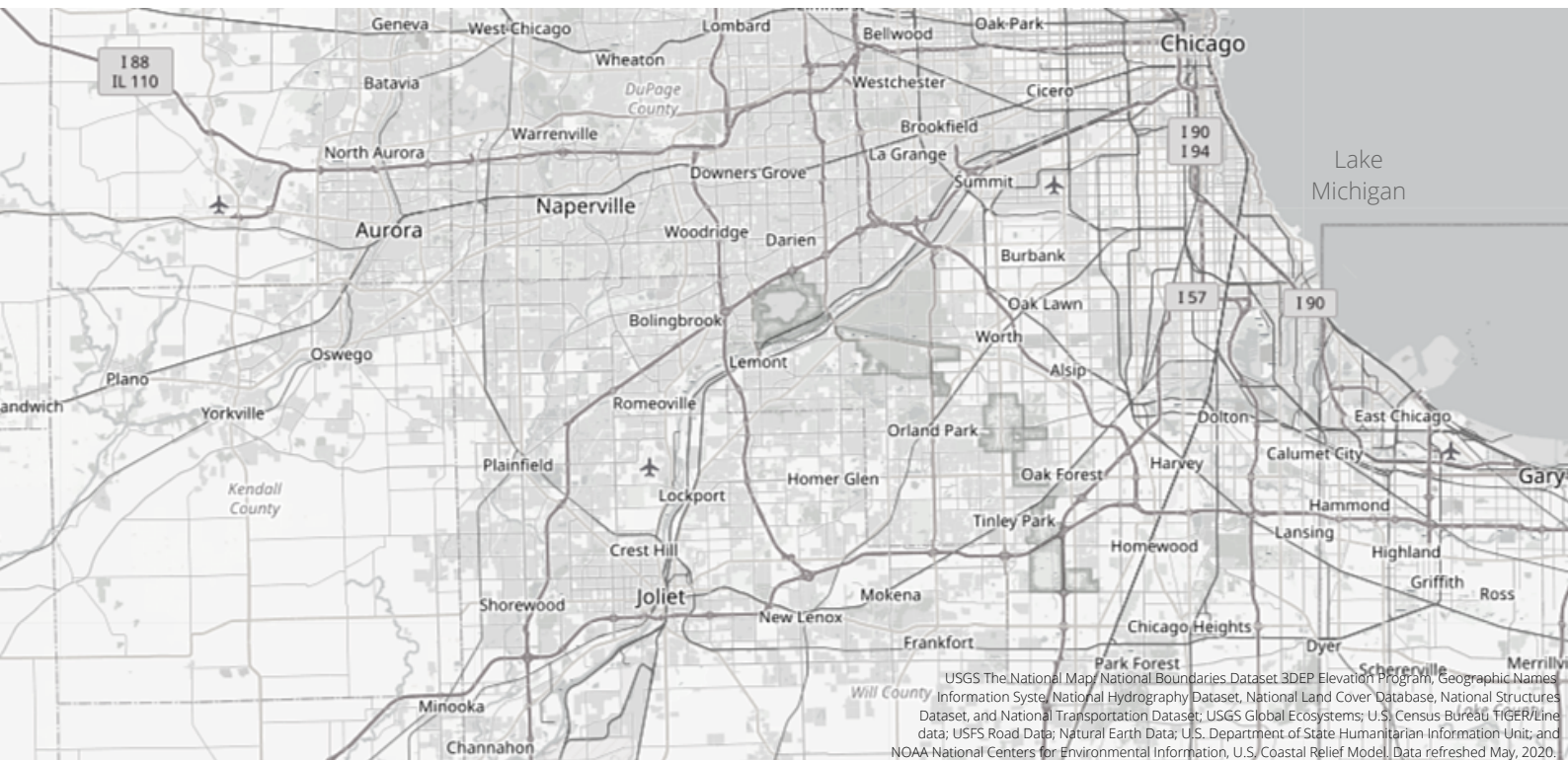


PROFILING THE CALUMET MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY SECTOR PARTNERSHIP

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



CALUMET MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY SECTOR PARTNERSHIP

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



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.
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- **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.

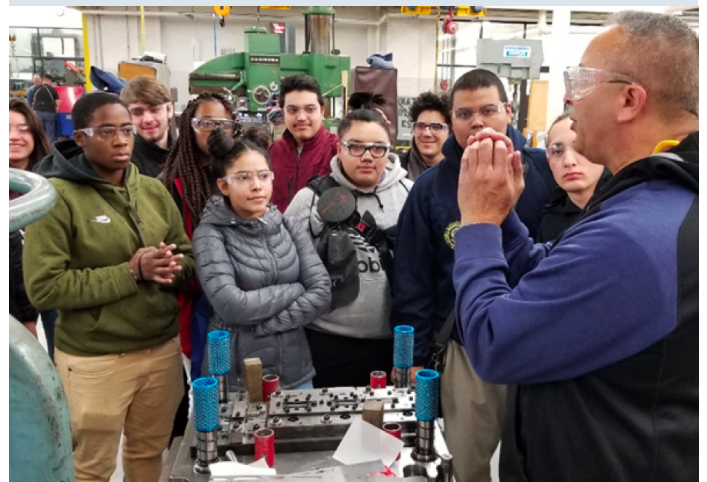
Among public and private partners most closely involved, there is a growing sense that a more consistent and responsive staff, funding, and organizational structure will be important to attracting new and more involved business members. It's a vision of a "connected community" model that keeps business 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.

MORE FROM THIS SERIES:

- *MADE in Central PA Manufacturing Partnership*
- *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 logo for Ascendium, featuring the word "Ascendium" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. A small red triangle is positioned above the letter 'i'.

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



Above: A plant tour organized through Manufacturing Day.