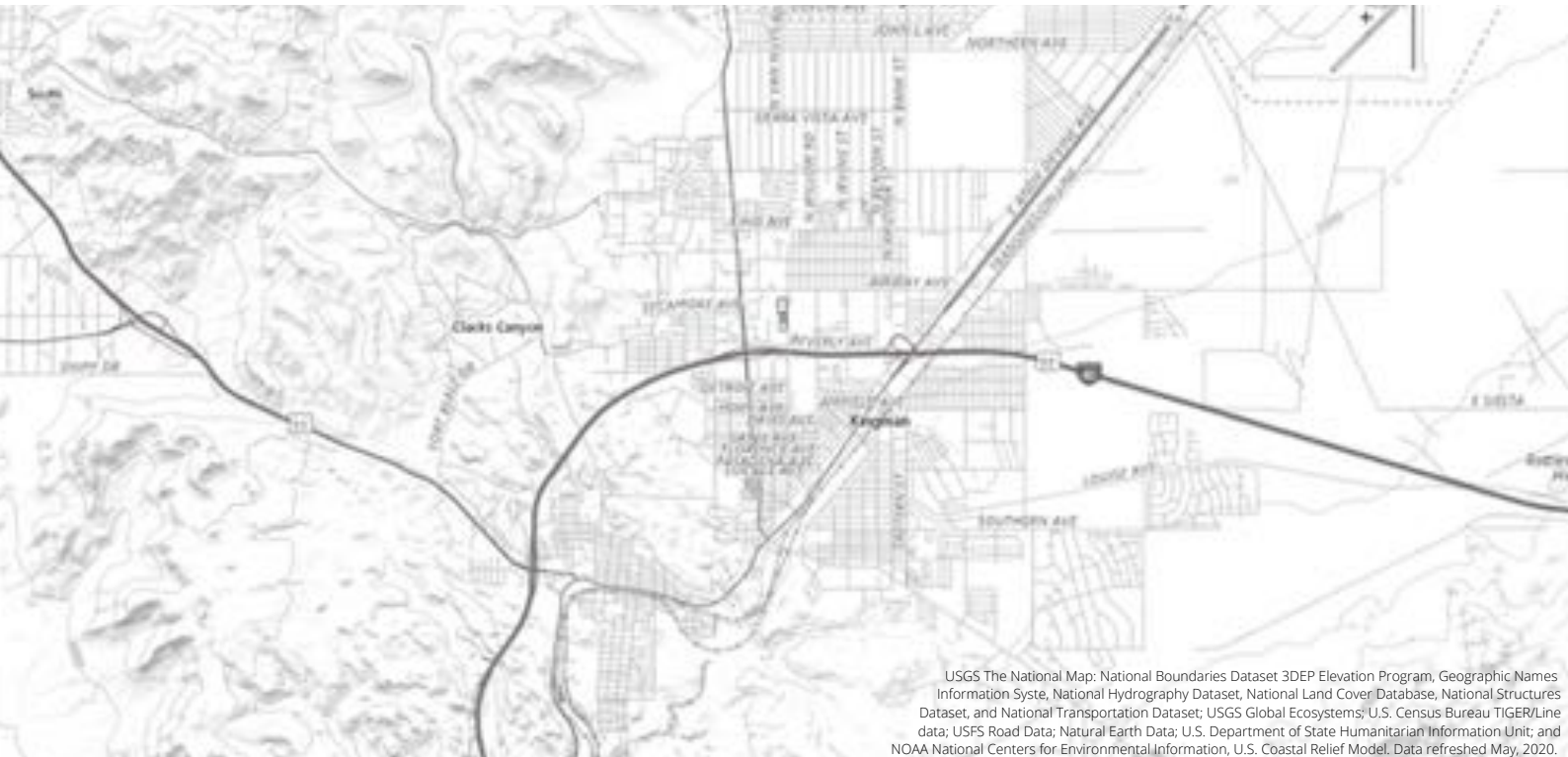
"Industry tables will be critical to post-COVID recovery in our regional economy. The speed and scale needed to implement sustainable recovery will require a go-to network to connect workforce systems with industry. During COVID the Healthcare Industry Leadership Table was able to advance agendas in the future talent pipeline, begin to address behavioral health shortages, and tackle head on the need for the healthcare industry to embody anti-racism to address workforce and health disparities."

– **Ryan Davis**, Executive Director, Seattle Jobs Initiative,
Co-convener HILT, Committee member Industry Engagement Committee.



PROFILING THE KINGMAN AND MOHAVE MANUFACTURING ASSOCIATION

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KINGMAN AND MOHAVE MANUFACTURING ASSOCIATION

By: John Melville, Editor: Mara Timmeney

This case study is one in a series of profiles of Next Generation Sector Partnerships from across the country. Its primary purpose is to give practitioners insights into the key milestones and critical ingredients for success that have shaped the journey of the Kingman and Mohave Manufacturing Association (KAMMA), at nine years one of the longest-lasting Next Generation Sector Partnerships. Its intended audience is the diverse mix of business, education, workforce development, and economic development leaders who are trying to take their communities to a new level of shared prosperity. The profile is organized into five sections: motivations for launch, mechanisms for change, moments of transformation, measurable results, major ingredients for success, and the future and needed areas for growth.

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- *Motivations for Launch*
- *Moments of Transformation*
- *Measurable Results*
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- *Future of the Partnership*



MOTIVATIONS FOR LAUNCH: AN OVERLOOKED INDUSTRY, AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A NEW APPROACH

Historically, the economy of northwest Arizona's Mohave County had been primarily based on cattle ranching, mining, and tourism. With the addition of an industrial park in the late 1970s, the manufacturing sector began to grow, with the number of companies accelerating rapidly in the first decade of the 2000s. By 2011, more than 200 companies were already having trouble finding sufficient skilled workers, increasingly raiding one another for talent. Although the sector had grown to account for about 20% of the County's jobs, the community at large did not have a good understanding of the industry, impacts, or potential. For their part, manufacturers were not visibly active in community affairs, and while some individuals were engaged in the community, the industry had not developed a collective voice.

At this moment, the State of Arizona adopted the Next Generation Sector Partnership approach, offering regions help to launch their own partnerships, and encouraging local workforce development leaders to learn the methodology and recruit business champions. Jen Miles, a workforce development executive who also had an extensive business background, jumped at the opportunity, and enlisted John Hansen, the Chief Operating Officer of Laron Corporation, as the lead champion. Hansen and other manufacturers had been informally discussing the need to work together, and the time seemed right to launch a partnership.



Above: "Kingman to Las Vegas" by Glysiak is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported.

MECHANISMS FOR CHANGE: INDUSTRY LED, COMMUNITY SUPPORTED, BOTH PRACTICAL AND VISIONARY

Initially, there was skepticism among manufacturers about getting involved in something that they assumed was going to be government driven. Understanding that the Next Gen approach was to be industry led, Hansen, who was well-respected among his peers for his integrity and industry acumen, reassured a core group of business leaders that this partnership would be theirs to drive. As important, Hansen had administrative help largely from Jen Miles and her staff, as well as guidance on how to work with different community institutions. The combination of an industry-led, community-supported approach enabled the partnership to evolve into a unique vehicle for change.

Because it was industry-led, the partnership chose a mission that went beyond a workforce development agenda. From the beginning, it focused on both practical and immediate challenges facing local manufacturers, such as peer support around human resource, environmental health and safety, OSHA compliance, industrial park road improvements, and an on-line freight sharing program. It also embraced a longer-term and ambitious vision: discovering and leveraging the hidden talents of their region, including transformative transportation and educational infrastructure investments that would open up a new era of economic prosperity.

MOMENTS OF TRANSFORMATION: ESTABLISHING OWNERSHIP, DRIVING SOLUTIONS, BECOMING PART OF THE COMMUNITY

A transformative moment early in the development of the partnership was the decision to formalize ownership. Manufacturers decided to incorporate their fledgling group, forming a non-profit entity with the name of KAMMA: Kingman and Mohave Manufacturing Association. The entity, however, did not look or operate like a traditional industry association: it has never had employees and remains entirely driven by its board officers and members, who have taken over the administrative support tasks once provided by the workforce development system staff.

The Association has been able to get its members to contribute modest dues to help offset operational costs, with membership growing every year between 2011 and 2019. And, when the Association received public funds from the City of Kingman for start-up and incorporation costs, it paid them back in full. To newcomers and long-time contributors alike, through both words and actions, it is clear that the region's manufacturing industry directs its own partnership.

An important turning point early in the operation of the Association was a recognition that members could drive change rather than wait for others to offer solutions. An early example was the adoption of a creative approach to apprenticeships for millwrights, machinists, and welders, with one company (Laron) hosting several apprentices for other companies, a model that was recognized nationally. Another example is the response to a fatality in the industrial park. Rather than accept slow emergency response times, Association members themselves reached out to the local community college, co-designing and sustaining a first-responder training course for designated individuals at local manufacturers that to this day is critical to maintaining a cadre of trained employee first-responders able to administer emergency assistance.

Another turning point early in the operation of the Association was the recognition by education, workforce development, the City of Kingman, and other community leaders that the manufacturing industry could now speak with one voice.

KAMMA meetings became an important venue for community partners to hear the industry's shared priorities and identify specific ways to support the manufacturing sector. This shift also led to manufacturing leaders becoming active advocates with local and state government for major community improvements, such as transportation and educational infrastructure.

Despite a number of successes over the years, it was 2020 that produced perhaps the biggest defining moment for KAMMA. Its founding chair John Hansen retired, and was replaced with another long-time Board member, ensuring continuity. At the same time, major breakthroughs in both transportation and educational infrastructure confirmed the role of KAMMA as part of the fabric of the community. Both breakthroughs were years in the making, with KAMMA members collaborating with other community leaders to work through financial, political, and technical challenges to reach written agreements to move forward:

- The Rancho Santa Fe Parkway Interchange, providing new transportation access to the industrial park along with the acquisition of industrial land for major expansion of the manufacturing sector.
- A new workforce training center at Mohave Community College, which will be housed in either a repurposed 10,800 square foot building or a new facility, and will provide, working closely with KAMMA, a series of rapid training modules for manufacturing workers.



MEASURABLE RESULTS: PLAYING THE LONG GAME WITH TANGIBLE WINS ALONG THE WAY

KAMMA's history has been marked by specific, meaningful achievements that have kept members and their community partners engaged. These results helped establish and grow KAMMA's influence, which members have used to pursue larger, more complex goals.

In the early years, the Association could point to the training and hiring of 18 new apprentices through the Laron Extended Apprenticeship Program (LEAP), as well as reaching more youth with an expansion of Manufacturing Day activities. It was also responsible for transforming how manufacturers prepared for emergency situations by creating a first-responder educational program and ensuring companies designated someone on staff to become trained. The Association provided an ongoing series of learning events for members on business and technical issues, as well as connections to local and state assistance (e.g., a local company received a \$40,000 grant through Arizona's Manufacturing Extension Partnership to implement a LEAN solution).

At the same time, KAMMA was developing relationships, sharing their collective needs, and advocating for solutions in both education and transportation. An early win was the College's acquisition of a Mobile Training Laboratory to provide a focal point for short-term workforce training. KAMMA was instrumental in helping secure funding, which was included in a City of Kingman Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), and matched by the College.

However, the College did not sustain its commitment to staffing and otherwise supporting operation of the Mobile Lab, and it fell into disuse.

KAMMA persisted, and when a new college president was appointed in 2019, a renewed discussion of the need for responsive workforce training for manufacturing ensued. Over the past year, KAMMA has weighed in on strengths and weaknesses of curriculum and begun to offer more internships. The College has introduced new classes and tailored the curriculum of others—from basic blueprint reading and mechanics to electronics in a manufacturing environment. The College has also made the bigger commitment to create a new workforce training center in 2021 that will sustain their focus on short-term training modules designed for working adults, enabling current manufacturing company workers to add skills while employed.

KAMMA has also played the long game to improve the local transportation infrastructure. It started in 2011 with a quick assessment of road conditions in the industrial park and requests for specific improvements. It continued in 2014 with a vision for pursuing a foreign trade zone designation, the idea of an "inland port" as a catalyst to drive growth of a local logistics and manufacturing hub with close access to the major Southern California market. Association leaders pursued the idea for two more years without success. However, the need for a major improvement in the highway infrastructure—an interchange that would provide much more access and stimulate growth of manufacturing companies in the industrial park—was clear.

Local efforts to improve highway capacity and access had been pursued off and on for decades. The specific proposal for a new highway interchange was first put together in 1971, but state funding kept being delayed year after year until 2008. Then the community split into growth and no-growth factions, putting forward competing proposals and bringing the process to a halt. By 2017, local government officials had identified a dedicated local funding source, but that source was blocked by a ballot initiative.

Despite this history of setbacks, KAMMA intensified its efforts to secure state funding. John Hansen joined a team of local government officials, including Jen Miles who had become mayor of Kingman, to attend Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) advisory committee meetings, traveling to different locations across the State, often driving several hours to keep presenting their funding proposal during 5-minute speaking slots. Although they ultimately did not get the funding through the ADOT process, they did discover an avenue for going directly to the Legislature. Working with their local state representative Regina Cobb, and with support from the Governor, they successfully secured a \$20 million allocation to move the project forward.

The local team was then able to put together a complete financing package, including local government dollars, commitments from a private developer, and state funding. By the end of 2020, the final piece of a complex set of development agreements were approved to secure the construction of the Rancho Santa Fe Interchange plus additional industrial land development, with the project scheduled to break ground in early 2021.

MAJOR INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS: LEADERSHIP, VISION, PERSISTENCE

Those involved with KAMMA, from industry leaders to community partners, uniformly agree that John Hansen provided a distinctive kind of leadership as the founding Chair of the Association. But his leadership had several important dimensions that together opened up avenues and challenged others to be leaders themselves. Those qualities included:

- A reputation for integrity, community mindedness, independence from political agendas, and respected business expertise, creating an atmosphere of trust first among other manufacturers, then among community partners. He provided a model for others, and tended to attract those who shared his guiding principles.
- An inviting and welcoming approach, which opened the door to new people and ideas constantly and extinguished concerns about secret agendas and exclusive groups making decisions for the community. KAMMA became a unique forum for inclusive dialogue among stakeholders, the only place where those conversations took place on a monthly basis.
- A willingness to put in the work, to show up for public meetings and be a reliable partner and inspire others to follow-through on their commitments.



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- A commitment to champion the community, where the community's interests intersected with those of industry, rather than a narrow definition of his or other manufacturers' bottom line. As a result, KAMMA worked to find its distinctive role and contribution to the larger shared effort to improve Mohave County.
- The use of "appreciative inquiry," focusing on assets, leveraging strengths, and realizing untapped potential, as a way to create and sustain a shared, positive vision for what the community and manufacturing industry could become together.
- The ability to articulate the common vision and convince others that they could share ownership of that vision. This was coupled with the ability to help people identify their role and contribute their specific expertise to the cause.

MOVING FORWARD: STAYING FOCUSED ON IMPLEMENTATION, VIGILANT ABOUT SUCCESSION

While KAMMA has become an important part of the fabric of the community, it is at a critical point of transition. Now that major breakthroughs in education and transportation infrastructure have been achieved, KAMMA will need to stay engaged in the implementation phase of each effort. By design, the creation of a workforce training center by Mohave Community College will need the ongoing involvement of manufacturers to weigh in on the focus and curriculum of training modules, provide instructional assistance, and perhaps donate equipment and materials. As the Interchange is built and industrial land developed, KAMMA's continuing advocacy will be important to ensure that local and state government effectively provides the expanded services to support the growth of existing and new companies.

With John Hansen's retirement along with the continuing impacts of COVID-19 on business operations and community stability, KAMMA will need to be vigilant about succession. Fortunately, there is a strong foundation upon which to build: there are now many "co-owners," not just a single champion, as well as an organization with an established role as advocate of a shared community vision, and a tradition of collaboration that continues to widen the circle engagement of business and community partners.



PROFILING THE NORTHERN COLORADO MANUFACTURING AND HEALTH SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

A Benchmarking Project of the Institute for Networked Communities (INC)



NORTHERN COLORADO MANUFACTURING AND HEALTH SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

By: John Melville, Editor: Mara Timmeney

This case study is one in a series of profiles of Next Generation Sector Partnerships from across the country. Its primary purpose is to give practitioners insights into the key milestones and critical ingredients for success that have shaped the journey of the Northern Colorado Manufacturing and Health Sector Partnerships, at seven years two of the longest-lasting Next Generation Sector Partnerships nationwide. Its intended audience is the diverse mix of business, education, workforce development, and economic development leaders who are trying to take their communities to a new level of shared prosperity. The profile is organized into five sections: motivations for launch, mechanisms for change, moments of transformation, measurable results, major ingredients for success, and the future and needed areas for growth.

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- *Motivations for Launch*
- *Moments of Transformation*
- *Measurable Results*
- *Ingredients for Success*
- *Future of the Partnership*



MOTIVATIONS FOR LAUNCH: AN OPPORTUNITY TO BREAK DOWN INDUSTRY AND COMMUNITY SILOS

In 2013, Northern Colorado's Larimer and Weld Counties had an increasing number of manufacturers and a growing health care sector. However, manufacturers tended to know little about one another, especially those located in the adjacent county. Health care providers competed for talent, but did not have a forum to work together on common issues. Education and workforce development had limited ties with both sectors. Economic development groups had better business relationships, but restricted the access of others to those companies. Most now describe the situation then as a series of industry and community silos, with the border between Larimer and Weld Counties compounding the separation.

That year, however, the walls would begin to fall. Yvonne Myers, a top health care executive and recent chair of a local workforce development board, knew that her sector needed to work better together and with the community, and began to reach out to others to call for change. Manufacturers were also struggling with lack of skilled labor, experiencing growing delays in their supply chains and limitations in their ability to expand. Some executives were coming to the conclusion that the problem was too big to try to solve as individual companies.

At about the same time, the State of Colorado's top education, workforce development, and economic development agencies co-hosted a summit meeting, inviting every region of the state to send a team composed of local leaders in the three fields as well as a few industry executives. The leaders of each agency announced that they had adopted a common approach: challenging every Colorado region to launch sector partnerships to strengthen their economies and communities, consistent with the Governor's Economic Blueprint.

Each regional team received a detailed profile of their economy so they could identify growing sectors to prioritize, and then develop a launch plan using the Next Generation Sector Partnership approach. Northern Colorado chose manufacturing and health care, and key industry leaders in both sectors, including Myers who had attended the Summit, volunteered to be champions. When the team returned to Northern Colorado after the Summit, they understood that their superiors in state government expected them to follow-through—and they did.



MECHANISMS FOR CHANGE: INDUSTRY IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT, INCLUSIVE MISSIONS, AND SHARED TABLES

The partnerships provided new forums for a certain kind of industry leader to emerge. They were a combination of large and small company executives across different parts of the manufacturing and health care value chains, spanning both Northern Colorado counties. They were recognized as pacesetters and “doers” by other industry executives, so people listened when they spoke up about what needed to change. They embraced the Next Generation Sector Partnership's emphasis on being industry-led. As one of the founding manufacturing champions, Paul Harter has said: “I was initially put off by industry being at the front of the room with community partners at the back of the room, but I finally realized it wasn't about them being pushed to the back, it was about us being pulled to the front to take responsibility for our sector.”

For both sectors, a core group of industry leaders emerged to develop the organizational framework that exists to this day. Both groups developed ambitious mission statements and identified specific priorities for immediate action, enabling them to achieve “early wins” and build momentum.

- The Manufacturing Partnership's mission is to make American manufacturing great by driving a passionate, collaborative partnership, so that Northern Colorado manufacturing and our communities thrive. Their core beliefs include: altruism, passion about manufacturing, collaboration, manufacturer-driven, integrity and accountability, action-oriented/solving real problems, community-oriented, and learning.
- The Health Sector Partnership's mission is to bring together key stakeholders to promote and improve health within our communities. They collaborate across disciplines, organizations, and communities to seize opportunities, solve problems, and celebrate successes in the region.

MECHANISMS FOR CHANGE: CONTINUED

Notably, both Partnership's missions are broad-based, making explicit reference to helping the communities in which they operate. Both assume that the destinies of their industries and communities are intertwined, and can move forward together in a positive fashion. This philosophy is clearly visible in the specific projects and activities of each partnership, with manufacturers, for example, working with schools to improve curriculum and build career awareness among local youth and health care also focusing on career awareness as well as behavioral health and addressing specific occupational shortages, such as medical assistants.

For community partners from education, workforce development, chambers and economic development, the formation of the partnerships created for the first time truly "shared tables" for collaboration with industry and among fellow community partners. Instead of having to contact employers separately, each of the partnerships provide a shared table at which all the partners can hear about industry needs and develop solutions. This has helped community partners better align their work to industry priorities, engage industry executives as partners in the work, and forge new collaborations with other organizations across education levels, political boundaries, and disciplines.

MOMENTS OF TRANSFORMATION: FLIPPING THE SCRIPT AND WATERSHED EVENTS

Shortly after the formation of the two partnerships, both demonstrated that they represented a clear departure from the past. A small but significant step for the Manufacturing Partnership turned out to be central to their new approach to problem-solving. One of their priorities was to give local high school students an opportunity to see first-hand how their plants operated and to talk to actual manufacturing workers through organized tours. Manufacturers took it upon themselves to recruit companies for tours and develop guidance for those giving the tours to ensure consistent quality.

Meeting with local educators they were told that the schools would not be able to afford the bus transportation costs to get the students to the plants. On the spot, manufacturers took up a collection among themselves for the funds required, and the first tours were able to proceed. Those tours multiplied over the years and continue to this day. Instead of blaming their public partners, accepting defeat, or waiting for the school system to find a solution, the business leaders took charge and came up with a creative solution. They flipped the script," with business shifting from passive observer to active player.



In its first year, the Health Sector Partnership experienced two important turning points. The first was to depart from the traditional pattern of hyper-competition when it came to talent. Early on, there was a recognition that health care providers were playing a zero-sum game, poaching a limited pool of talent from one another. Only if they worked together and with local educators could they hope to grow the skilled labor pool, and move to a positive-sum situation.

This shift first took the form of a unified effort to improve the quantity of effectively-trained medical assistants (MAs) in the region. Two-year MA programs were in place at local community colleges, but industry generally felt that the programs were too long and that some graduates didn't match well with what employers needed, contributing to high rates of turnover. Traditionally, a few providers had representatives on program advisory committees that offered feedback, but had little impact. For the first time, the region's providers approached the colleges together, asking to help develop a different curriculum and a shorter educational program to produce better graduates faster. For a process that usually takes two years, within 8 months local providers had successfully worked with local colleges to make the change, as well as with a larger group at the state level to make changes in colleges across Colorado.

MOMENTS OF TRANSFORMATION: CONTINUED

This shift also took the form of sharing of resources so the entire sector could improve. In early discussions, it became clear that many providers were struggling with staff that did not have sufficient “cultural competency” to serve an increasingly diverse patient population. One provider stepped forward and offered to share their well-developed internal diversity training program curriculum with other Partnership members, as well as local education institutions. A sharp departure, this provider realized that sharing would grow the pool of culturally-competent talent in the region, which would help everyone over the long term.

The second kind of turning point for both partnerships involved watershed moments—events that ushered in a completely new approach. For the Manufacturing Partnership, it was the decision to host “skills panels” to dive deeply into the skills needed for a range of high-priority occupations. Top executives and human resource managers first identified top occupations and, from their perspective, critical skills high-performing workers in those jobs needed to have. Then, panels of high-performing workers in those professions were convened to get a deeper set of insights on what makes them successful and what can be done to prepare new workers for success.

The skills panels led to immediate changes in curriculum at both the local community colleges and high schools, and generated more internship opportunities with local companies. More importantly, it led to the creation of an annual Regional Advisory Meeting, a day in which manufacturing leaders and their high-performing employees regularly update all the local colleges and high schools at the same time about changing skill needs. This approach has proven to produce better information than 15 separate educational program advisory council meetings. In fact, the State of Colorado recognizes this event as an official business advisory meeting required for access to federal funding.

Another watershed event for the Manufacturing Partnership was the creation of a regional trade show (NOCOM). Unlike a traditional trade show that a third-party company organizes and staffs, NOCOM from the beginning was an all-volunteer effort. The Partnership decided that an effective way to advance their goals of better connecting local companies to one another, while also showcasing companies and jobs to youth, would be to hold a high-profile event with booths and educational programming. Seven years running, NOCOM has continued to be an effective business networking vehicle, with many companies developing new customer and supplier relationships, but also as an important avenue for reaching other audiences such as educators, students, and parents.

For the Health Sector Partnership, the watershed moment came in 2020 with the advent of COVID-19. Initially, the pandemic overwhelmed providers and caused the Partnership to pause. Partnership leaders decided to reconvene members to chart a path forward—and the response was resounding, with strong and engaged participants. The result? A recommitment to the Partnership and refinement of its priorities based on new realities. For example, while talent remains a top priority, a major COVID-19 driven change that is likely to remain is the need for a much greater volume of virtual visits and the training needed to prepare health care workers for this growing role.

MEASURABLE RESULTS: KEEPING TRACK, TELLING THE STORY, BREAKING NEW GROUND

The Northern Colorado Next Generation Sector Partnerships have made a lasting commitment to tracking their results, professionally telling their story, and pushing the boundaries of what’s possible. They both make sure to identify meaningful metrics and capture data as they implement their action agendas. Both issue annual written reports, with text and infographics that communicate multiple impact measures. And, while their priorities have remained largely the same over time, each Partnership has continued to add new projects and new dimensions to existing projects based on what they have learned.

The Manufacturing Partnership has grown from a few dozen manufacturers in 2013 to more than 450 manufacturers and direct supply chain companies, 140 public agency partners, and 117 educational partners. It has two main priorities: talent and business-to-business networking. In both areas, manufacturers drive several initiatives that have evolved over the years. More than 250 volunteers from business members drive these initiatives. These include:

- “Manufacturing Rocks” student tours—Middle and high school students tour manufacturers in Northern Colorado with an opportunity to see in person what a career in manufacturing could look like. Tours include a manufacturing floor tour, an interactive activity, and an opportunity to ask questions. Between 2014 and 2019, 2,502 students participated in 162 tours. A “Parents Night” event has been added, and has generated not only measurable interest among students, but successful job applications from parents and coverage in *The Wall Street Journal*.
- “Manufacturing Presents” school presentations—Local manufacturers share about their company, manufacturing applications and career opportunities in manufacturing. Topics include: machining, laser cutting, metal stamping, 3D printing, welding, injection molding, LEAN and more. Between 2014 and 2019, 5,809 middle school, high school, and college students attended a classroom or career fair presentation.



MEASURABLE RESULTS: CONTINUED

- Manufacturing high school internships—a summer internship program that places high school students with local manufacturer into 250 hours of paid internship experiences with an opportunity to increase their skills, explore career options and gain exposure to the industry. Fourteen internships and two faculty externships were completed in 2019.
 - Supervisor management training—Designed and delivered by supervisors in the local manufacturing industry through the local community college, this training was added to fill a gap to prepare promising employees to become first-time supervisors, helping companies grow. In 2020, 160 local manufacturing employees completed the program.
 - Scholarships for college students preparing for manufacturing careers—Annually, the Partnership donates funds to AIMS and Front Range Community College to help students pay for tuition and supplies. In 2019, \$38,500 was contributed for these scholarships with funds raised during by the Partnership's annual trade show NOCOM.
 - A new center for integrated manufacturing at Front Range Community College—Leveraging their new ties with the College, the Partnership was instrumental in helping secure federal funding to build the center and acquire equipment.
 - Regional Advisory Meeting—Building on their initial success with “skills panels,” manufacturers host the annual meeting and invite educators to hear about the latest developments in manufacturing and the impacts on skill needs, including input directly from top executives and high-performing employees in key occupations. The event regularly draws between 100 and 200 educators in the region.
 - Insite Tours and Lunch and Learns—Local manufacturers host Partnership members from other companies to tour and share best practices. Lunch and Learns are regular sessions focused on key business topics. In 2019, there were 6 Insite tours with 162 attendees, 10 Lunch and Learns, and 3 other Business-to-Business networking events with 328 attendees.
 - NOCOM Trade Show—The largest manufacturing trade show in Colorado, all-volunteer run. In 2019, NOCOM had 114 booths and 900 attendees. The Partnership has created a written guide to putting on the show, which is used to recruit and train volunteers.
- Similarly, the Health Sector Partnership grew from 30 participating organizations in 2013 to 75 organizations and 530 members by 2020. It has four main priorities: education of the public on health care, coordination of a larger behavioral health solution for the region, increasing workforce skills relative to diversity awareness, and assuring the appropriateness for pre-admission screening and resident review (PASRR). Important measurable results include:
- Medical assistant program overhaul. The Partnership was instrumental in restructuring the medical assistant program into a one-year certificate in 2015, increasing the number of qualified graduates significantly in the five years since the change. An addition of an apprenticeship program for MAs has also helped with retention.
 - Medical assistant education scholarships—The Partnership donated \$3,000 in 2019 for scholarships at Front Range and AIMS Community Colleges. These donations supported 6 medical assistant students at FRCC and paid for CNA certification exams for students at AIMS Community College.
 - "Get into the Guts of Medical Careers" Program—These half day events and tours for middle schoolers provide students with an opportunity to meet with leading health care professionals and educators to talk about different medical careers including medical assisting, surgical technician, behavioral health, emergency medical services, senior care, and other health occupations. Over the 2019-2020 period, 10 providers hosted 187 students.
 - New Healthcare Career Live Virtual Chats—These innovative panel discussions connected individuals interested in healthcare careers with speakers from in-demand jobs in a live, panel presentation and Q&A setting. The first Chats held in November 2020 had panels with (1) a registered nurse, occupational therapist, and social worker (55 attendees); (2) a certified nursing assistant, a certified nursing assistance youth apprentice, and medical assistant (115 attendees); and (3) a licensed practical nurse, certified nursing assistant, and sterile processing technician (41 attendees).
 - Behavioral health career exploration—The Partnership conducts outreach to build awareness for the need for behavioral health professionals. In 2020, it held its first event at the University of Northern Colorado, involving 80 employers, 60 health professionals, 10 government partners, and over 100 students.
 - Pre-Admission Screening and Resident Review (PASRR) process training—The Partnership works regularly with state regulators and industry representatives to ensure the PASRR assessment process is timely, respectful, and fair to the patient, the discharging entity and the admitting skilled nursing facility. In 2019, the Partnership hosted one of only four such trainings in Colorado, with over 125 attendees.

MAJOR INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS: CONNECTED LEADERSHIP, ROLES FOR EVERYONE, INVESTING IN GROWTH

While the Partnerships represent very different industries driven by distinct sets of business leaders, they do share a common recipe for sustainable success. First and foremost, they both rely on well-connected leadership to ensure the right players are in the room to make decisions about priorities and mobilize to act on those priorities. In this case, well-connected means strong relationships with both their peers in industry as well as key public partners in education, workforce development, and economic development.

From the industry perspective, these leaders are well respected for both their business acumen and commitment to the community. They are able to express how the Next Gen approach is different and why other executives should join the Partnerships. And, they often understand the underlying strengths and expertise of their business peers so they can help them find the best ways to contribute. Since not all of these leaders are from the most well-known companies, there continues to be a mix of executives representing different company sizes and product areas and markets, ensuring diverse perspectives and, once decisions are made, widely-shared priorities.

From the community perspective, especially in the early years, these relationships were often built by business leaders having served previously on chamber or public boards or worked with chamber or public partners on a specific community project. Today, as new leaders are elevated, they have also had experience and built relationships through the work of the Partnerships themselves.

Both Partnerships have maintained a small, everchanging core of business leaders who have overseen operations and led committees. However, that does not mean that only a few people are doing the work. Both Partnerships have been adept at finding roles for everyone: projects are designed to give other businesses specific options for roles they can play. For example, the Manufacturing Partnership has more than 250 business volunteers that can host a tour, host an internship, provide curriculum guidance to local schools, help with a task for the NOCOM trade show, and contribute funds for specific outcomes (e.g., \$100 to pay for six students to go on a plant tour, \$800 to pay for an entire bus of students to go on a plant tour).



A third critical element that has enabled the Partnerships to enjoy sustained success is a commitment to investing in growth. After experiencing early success, leaders of the all-volunteer Partnerships realized that to move to the next level they would need dedicated staff to expand their reach and grow their impact. However, they wanted to make sure that the Partnerships remained industry-led, rather than staff-driven with a growing overhead burden. They retained flexible consulting help rather than hire permanent employees, someone to project manage, do meeting logistics, and keep track of outcomes in the form of annual reports, which in turn puts a spotlight on tangible results and helps with membership and fundraising.

Leadership also realized that they would need a new funding model. In the early years, costs were low as in-kind contributions from industry, chambers, and public partners sustained operations. This was supplemented by state and local government grants for specific projects. To grow, however, they realized that they would need a more diversified and stable combination of revenue sources.

While they felt it was important to keep general membership free for interested companies, they also began structuring voluntary giving levels for members who felt the Partnership was adding value to their company and the community. In the case of Manufacturing, they significantly expanded the NOCO trade show, creating a reliable annual revenue stream they could use to pay for staffing help and for project costs in other areas. Both also secured regular funding from local government, chambers, and economic development organizations, after having demonstrated the value of the Partnerships to advancing shared agendas for job growth and community vitality. And, other community businesses, such as banks and utilities, education, as well as individuals were given the opportunity to support the Partnership efforts.

MOVING FORWARD: MANAGING SUCCESSION, MEASURING DOWNSTREAM IMPACTS

Although both Partnerships have shown an ability to make successful transitions, 2020 provided a unique combination of challenges. The Health Sector Partnership, in particular, paused as members dealt with the Spring surge of COVID-19 in the region. The Partnership did have a well-attended meeting later in the year that re-energized members, demonstrating the importance of remaining industry-led and adapting to changing circumstances to long-term sustainability.

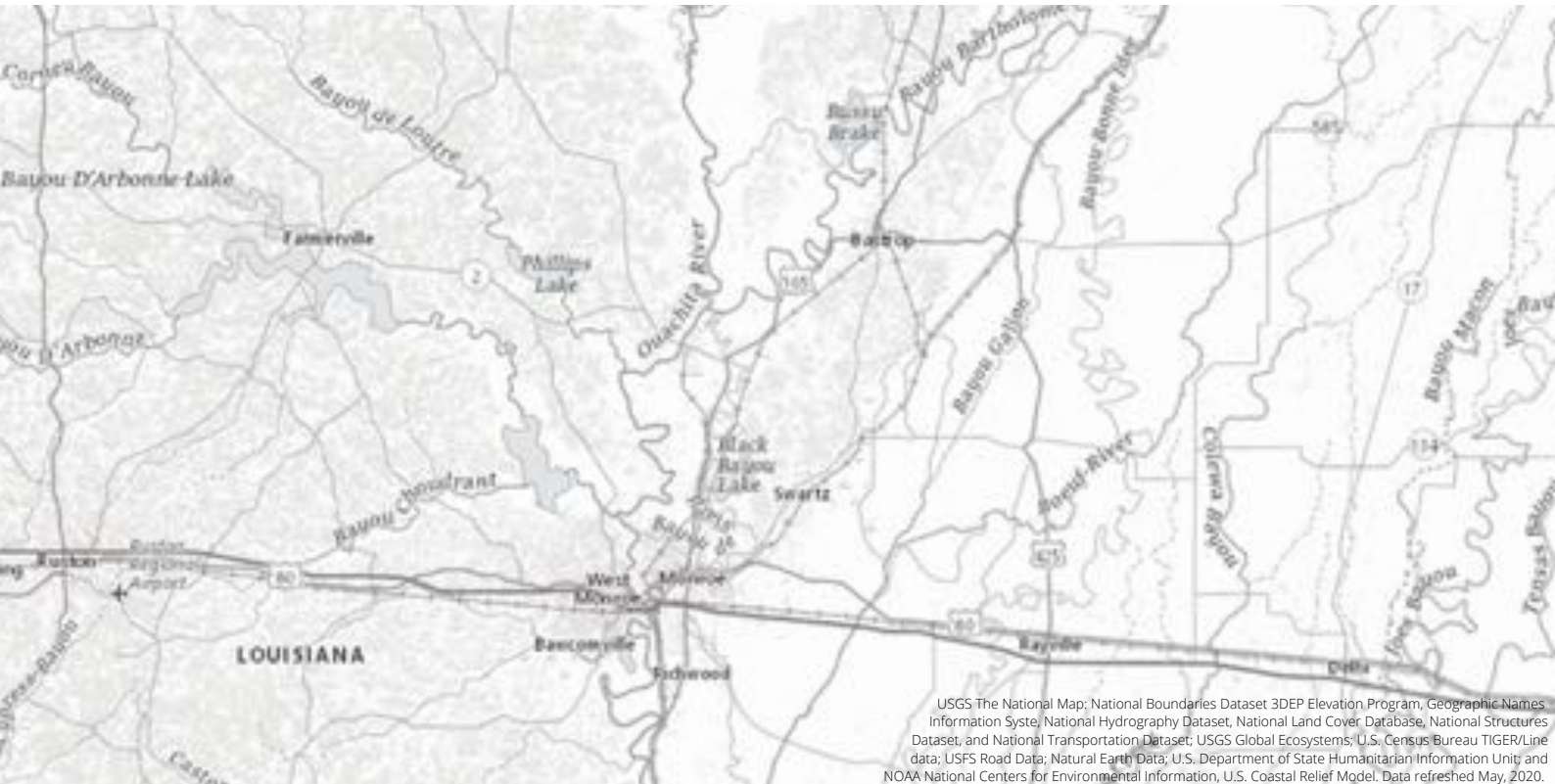
More broadly, as the years pass, there are fewer of the founding generation of both Partnerships who are still active in leadership. In general, these leadership transitions have been successful, but the more changes that happen, the more variables are introduced that create uncertainty about the future.

Both Partnerships have measured results in some areas, still there are downstream impacts that haven't yet been assessed (e.g., students/parents who participated in plant tours/parent nights who went on to manufacturing careers; the number of medical assistants who have been produced and retained as a result of changes in community college curriculum; the number of new internships/apprenticeships; companies that have experienced growing revenues, secured new suppliers, or recruited new talent as a result of their participation in the NOCOM trade show; measurable changes in curriculum and programs as a result of the annual Regional Advisory meeting). Having been in operation several years, both Partnerships should be well-positioned to measure these and other downstream impacts from their work.



PROFILING THE NORTHEAST LOUISIANA HEALTHCARE ALLIANCE

A Benchmarking Project of the Institute for Networked Communities (INC)



USGS The National Map; National Boundaries Dataset 3DEP Elevation Program, Geographic Names Information System, National Hydrography Dataset, National Land Cover Database, National Structures Dataset, and National Transportation Dataset; USGS Global Ecosystems; U.S. Census Bureau TIGER/Line data; USFS Road Data; Natural Earth Data; U.S. Department of State Humanitarian Information Unit; and NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information, U.S. Coastal Relief Model. Data refreshed May, 2020.

NORTHEAST LOUISIANA HEALTHCARE ALLIANCE

By: Lindsey Woolsey, Editor: Mara Timmeney

This case study is one in a series of Next Generation Sector Partnerships profiles from across the country.

Its primary purpose is to give practitioners insights into the key milestones and critical ingredients for success that have shaped the journey of the Northeast Louisiana Healthcare Alliance, a four-year old healthcare sector partnership in the 11 parishes of Northeast Louisiana. Its intended audience is the diverse mix of business, education, workforce development, and economic development leaders who are committed to the work of taking their communities to a new level of shared prosperity. The profile is organized into six sections: motivations for launch, mechanisms for change, moments of transformation, measurable results, major ingredients for success, and the future of the Partnerships moving forward.

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- *About NEHA Healthcare Alliance*
- *Motivations for Launch*
- *Moments of Transformation*
- *Measurable Results*
- *Ingredients for Success*
- *Future of the Partnership*



ABOUT THE NORTHEAST LOUISIANA HEALTHCARE ALLIANCE REGION

The eleven parishes of Northeast Louisiana remain the most impoverished areas of the state and of the nation. The parishes, many of which reflect a traditional view of the Louisiana Delta, are East Carroll, Madison, Tensas, Franklin, Richland, Jackson, Caldwell, West Carroll, Morehouse, Union and Ouachita. Though possessing a population upward of 304,000—more than 50% of that population, along with the three major hospitals, resides within only one parish, while the balance of the total population resides within the remaining ten parishes. The Healthcare Alliance is comprised of nearly forty hospitals, clinics, long term care facilities, skilled nursing facilities, and home healthcare organizations who together, in addition to providing critical needed healthcare to community members, provide nearly twenty percent of all jobs in the region. For the Northeast region of Louisiana, these jobs are critical to the regional economy. For this reason, the healthcare industry in 2016 was identified through a joint process spearheaded by Workforce Development Boards 81 and 83 as a high priority sector. Using pages from the Next Gen sector partnership playbook, the Boards followed a process by which local education institutions, workforce, community and economic development organizations agreed to build a network of healthcare providers in the region that would partner together around the industry's need to stabilize and grow. The Alliance was launched on August 3, 2016 by six healthcare system CEOs and Administrators in the region, each bringing their own top issues and opportunities for a potential partnership, but all equally messaging the need for a shared and sustained forum to tackle the industry's most pressing shared issues. The purpose of the Healthcare Alliance established then remains the same today:

- To jointly create an agenda that supports the stability and growth of the healthcare industry, and a healthier community, in northeast Louisiana.
- To commit to coordinated action and implementation of shared, high priority areas by public and private sector partners.
- To create a forum for consistent, high quality connections, networking, information and idea sharing.



Since its launch, the Healthcare Alliance has steadily increased in volume, influence and ability to design and implement projects and outcomes that keep the healthcare sector strong and increase access to jobs by people who live in the region. This is attributable to three factors: an ongoing strong business leadership group, the strong staffing and backbone support provided by Workforce Development Board 83, and the coordinated network built as a result of the Alliance among Workforce Development Board (WDB) 81, the University of Louisiana-Monroe, Louisiana Tech University, Louisiana Delta Community College, the Monroe Chamber of Commerce, the West Monroe Chamber of Commerce, a community-based training organization NOVA, and others. These partners were among the original organizations that agreed a new mechanism for partnering and engaging with critical industry was needed.

MOTIVATIONS FOR LAUNCH: A COORDINATED APPROACH TO REGIONAL IMPACT

In early 2016, the State of Louisiana Department of Workforce Services, like many of its equivalents across the country, was pushing a sector-focused approach to workforce development strategies, motivated by a heavier emphasis in the re-authorized Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act on “sector partnerships.” Each of the state’s workforce regions were offered the opportunity to receive a small U.S. Department of Labor National Emergency Grant for the purposes of contracting with a sector partnership expert. The Next Gen Sector Partnership team was selected for this work, and Workforce Boards 81 and 83 took the opportunity as a chance to accomplish three linked objectives: first to significantly increase and sustain employer engagement; second to increase the credibility of the Workforce Boards in the region, both with the private sector and their public sector partners in education and economic development; and third to bring coherence to otherwise separate and low-impact engagement of the private sector by public sector partners, often referred to as the “death by a thousand cuts” scenario in the Next Gen world.

An additional driving factor was a larger Health Professions Opportunity Grant to WDB 83 from the Office of Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This grant required healthcare employers to inform new and expanded training programs; the problem was a significant lack of engaged healthcare employers, especially beyond the limits of Monroe, the region’s largest town. This grant was no doubt an added motivator to launch a healthcare partnership, but importantly WDB 83 did not let it interfere with the discipline with which both WDBs and their public partners used to jointly arrive at a shared target sector, one that answered a pivotal question: Which industry warrants our coordinated engagement in the form of a formal sector partnership? Manufacturing and Technology, in addition to Healthcare, rose to the top. The final selection, made at a meeting of nearly 60 public stakeholder partners in May 2016, of Healthcare was made based on three criteria: the industry provided a significant number of overall jobs in the region; healthcare provides a wide range of entry-, mid- and high-level jobs, thereby offering a stronger potential for career pathway development; and it represented the strongest candidate for direct connections and impacts on the well-being of the region’s communities.



“From a hospital executive standpoint, I needed to know this was a long-term endeavor, that we were setting up a table that created space for a very competitive industry to name and tackle our big, shared pre-competitive issues together for the long haul. That’s industry-driven, solution-oriented, and in the end it’s about what we do right, by us and by our region and the people we need to serve.”
– **Jonathan Phillips**, (Director of Clinical Services, LaSalle Corrections, formerly Chief Operating Officer, Oschner LSU Health System Monroe Medical Center)



MECHANISMS FOR CHANGE: INDUSTRY VOICE AND LEADERSHIP, PUBLIC PARTNER SUPPORT

Terri Mitchell, Executive Director of WDB 83 and lead public partner convener of the Alliance admits that prior to the launch of the Alliance, she and business service unit staff, even with the best intents, did not actually listen to employers. They, she says, “never understood that employers are not just employers, they’re businesses, and they have three other things to get through before they can focus on talent.” The most significant shift, according to Terri and active industry leadership, was therefore both positioning and expecting industry to lead from the center. The agreed-upon structure of the Alliance requires industry voice, leadership and investment of time into shared priorities before a coordinated network of workforce, education and economic development partners can wrap around those priorities with public resources. Creating the pull by industry inserts a common focal point for public partners where one did not exist before. For the Alliance it required committed healthcare executives to persist and make time for shared priorities and investments, coalescing the right coalitions of willing healthcare organizations around the right issues at the right time. It also required public partners to fully give space to the emerging business-to-business network forming, and to check their individual agendas at the door, despite initial skepticism. For Jonathan Phillips (Director of Health Services, LaSalle Correctional, formerly Chief Operating Officer, Oschner LSU Health System Monroe Medical Center), long time industry leader in the Alliance, the fact that this was not a grant, an initiative, nor another ask brought to him by an agency or public partner, was the draw.

MOMENTS OF TRANSFORMATION: IDENTIFYING BARRIERS, CREATING SOLUTIONS, TAKING ACTION

In its first year, the Alliance focused on a few critical shared issues, including:

- Identifying and acting on policy barriers that prevented healthcare providers from hiring qualified individuals to critical occupations (leading, for example, to new state legislation streamlining and removing costs for LPN license checks);
- An assessment and articulation of customer service skills needed in CNA trainings (leading to a new workforce training certificate program and a re-tooled community college CNA program);
- An inventory of bed space, special equipment and specialized nursing skills across regional hospitals in order to improve likelihood of safe and effective transfer of patients from over-capacity to under-capacity systems, resulting in a Hospital Resource Guide.

Each of these were spearheaded by industry executives, delegating expert staff within their systems when needed, but always keeping executives leading and co-investing their time. WDB 83 will admit at first the work of keeping the trains moving and on time from a staffing perspective felt overwhelming. Still, WDB 83 is quick to acknowledge an early turning point: the realization that this work is, in fact, the work a Workforce Board is intended and suited to do. A critical additional factor of success within the first year was a shared and broad recognition that individual education, workforce and economic development partners were getting more out of this than if they had never joined. The access to a critical and invested cohort of healthcare providers would not otherwise be replicable. The vision of how each organization can and should plug in essential resources and expertise to projects that benefit their mission populations (low-income workers, students, businesses) was markedly clearer. The ease and agility with which public partners collaborated, as well as healthcare organizations with competitors, was new and high-value. These early moments of markedly different experiences as a result of launching the Alliance led to a series of additional wins in the coming years.



“There is no comparison. Sector Partnerships are hard work and time intensive. Having the vision, the model and training to help establish the foundation for this type of partnership has been invaluable. We see the fruits of our labor, recognition of Workforce Development Board 83 as a true asset to the business community, and improved credibility with leadership from our regional community partners.”
– Terri Mitchell, Director, Workforce Development Board 83, Monroe, Louisiana



MECHANISMS FOR CHANGE: INDUSTRY VOICE AND LEADERSHIP, PUBLIC PARTNER SUPPORT

With the groundwork laid in the first year, the work of the Alliance continued in a cascade of industry-driven, community-supported initiatives and activities, including:

- The Policy and Regulatory committee positioning the Alliance as a go-to for Louisiana’s State Legislature on healthcare-related laws, triggered by hosting an annual Legislative Luncheon on top policy barriers, again focused on the ability to hire and advance qualified talent;
- The Education Committee significantly expanding a CNA certificate program that increases the time and rigor of classroom and clinical hours in order to more closely align healthcare provider skills and knowledge needs with graduating CNAs. This included a new Behavioral Health module that fills the void of severely lacking Behavioral Health techs in the region. This training demand increased at such a rate that providers now pay for Delta Community College to conduct the training at healthcare providers sites. Individuals who go through this training get guaranteed job interviews and job preferences among Alliance healthcare providers;
- The Acute Care Committee re-establishing a defunct Ambulance Advisory Committee, including securing Committee appointments, in order to initially tackle limitations on patient transfer between hospitals, and ultimately to add additional needed ambulance provider capacity to the region.



Before we just all had the same issues; now we have single, shared solutions. The Alliance ignites otherwise separate organizations together. It requires pro-active collaboration and coordination. If the healthcare industry fails, our regional economy fails. We must thrive so that we have a regional economy that works for the people who live here, by keeping them healthy, educated and in good jobs. – Aimee Kane (Vice President, Business Development and Strategic Planning), St. Francis Medical Center



MECHANISMS FOR CHANGE: CONTINUED

- A 2018 grant from the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation and Living Well Foundation to fund adjunct nurse faculty to teach nursing clinicals onsite at 12 regional healthcare facilities during non-peak/off-schedule times in order to avoid competing with nurse workdays. This grant directly responded to an Alliance focus on the extreme need for qualified nurses in the region and solved a problem of lack of experienced nurse preceptors due to under compensation. The project has increased the adjunct faculty pool by 15, including three adjunct faculty who have transitioned to full-time. Up to 30 new nurses graduate per year as a result, totalling 114 additional RN students to-date. The Alliance was awarded a prestigious 2019 International Economic Development Council (IEDC) award for this work.
- An annual Nursing Symposium that offers Continuing Education credits at no cost to 70+ existing nurses to upskill in critical applied knowledge areas, including skills stations staffed by subject matter experts from healthcare providers and the region's 2- and 4-year colleges and universities. Criteria and qualifications align with the state's Nursing Board.
- Ongoing addition of new, in-demand occupational training programs in the region including Environmental Technicians, Medical Assistants and Behavioral Technicians.
- A patient-facing Acute Care Resource that helps patients and families navigate the complexities of transfers from acute care to nursing homes and skilled nursing facilities, building off the Year 1 work of inventorying skills and equipment across institutions.
- Influence and appointment of a rural Hospital physician to the Louisiana Board of Pharmacy, a State Board previously only represented by private sector retail pharmacies.

Beyond the sheer number of initiatives and projects that are spearheaded by the Alliance, three additional factors may best characterize it. First, scalability in a short time period. In its first year, most healthcare organizations remained on the sidelines, with only a half dozen leaders investing time. Today over 40 healthcare organizations participate, and could describe the Alliance and its outcomes to strangers. Second, credibility, both of the Alliance itself as a go-to forum for anything healthcare related by public policy makers and education institutions, and of the Workforce Board as an effective broker of public-private partnerships. Third, accelerated decision making capacity by a collective and diverse group of stakeholders. "Nothing gets stale; it gets decided," according to Aimee Kane, Vice President, Business Development and Strategic Planning, St. Francis Medical Center. This took two years, she said, but is demonstrative of the true mobilization of a public-private network in the region that did not exist before.

It is often discussed in the national Community of Practice of Next Gen Sector Partnerships that the ultimate litmus test for partnership success is a sudden awareness that a partnership could not be shut down under any circumstances. In other words, no sudden pull of funding or lack of a grant, no turnover of a critical public or private sector leader, and in the context of 2020-21, no unprecedented global pandemic. The Healthcare Alliance did not miss a beat during the COVID-19 crisis, but instead tightened the ship. The Alliance, true to form, became the go-to forum for provider-to-provider networking about critical issues, including staff fears of coming to work and patients' fears of accessing healthcare services. A public service campaign launched, including a video and social media campaign that directly speaks to community members about the need to manage their chronic and acute health issues during the pandemic. Sharing promising practices and acting on the most pressing retention and recruitment issues of essential healthcare workers during shifting conditions and sudden loss of revenues came into sharp focus.





MAJOR INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS: COALITION BUILDING AND COLLECTIVE CREDIT

Two essential ingredients for success are the level and consistency of industry leadership coupled with the neutrality and effectiveness of the public partner convener, the WDB 83. Constant, transparent communication; exceptional work stream management; and a learned ability to broker relationships and mutual support by the WDB 83 are strong contributors to the success of the Alliance. Public and private partners alike will cite a true spirit and practical adherence to coalition-building as a foundation for Alliance success. Industry executives are quick to note that coalitions of the willing are the key.

Involvement around some issues may be small at first, but staying focused and persistent with the leadership that steps up on each project leads to momentum and scale. Industry leaders at executive level positions step in and step up on the issues they see as pressing and requiring collective action. Despite being competitors in a healthcare market, they see themselves as coalitions of connected leadership on the shared issues that affect their businesses and impact the people and patient populations of Northeast Louisiana. So strong is the practice today of collective leadership, no credit by any single initiative or outcome goes to individual organizations, neither private or public; it goes to the Alliance.

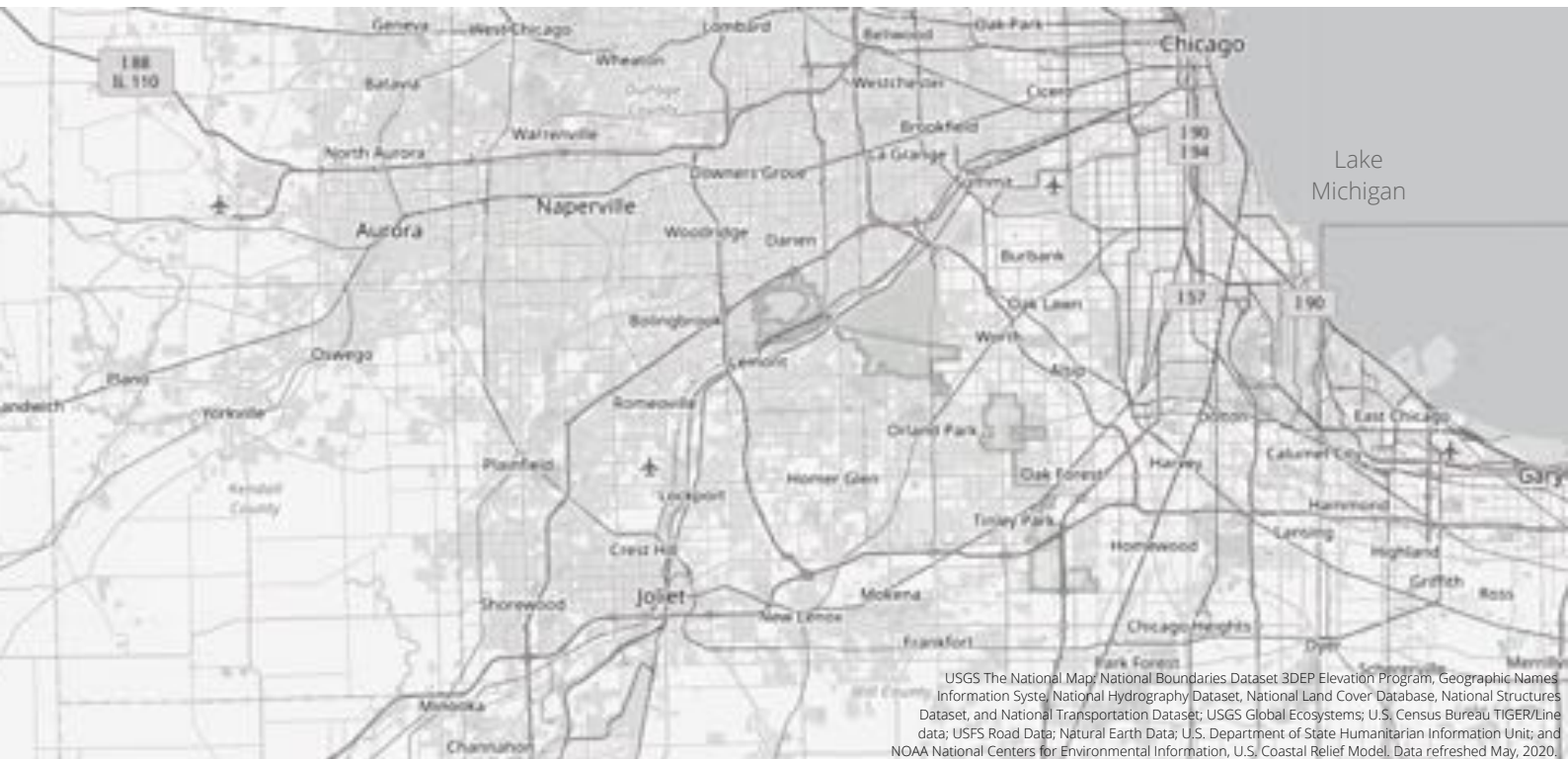
THE FUTURE OF THE ALLIANCE: AREAS TO STRENGTHEN AND GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

The award-winning Alliance no doubt demonstrates an ability for a region to create and mobilize a public-private network that did not exist prior, one capable of harnessing the voice and commitments of an industry for the good of a region. But that does not mean the Alliance can coast forward into the future. The everchanging landscape of Healthcare nationally and in the 11 parishes of Northeast Louisiana will require consistent leadership and continued partnership brokering. As the Alliance enters its fifth year, it faces these realities. But it shows no signs of slowing down. On the public partner side, a critical commitment in 2021 will be among the network of public partners, some of which are even stronger partners than ever (including the two Universities in the region, Delta Community College, the major Chambers of Commerce, and the sister WDB 81), and others who still have not directly engaged with the Alliance work. Risks that unengaged partners set up siloed healthcare-related initiatives, thereby missing out on opportunities for scale, do exist. WDB 83 will therefore purposely design an onboarding process and a refreshed agreement among public institutions in support of the Alliance, drawing in some partners that have yet to strongly engage, including school districts and some of the smaller cities in the region.

On the industry side, despite COVID conditions, a new growth opportunity is being explored that directly leverages the coalitions of the Alliance: the exploration of the Monroe area, the region's most densely populated small city and home to three major hospitals within ten miles of each other, as an official medical district. Much like a designation as a downtown district or an arts and cultural district, the concept of a medical district relies on the deliberate knitting together of an ecosystem of healthcare organizations and services with patient- and community-facing enterprises, including grocery stores and affordable living. It envisions leveraging synergies of the industry and the community in a way that begins drawing in additional medical innovation and research activities as well. It may take time to realize the vision, but it epitomizes the spirit and practice of the Alliance: a public-private network focused on keeping a critical jobs sector stable and vibrant, and rooted in the needs and opportunities of a unique region.

PROFILING THE CALUMET MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY SECTOR PARTNERSHIP

A Benchmarking Project of the Institute for Networked Communities (INC)



USGS The National Map; National Boundaries Dataset 3DEP Elevation Program, Geographic Names Information System, National Hydrography Dataset, National Land Cover Database, National Structures Dataset, and National Transportation Dataset; USGS Global Ecosystems; U.S. Census Bureau TIGER/Line data; USFS Road Data; Natural Earth Data; U.S. Department of State Humanitarian Information Unit; and NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information, U.S. Coastal Relief Model. Data refreshed May, 2020.

CALUMET MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY SECTOR PARTNERSHIP

By: Lindsey Woolsey, Navjeet Singh and John Melville

This case study is one in a series of profiles of Next Generation Sector Partnerships operating across the country. Its primary purpose is to give practitioners insights into the key milestones and critical ingredients for success that have shaped the journey of the Calumet Manufacturing Industry Sector Partnership (CMISP), a three-year-old partnership that has proved to be a steady force in the Calumet region. The intended audience for this series is the diverse mix of business, education, workforce development, and economic development leaders who are committed to the work of taking their communities to a new level of shared prosperity. The profile is organized into six sections: motivations for launch, mechanisms for change, moments of transformation, measurable results, major ingredients for success, and the future of CMISP.

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- *About CMISP*
- *Motivations for Launch*
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ABOUT THE CALUMET MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY SECTOR PARTNERSHIP

Chicago, the nation's third largest metropolitan area after New York City and Los Angeles, has one of the world's largest and most diversified economies, including over six million full and part-time employees, over 400 major corporate headquarters and a rich array of some of the nation's leading universities. The Chicagoland economic region, bordered by Lake Michigan on the Eastern boundary, expands across fourteen counties and into Indiana and Wisconsin. On the Southside of the city and Cook County is the Calumet region. Here resides a robust and booming manufacturing sector, a longstanding cornerstone of the Southland economy fueled by the production of metals, machinery and equipment, and today a diverse and robust industry made up of nearly 50 manufacturing sub-sectors like technology, plastics, packaging, chemical, medical equipment and others. "Anything that can be made can be made here," purports a spokesperson for the Calumet Manufacturing Industry Sector Partnership (CMISP), a Next Generation style partnership in the region.

There's no question why the Southland is a manufacturing hub. It's access to a highly connected network of railroads and interstate highways lays a foundation for an unparalleled supply chain and distribution infrastructure. That alone however does not mean manufacturers are effectively networked and connected in ways that maximize their growth potential. That's why CMISP launched in November 2017. Alone no manufacturer can tackle their toughest engineering, production and supply chain challenges; alone no educational or training institution can keep up with the right technologies and knowledge needed by students to enter prosperous manufacturing careers. CMISP launched as a response.



Above: "Looking South from Willis Tower" by Ken Lund. Licensed under [CC BY-ND 2.0](#).

Similar to other Next Gen Sector Partnerships across the country, it endeavors to put businesses at the center of big decisions, with an expectation that businesses will partner with public partners to solve big challenges. For CMISP this means re-organizing education and training around the skills needed for 21st century manufacturing, opening doors to facilities for students and teachers to get a firsthand glimpse at manufacturing jobs, and forging new business-to-business connections around shared supply chain and technology needs. CMISP is spearheaded by ten manufacturers and made up of nearly 100 additional manufacturers, representing small, large and diverse sub-sectors. CMISP leaders and partners equally acknowledge that network building at this scale and in such a complex economy is a work in progress but persist with the notion that a stronger public-private network will lead to stronger companies and stronger opportunities for Southland residents for good jobs.



MOTIVATIONS FOR LAUNCH: CREATING A WHOLE GREATER THAN THE SUM OF THE PARTS

For Chicagoland public partners, organizing around the needs of manufacturing is not new, particularly in support of industry-informed education and training. In fact, CMISP stands on the shoulders of similar past efforts, including a 2012 Calumet Green Manufacturing Partnership (CGMP) seeded by the Chicagoland Workforce Funder Alliance (an alliance of public and private investors who pool funding toward shared workforce development goals and outcomes, affiliated with the National Fund for Workforce Solutions). Initially CGMP was a collaborative of community colleges, community-based organizations and government focused on expanding welding and CNC machine technology training. By 2017, a series of conversations were occurring among these public partners, as well as other public and community-based institutions, seven in fact^[1], each separately trying to connect the needs of manufacturers for skilled workers with the needs of Calumet residents for relevant training and jobs. Collectively they knew they needed a different approach.



“I go back to the early nineties in Chicago, starting with cluster analyses of our local industries and transitioning in the early and mid-2000’s into deeper understanding of the systems change and targeted training needed to connect people to jobs. But more is needed. We organized a team to attend the national Next Gen Sector Partnership Academy in 2017. The approach, process and outcomes are different. The model clearly builds on decades of sectoral initiative experience but adds in the critical piece of engaging the highest level of business leadership in target industries, listening to their needs, and facilitating them to create and own their own agenda.” – *Tom Dubois, former Director of Training & Talent Development, Calumet Area Industrial Commission*



Above: CMISP convening partners and business champions at the Next Gen Sector Partnership training in Austin, Texas.

Perhaps the factor that most solidified a shared decision to slow the “go it alone” mentality was a double federal grant award, each approximately \$4 million to two Calumet organizations (IMEC and OAI, Inc.) related to manufacturing training, one focused on ramping up apprenticeships and one focused on wraparound supports for individuals entering training. “These two big awards were a huge opportunity to get aligned. We all realized we were not engaging with manufacturers in a deep enough or sustained enough way, and yet business fatigue was real and problematic because we were all asking for their support. That was the moment we knew we needed to let go of territorialism and ownership of private sector relationships and combine forces,” states Mollie Dowling, Executive Director of OAI Inc. This combined with an exposure to the Next Gen Sector Partnership approach quickly led the seven core convening partners to agree that the time was right for a coordinated effort – “a whole greater than the sum of the parts”. Their first step was to coordinate a shared (versus competing) engagement of manufacturers in the Calumet region in the hopes of creating a strong enough business network to guide their work.

[1] The seven organizations each with an interest in engaging manufacturers included the Calumet Area Industrial Commission, Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership, Chicago Federation of Labor Workforce and Community Initiative, Chicago Metro Metal Consortium, Chicago Southland Economic Development Corporation (CSEDC), Cook County Bureau of Economic Development, Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center (IMEC) and OAI, Inc.

MECHANISMS FOR CHANGE: CREATING FORMAL RULES OF ENGAGEMENT, RECRUITING INDUSTRY CHAMPIONS

While the need to collaborate around a shared industry and related activities may seem obvious, the Southland region is not alone in the struggle to break from the practice of largely independent, siloed efforts when it comes to engaging the private sector or when developing industry-relevant education. Most Next Gen Sector Partnerships develop in direct response to this reality. So too did CMISP. The initial foray into operating more collaboratively was at first just an agreement by public partners to approach manufacturers in a collaborative way. This quickly led to a much more formal agreement among public support partners in the form of a memorandum of understanding (originally in 2017 and renewed in 2020) that outlined the intent, structure and rules of engagement via a single table of manufacturing companies in the region.

Emboldened by this new discipline for collaboration, each of the seven support partners took the next step of tapping into their own networks of industry relationships to recruit manufacturing industry leaders to launch CMISP in November 2017. Over 30 manufacturers, largely representing metals, machinery and equipment manufacturing, participated. Eric Marks, of Alpha Products Inc., notes that the opportunity for increased collaboration among sub-sectors in the Calumet region was an initial motivator for participation. Following the official launch, the business partners identified three top initiatives: developing a manufacturing skilled workforce, increasing business-to-business networking, and improving infrastructure.

CMISP, like many Next Gen Sector Partnerships, operates via committees. Committees are spearheaded by manufacturers and supported by public partners most relevant to the topic. The committees are intended to evolve with the changing needs and direction of participating manufacturers. For CMISP this has meant staying focused on business-to-business networking and a skilled workforce, but disbanding the infrastructure committee, involving Cook County's Department of Transportation and other partners, after achieving a set of early wins, including flagging potholed roads blocking truck access and providing industry feedback on specific future infrastructure improvements.



Above: A Southworks Robotics and Engineering Tournament organized in partnership with CMISP.

MOMENTS OF TRANSFORMATION: BUSINESS STEPS UP BEFORE AND ESPECIALLY DURING CRISIS TOGETHER

Over the course of CMISP's first two years, the focus stayed on business-to-business networking and the development of a skilled workforce. The B2B Networking team (championed by companies Alpha Products and Ability Engineering) acted as a forum for problem-solving, supplier-customer connections, best practice sharing on new technologies and operations. CMISP's manufacturers also stepped up to drive a much greater level of in-person business-to-business networking, including a series of plant visits to learn more about each other's facilities and operations. Manufacturers report much stronger relationships among manufacturers in the region, including new buyer-supplier connections that have helped grow business in the region.

The Workforce Action team (championed by companies Morrison Container Handling Solutions and National Tube Supply) focused on increasing awareness about the industry and its careers by students and aligning training and curriculum with industry's hiring needs. This included career nights with students and faculty, tours of manufacturing facilities, and an ongoing definition of foundational and critical occupation skills. As a result of efforts associated with the partnership, two partners (OAI, Inc. and CSEDC) coordinated over 30 high schools to attend tours with businesses members of CMISP on Manufacturing Day in October 2017, 2018, and 2019. To organize this event, public, nonprofit and industry partners activated their network to ensure an impressive turnout every year.

MOMENTS OF TRANSFORMATION: CONTINUED

When the mid-March 2020 COVID-19 closures hit, the value of CMISP shifted. It became clear that all partners within CMISP would need to collaborate to best comply with regional and state rules and restrictions. One of the Partnership's leading business champions, Nancy Wilson of Morrison Containers, notes that having the connection to a regional partnership was pivotal in her company's ability to quickly respond to the changing guidelines. Although Wilson is a part of multiple trade and industry associations, many that function at a national level, she found CMISP became the networking forum with regional business partners to dissect and translate the region's regulations during the pandemic. The frequency of the business-to-business (B2B) networking meetings has increased to adapt to the continuously changing business environment. Instead of meeting quarterly, a small group of manufacturers now meet monthly to share best practices for navigating the COVID world, including worker safety and vaccination roll-out.

One COVID era moment stands out, showcasing the region's new collaborative approach to problem-solving. A manufacturer called for a convening on a specific issue: employee childcare and remote learning needs. In response, within two weeks, support partners had organized a roundtable bringing together a diverse mix of companies and those with possible solutions. Businesses first shared their best practices, then support partners shared solutions and resources that might help, followed by everyone brainstorming additional and blended solutions. Following the meeting, a summary packet was put together as a comprehensive resource for companies. Kraig Kistinger, Director of Human Resources at National Tube Supply, noted this activity as one that exemplifies a void that CMISP could continue to fill for industry partners and the region if facilitated effectively.



Above: A plant tour of the SouthWorks MakerLab at Prairie State College. Photo by Irene Sherr.

MEASURABLE RESULTS: ACHIEVING BREAKTHROUGHS, EXPANDING THE PIPELINE, LEVERAGING SUCCESS

CMISP's areas of success are concentrated in three categories: the results and impact on students and jobseekers, the impact on manufacturers themselves, and on increased efficiencies and impact by public and government programs. Examples of measurable results that stand out for public and private partners include:

- In 2017, industry partners and public, nonprofit and workforce development partners convened to create tangible actions for collaboration, including ongoing support for regional robotics competitions and intern placements at CMISP manufacturers as well as establishing a framework for career readiness for graduating seniors needed by area companies.
- In June 2019, the support and industry partners from CMISP organized a first-ever regional meeting to connect three community colleges, 30 high school districts and a large showing of manufacturing industry leaders. The meeting functioned as a hub for schools seeking business input for their Perkins V application, a critical resource for vocational training from the US Department of Education.

MEASURABLE RESULTS: CONTINUED

- The support partners have been active in connecting CMISP manufacturers with regional talent. For example, Nancy Wilson of Morrison Containers notes that one of the interns placed through the Partnership continued on to accept a job offer at her company following the internship. Within the coming months, Morrison Containers will also host a number of interns through their connection with OAI. Overall, support partners, including OAI, CAIC and CFL, report increased numbers of job and intern placements and on-the-job training through their involvement with CMISP^[2].
- The partnership is valuable to manufacturers in the region as it serves as the intermediary between and among manufacturers, local schools, and local support organizations, many partners noting it's "something they cannot get elsewhere."
- Building on connections made through the Manufacturing Day events, regional manufacturers sponsored over 20 high school robotics teams who competed in the regional Southworks Robotics and Engineering Tournament. These efforts foster the interest in STEM careers and build STEM skills within local high school participants, ultimately exposing participants to possible pathways within the manufacturing industry.
- Due to the high levels of collaboration among public and non-profit partners, additional funds and grants have been drawn to the region. The partners have collectively leveraged over \$1.2 million in additional local, state, federal and private funds to support the manufacturing industry.
- Business representatives have cited that through the partnership they have a much better appreciation and understanding of the services available through public and nonprofit agencies for their companies in the region and now have a ready access point to these supports.

[2] Results reported from OAI, CAIC and CFL:

- Placed over 300 persons in full-time jobs
- 100 on-the-job trainings completed
- 100 interns placed for the summer and developed an intern-matching website
- Childcare assistance provided to individuals while they were receiving training from OAI



Above: A plant tour of Sciaky, Inc., an Industrial metal 3D printing manufacturer, organized by the B2B committee. Photo by Irene Sherr.

MAJOR INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS: GETTING THE BASICS RIGHT FROM THE BEGINNING, MOVING FROM INDIVIDUAL AGENDAS TO SHARED INDUSTRY PRIORITIES

Lessons from CMISP as a Whole

- **Distribute leadership while maintaining an accountable convener.** CMISP has worked to create and cultivate clear industry leadership, while bringing in a complex array of public and nonprofit partners. Public and private partners alike will agree it is hard and imperfect work. Critical to success is a consistent and accountable convener and work stream manager. The Cook County Bureau of Economic Development has taken the lead as the operational backbone agency for the Partnership (the official convener role). Turnover of this position created some slowing of momentum heading into 2020, demonstrating the importance of a set of clear roles and responsibilities of the convener to keep manufacturing partners engaged and the array of public partners effectively plugged into solutions and activities.
- **Build a “coalition of the willing”, those committed to a shared approach.** Support partners have noted that it's essential to identify and engage partners who are willing and committed to the work of creating a business-driven partnership, one truly focused on collective industry priorities, and not on the individual agendas of support organizations and agencies.

MAJOR INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS: CONTINUED

Lessons from CMISP as a Whole cont.

- **Train public and private partners on the Next Gen model early in the development of the partnership.** These training sessions helped participants develop an in-depth understanding of the approach, enabled the core group to move forward with a shared knowledge base, and helped individuals learn from Next Gen practitioners in other regions. Nancy Wilson of Morrison Container Handling Solutions attended a national Next Gen academy at an early stage in her involvement with CMISP, which provided an opportunity to interact with business champions from other parts of the country. This training helped convince her to commit to the model and inspired her to review its distinct advantages at the beginning of every quarterly Partnership meeting, which has been especially important for acclimating newcomers.
- **Understand the value of a neutral, knowledgeable facilitator.** Both industry, public and nonprofit partners alike emphasize the importance of building the foundation of the partnership with a neutral facilitator who had a robust understanding of the model. It provided an opportunity for support partners to learn the Next Gen approach to facilitation, and early in the process stay in “listen-only” mode in order to give space for industry partners to step in and step up to the task of defining and co-investing in solutions.

Lessons from Business Leaders

- **Identify and recruit business leaders who have a personal passion for the mission of the partnership.** From the early stages, CMISP engaged industry leaders with a personal commitment to advancing the region’s workforce and B2B networking opportunities. Kraig Kisting of National Tube Supply long demonstrated passion and commitment in earlier regional initiatives addressing the industry’s workforce gaps, and similarly has been a consistent and sustained force for action in CMISP.
- **Recognize that business engagement relies largely on the industry champions’ ability to communicate the structure, mission and impact of the Partnership and to rally other businesses to join.** For CMISP, industry champions have been able to engage fellow leaders more effectively when they have an in-depth understanding of and ability to clearly describe the business-driven approach.

Lessons from Support Partners

- **Establish (and re-visit) a formal agreement for rules of engagement and partnership structure.** It’s essential for the public and nonprofit agencies to understand the purpose and intent behind an industry-led partnership, and their shared roles and benefits. CMISP created a formal MOU amongst the support partners, and re-committed to it three years later.

Shared Commitments in Formal MOU Among CMISP Public and Non-Profit Partners

- Interpret industry priorities and develop responsive solutions as a team.
 - This may include modifying existing program(s) and/ or building stronger systems or linkages across programs to respond to industry priorities.
 - Broker collaborations across programs to develop customized solutions, (as opposed to relying on pre-existing programs within institutional silos).
 - Provide project management support to advance sector partnership priorities, tracking progress, holding partners accountable, and driving toward action and results.
 - Make good faith efforts to consistently participate in planning and committee calls and to attend quarterly meetings.
 - Encourage and promote involvement in CMISP among the businesses you work with.
-
- **Actively listen to industry needs, facilitate and broker public-private solutions.** CMISP support partners have a shared commitment to listening to industry needs first before offering their organization’s services to manufacturers, a departure from what had been common practice. Ideally, as exemplified by the COVID 19 childcare roundtable, industry champions articulate their shared priorities, ideas and commitments to solutions, with support partners then offering their ideas and resources to make solutions happen.

MOVING FORWARD: GROWING BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT, FORMALIZING THE COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

While over 100 unique businesses have attended at least one CMISP meeting, maintaining consistent and continuous participation from manufacturing businesses remains a challenge. Both business leaders and public partners agree that there is a need to expand the business membership of the partnership to ensure continuity, or else risk over reliance on a small handful of business leaders going forward. Nancy Wilson, one of CMISP's lead industry champions, believes that a reasonable goal should be the participation of 40 manufacturers in every meeting with more consistent attendance and participation from a significant core of business partners in committee work. This will also require the convening staff and support partners to make improvements. As is true in many Next Gen sector partnerships, from a staffing perspective there is no coasting in this work. Steady and consistent workstream management, timely response and follow through, and the skilled ability to broker relationships and position individuals to contribute where best able are essential skills of the lead convener. For CMISP this means recalibrating the balance of effective staffing at the right level so that significantly more business leaders join the effort and take more responsibility for the work that needs to get done. It means reminding support partners of the single, shared table approach when it seems independent, siloed outreach to manufacturers might be creeping back in.

Among public and private partners most closely involved, there is a growing sense that a more consistent and responsive staff, funding, and organizational structure will be important to attracting new and more involved business members. It's a vision of a "connected community" model that keeps business in the driver's seat, maintains strong and collaborative support partner involvement, but also provides for enough sustainable administrative capacity and structure to achieve greater impact on priorities important to the Calumet region's manufacturers and communities.

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- *Northeast Louisiana (NELA) Healthcare Alliance*
- *Northern Colorado Manufacturing & Health Care Sector Partnerships*
- *Kingman and Mohave Manufacturing Association (KAMMA)*
- *Seattle Healthcare Industry Leadership Table (HILT)*



The Benchmarking Project is made possible thanks to generous support from Ascendium Education Group.



Above: A plant tour organized through Manufacturing Day.

PROFILING THE MADE IN CENTRAL PA MANUFACTURING PARTNERSHIP

A Benchmarking Project of the Institute for Networked Communities (INC)



USGS The National Map; National Boundaries Dataset; 3DEP Elevation Program; Geographic Names Information System; National Hydrography Dataset; National Land Cover Database; National Structures Dataset; and National Transportation Dataset; USGS Global Ecosystems; U.S. Census Bureau TIGER/Line data; USFS Road Data; Natural Earth Data; U.S. Department of State Humanitarian Information Unit; and NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information; U.S. Coastal Relief Model. Data refreshed May, 2020.

MADE IN CENTRAL PA

By: Navjeet Singh and Mara Timmeney

This case study is one in a series of profiles of Next Generation Sector Partnerships operating across the country. Its primary purpose is to give practitioners insights into the key milestones and critical ingredients for success that have shaped the journey of the MADE in Central PA Manufacturing Partnership, a nearly three-year-old partnership that has reached new heights during the COVID era. The intended audience for this series is the diverse mix of business, education, workforce development and economic development leaders who are committed to the work of taking their communities to a new level of shared prosperity. The profile is organized into six sections: motivations for launch, mechanisms for change, moments of transformation, measurable results, major ingredients for success, and the future of the Partnership.

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- *Motivations for Launch*
- *Moments of Transformation*
- *Measurable Results*
- *Ingredients for Success*
- *Future of the Partnership*



MOTIVATIONS FOR LAUNCH: WORKING INDEPENDENTLY NOT OPTIMAL, A NEW PATH OPENS

Comprised of nine counties, the Central Pennsylvania region spans across 5,370 square miles of primarily rural portions of Pennsylvania. Known for its strong manufacturing presence, the region is centrally located between Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and New York City with a wide range of highway infrastructure, making the region well situated as a distribution center for its diverse manufacturers. With nearly 620,000 people residing in the Central PA region and with robust educational, healthcare and social services, and manufacturing industries ranking as the largest employers by sector, Central PA has a solid foundation for launching and fostering successful industry partnerships.

The region's manufacturing businesses range in size and scope from regional to global manufacturers. The leading companies have struggled to find and hire appropriately skilled workers, with many manufacturers searching for their own solutions to common workforce needs. Joe Miller, a Senior Human Resources Professional at First Quality Enterprises, was already working independently with local high schools and career and technical education (CTE) schools to raise awareness about the benefits and careers available within the manufacturing industry. Historically, support partners, including local public, nonprofit and education partners, routinely stepped up to the challenge of supporting and strengthening the region's manufacturing workforce. Still, these solutions did not provide the widespread nor systemic impact that the manufacturers and support partners sought, and all knew the region had greater potential to offer.

When the State of Pennsylvania offered grants to establish regional industry partnerships in 2017, Erica Mulberger, the Executive Director of the Central Pennsylvania Workforce Development Corporation (CPWDC), knew that the Central Pennsylvania region was ready to take the leap into creating organized, cohesive partnerships with the manufacturing industry and the healthcare industry. With the support of a Next Generation Sector Partnership (Next Gen) facilitator, the Central Pennsylvania region initiated an industry-driven partnership in manufacturing.



MECHANISMS FOR CHANGE: TAKING THE LEAP TOGETHER, USING A NEW DISCIPLINED APPROACH

With a history of industry partnerships in the region dating back to the early 2000s, the support partners and industry leaders shared a foundational understanding of both the required work and subsequent benefits of launching and sustaining industry partnerships. Still, the launching of what is now the MADE in Central PA partnership required a collective agreement from all involved to focus the partnership initiatives and benefits at the forefront.

The intentionally planned launch meeting served as the springboard for the partnership, allowing prospective business leaders to gain a firm understanding of the Next Gen approach to industry partnerships. Ronn Cort, President and COO of Sekisui Kydex, LLC, notes that he was initially drawn into the partnership because of the way Mulberger, as director of the local workforce board, was able to communicate the partnership's commitment to being industry-driven. Cort also recognized that the Next Gen model is meant to be tailored to the needs and assets of the region, unlike a "franchise model" that requires a strict adherence to all tools within the playbook. Gone were the days of individual outreach to community schools and support partners. The MADE in Central PA partnership was now committed to acting as a coordinated, united front when providing solutions for shared industry challenges.

With manufacturers in the region differing in size, clientele and type of production, there had been limited opportunities prior to the partnership to network and share best practices for tackling shared challenges. Cort describes this connecting thread across manufacturers as "very different businesses but we all had identical issues". After the businesses gathered and began to assess their shared needs, three main interests rose to the top: building a skilled workforce, business-to-business networking and marketing the Central PA region to both prospective employers and employees. With consensus around these three initiatives, both support partners and industry leaders began to consolidate their resources and identify solutions to create a collective approach to solving the three main challenges. Ultimately, three main action teams were formed.

MOMENTS OF TRANSFORMATION: COVID-19 AS A SURPRISING CATALYST FOR PROGRESS

Within the last year, MADE in Central PA has made significant progress and impact. Following a meeting in October 2019, the Partnership collectively decided to brand itself “MADE in Central PA”. Moving forward with a shared identity, the Partnership created and implemented a regional marketing plan focused on increasing the pipeline of skilled workers. With industry leading the effort, support partners rallied to generate funding for a video to market the Central Pennsylvania region. Ronn Cort, from Sekisui Kydex, LLC, notes that “this collective marketing campaign was driven by this partnership and is an example of the kinds of things that I don’t think any one manufacturer would have done alone, or any one support partner would have been able to do that effectively” without the collective effort.

Enthusiasm around the Partnership and the Partnership’s impact truly gained steam when the COVID-19 pandemic struck the region in March of 2020. Building off the foundational work of creating three focused action teams, the Partnership swiftly mobilized to meet the immediate regional needs that surfaced from the pandemic. During the first couple weeks of the pandemic, the Partnership’s manufacturing leaders met virtually to create a game plan for addressing the challenges emerging due to COVID and pivoting the production of their plants. After partnering with the Central Pennsylvania Healthcare Partnership to identify immediate concerns, the manufacturing Partnership activated their networks to rise to the occasion. Within the coming weeks and months, manufacturers switched their production lines to produce a broad range of critical materials--PPE, ventilator parts, bottles for hand sanitizer, to name a few. As the industry leaders led the charge, the Partnership’s support partners played their equal part in response to the industry needs, connecting manufacturers with each other to source necessary materials and connecting manufacturers with the Central PA Healthcare Partnership members to keep track of production specifications and products needed within the region.

As the pandemic wears on, MADE in Central PA’s network is still activated with the businesses meeting monthly to share best practices as they adapt to the ever-changing work environment during the COVID era. Rob Bargo, Vice President of Operations at Videon Central, attributes this quick, collaborative response to the foundational network of the Partnership. The Partnership’s continued response to the pandemic is proof that the region is no longer working in silos and is now tackling shared problems with a networked mindset.

MEASURABLE RESULTS: BUSINESSES FIND COMMON GROUND, COLLABORATE WITH SUPPORT PARTNERS TO BREAK NEW GROUND

With industry needs at the forefront and with all involved adopting the network mindset, the MADE in Central PA partnership has created lasting impact on the Central Pennsylvania region:

- **A strengthened purpose among the regional manufacturers.** Trust and common purpose is eroding the previous highly competitive manufacturing environment in order to solve shared challenges. Manufacturing leaders are now quick to offer support to peers, whether it be in response to producing necessary PPE for the pandemic, sharing best practices while translating COVID regulations, or hosting plant tours during pre-pandemic times.
- **Increased collaboration with local high schools and CTE centers.** Shifting from single manufacturers creating individual connections with local education leaders, the Partnership now offers a common point of contact to link education-business partnerships for college and career awareness and readiness activities, both in the school and in the industry setting. Additionally, businesses with historically successful Manufacturing Day strategies shared their playbook with fellow manufacturers within the partnership. Working as a united front on coordinating Manufacturing Day events every October, the Partnership has doubled the number of students who participate since inception.
- **Sharing the load in economic shifts.** As the Partnership strengthened, one manufacturer faced pandemic related reduced workloads and their workforce faced looming layoffs. Other manufacturers experienced increased work orders and hired the workers in jeopardy of losing their jobs, creating a win-win for the businesses, affected workers and the community.
- **A regional campaign to market the Central Pennsylvania region.** As the outreach and programs continue to build with the local and regional schools and education systems, the manufacturers leverage their ideal location between the major cities of Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and New York City. With a cohort of people in the workforce looking to leave the hustle and bustle of cities, the Central PA region is perfectly situated to offer an escape from the city life and a setting for a meaningful career, all while having close access to the natural beauty of Pennsylvania. Following the industry’s suggestion and their bias towards innovation and action, the support partners are collaborating to create an ongoing campaign for attracting talent to the region.

MEASURABLE RESULTS: CONTINUED

- **Investing in resources for the region and state's collective benefit.** In 2018, SEKISUI contracted an internationally renowned consultant to provide internal training on company culture and the impact that has on employee retention. Seeing how this topic aligned with the Partnerships action teams, Ronn Cort, President and COO of Sekisui Kydex, LLC, offered to sponsor the consultant to present a second day to all Partnership members. Capitalizing on the timing, Erica Mulberger, Executive Director of Central PA Workforce Development Corporation, noted the presentations were the same dates as a statewide Pennsylvania Workforce Development Association Symposium and suggested having the speaker be the keynote at the Symposium which would benefit not just the MADE in Central PA members, but employers and workforce professionals from across the state. Through this coordination, over 220 Pennsylvanians were able to attend the company culture training at the Symposium, and the members and support partners of MADE In Central PA and the Central PA Healthcare Partnership were able to attend the Symposium session at no cost.
- **A united front while working on workforce development plans and state and federal grant initiatives.** Both industry and support partners alike now work as a collective to tackle shared initiatives which brings additional funding to the region. With support from the Partnership, Pennsylvania College of Technology, a support partner, received an \$8 million U.S. Department of Labor Apprenticeship grant in partnership with the New Jersey Technical Institute.
- **Sharing resources and expertise to reduce costs.** When one manufacturer was looking to review the steps on a specific ISO certification, another manufacturer offered up their expertise. Instead of hiring an outside consultant, the company offered for their in-house expert in Quality Management to provide education and guidance. In return, the recipient company reciprocated by offering fabrication work at no charge.
- **An increase in network flexibility.** During the beginning stages of the COVID response, the quick and efficient pivot from quarterly meetings to manufacturers-only monthly sessions was facilitated by the partnership's network flexibility. Due to the relationship-building from previous partnership initiatives, businesses within the partnership quickly crowdsourced both advice and best practices for navigating through COVID impacts.



Above: Rail service provider, North Shore Railroad Company, services several of the MADE in Central PA manufacturers.

- **Collective response to pandemic related healthcare and protective needs.** As previously noted, the manufacturers rallied to help regional healthcare organizations and the broader community regarding emergent protective equipment needs. Sanitizers, gloves, masks and face shield production ramped up as well as the sourcing of materials for the manufacturing of these items. One manufacturing company that made jerseys for sports teams pivoted to produce protective equipment for healthcare and essential workers, again leveraging the supply chains of other companies in the region. Another manufacturer expanded their product line from haircare products to hand sanitizer that was quickly provided to members of the Central PA Healthcare Partnership and given to local non-profits at no cost. This successfully exemplified the role manufacturers could play for the community, and also made the community aware of the large number of manufacturers and their commitment to the region and the local community.
- **A streamlined way for support partners to share relevant resources with manufacturers.** In 2019, a sharing platform, Basecamp, was setup for manufacturers and support partners to quickly share resources. This master database was a critical component to the Partnership's successful response during the early stages of the pandemic. By highlighting each company and organization's areas of expertise, the database ensures a streamlined process for quickly identifying which organizations and businesses should be called upon. Basecamp has continued to be a place for support partners and manufacturers alike to share relevant information. For example, Lauri Moon, the Manager for Training & Outreach at Innovative Manufacturers' Center, uses Basecamp to thoughtfully share resources with manufacturers, ensuring that industry leaders have access and awareness of up-to-date information and available support.

MAJOR INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS: PASSION FOR PLACE, BIAS FOR ACTION, INCLUSIVE APPROACH

Lessons from the Partnership as a Whole

- **A place-based passion from all involved.** The MADE in Central PA partnership is comprised of leaders who have a deep passion and keen understanding about the beauty, merit and heart of the Central Pennsylvania region.
- **Adopting the “bias toward action” culture.** Rob Bargo from Videon Central understands that manufacturers have a natural bias toward action. With the Partnership creating a framework and structure for industry leaders to routinely connect, the natural results include action-based solutions.
- **“20-year vision, not a 20-minute vision”.** Ronn Cort emphasizes the importance of creating and working toward future-oriented goals. Whether it be workforce related or Partnership-structure related, it’s essential to keep the vision focused on longevity and sustainability, to have a bias for immediate actions that advance long-term goals.
- **Inclusion means outreach, outreach, outreach.** It’s no secret that building and maintaining a regional industry partnership takes hard work and consistency. MADE in Central PA leaders have been steadfast in their outreach to their own members and with prospective members, ultimately keeping accountability toward engagement levels during the early stages.
- **A strong and organized initial launch meeting.** The initial meeting sets the tone for the partnership, allowing business and support partner leaders to assess the value of the partnership. This initial meeting ultimately dictates the initial engagement levels, so it’s important to hold a concise, intentional meeting that emphasizes the importance of an industry-driven model.
- **Diversity in roles amongst leadership.** It’s key to include CEOs and plant managers as well as human resource and training managers. Different roles bring different skills and larger companies have been willing to share best practices.
- **A strong understanding of the Next Gen model.** The MADE in Central PA partnership utilized support from a Next Gen coach during the beginning phases. This initial support offered a neutral way for support partners and industry alike to understand the toolbox of a truly industry-led partnership. Additionally, multiple partners attended a Next Gen training to understand the model and many felt it was an invaluable step in creating MADE in Central PA.
- **Visionaries and project managers.** It’s critical to have diverse types of leadership styles within the partnership.



Above: Aerial view of the Susquehanna River Valley, located in Central PA.

MAJOR INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS: CONTINUED

Lessons from the Support Partners

- **A collective agreement from the support partners to champion industry needs at the center of the Partnership.** MADE in Central PA support partners have continuously rallied around the industry-driven initiatives, offering their resources and leaving their own agendas at the door to tackle shared challenges.
- **A deep commitment from the convening agency.** When launching the Partnership, the convening agency, CPWDC, led by its Executive Director, Erica Mulberger, had a pre-existing commitment to the development and strengthening of the region through the creation of industry partnerships.
- **Consistent, appropriate follow up.** A key to sustaining the Partnership as industry-led has been tailoring the communications and outreach to best match industry communication styles. The follow up and outreach has always been responsive to the needs and decisions of the businesses and not led by the agendas of support partners.
- **Support partners who are willing to activate their networks for the sake of the partnership.** Lauri Moon at Innovative Manufacturers’ Center elevated the well-being of the Partnership first by reaching out to her pre-established industry connections. Many other support partners within the Partnership did the same, ultimately increasing engagement and scope.

MAJOR INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS: CONTINUED

Lessons from the Business Partners

- **Choosing industry champions who create a culture of honesty and transparency.** The Central Pennsylvania region transitioned from a culture of relative secrecy and competition to a culture of honesty and transparency. From the beginning, industry leaders like Ronn Cort and Rob Bargo set the tone for the Partnership to be a place for sharing both challenges and solutions.
- **Industry champions who are willing to “call in” their peers.** Industry leaders have embraced the responsibility for building out the Partnership by leveraging existing connections and continuing to engage manufacturing peers within the region.
- **Diversity amongst company size.** MADE in Central PA emphasizes the importance of intentionally including small to large-sized companies as it ensures companies of all sizes will feel empowered to join the Partnership if seeing representation of their company size within the member mix.
- **Industry Champions that represent diverse types of businesses.** Ronn Cort, Rob Bargo and Joe Miller represent diverse types of businesses –including a large manufacturer part of a multinational company, and regional and local businesses.
- **An industry champion who is willing and able to articulate and share the vision for the partnership.** Co-champions of MADE in Central PA, Rob Bargo and Ronn Cort, lead all discussions putting the priorities of the partnership above their individual company needs and can quickly reframe conversations to get the most action out of each meeting.

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LOOKING FORWARD: FORMALIZATION AND CONTINUED MOMENTUM

Since its inception, MADE in Central PA has been intentional about creating an open, welcoming format for meetings and member engagement. The Partnership has emphasized the importance of creating an inclusive, diverse group of manufacturers and support partners. Because of this intentionality, the Partnership is now made up of a diverse portfolio of organizations and businesses. With this core foundation, the Partnership is now looking forward to creating a more formal and transparent framework of vision, mission, goals and operations. The members believe a more formalized framework will ensure a broader footprint, allowing interested parties to quickly get onboard with the mission, vision and initiatives of the Partnership. This formalization will consist of a period of reassessing collective goals, initiatives and action items. Still, it will be crucial to keep flexibility in the framework, ensuring that the Partnership will always be industry-driven and responsive to industry and economic needs.

Finally, the Partnership has experienced high levels of enthusiasm from multiple core partners throughout the course of the 2020-2021 pandemic. Still, many manufacturing leaders have been pulled onto the plant floor due to the increased production demand in some manufacturing sectors. Without the ability to consistently and safely gather in person, there has been a strain on engagement for many. Virtual meetings cannot fully replace in-person meetings during these earlier years of partnership development, yet the Partnership is finding that there is still room for creative solutions. The Partnership will batten down its emphasis on industry-led initiatives, and the accompanying support partners will continue to champion industry needs to ensure relevance, enthusiasm and momentum are sustained.