

Planning at a Regional Scale to Address Unemployment

Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development

Recovery and Reemployment Research Conference
September 15, 2009

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Introduction

National competitiveness and regional prosperity are possible if communities:

- Link knowledge resources with business and innovation assets
- Train workforce in the skills and knowledge required to work effectively in new and emerging industries

ETA's Initiative supports working regionally towards two national goals:

- to develop strong linkages between industry and the education, economic development and workforce systems; and
- to transform the workforce system into an integrative, forward-looking talent development system.

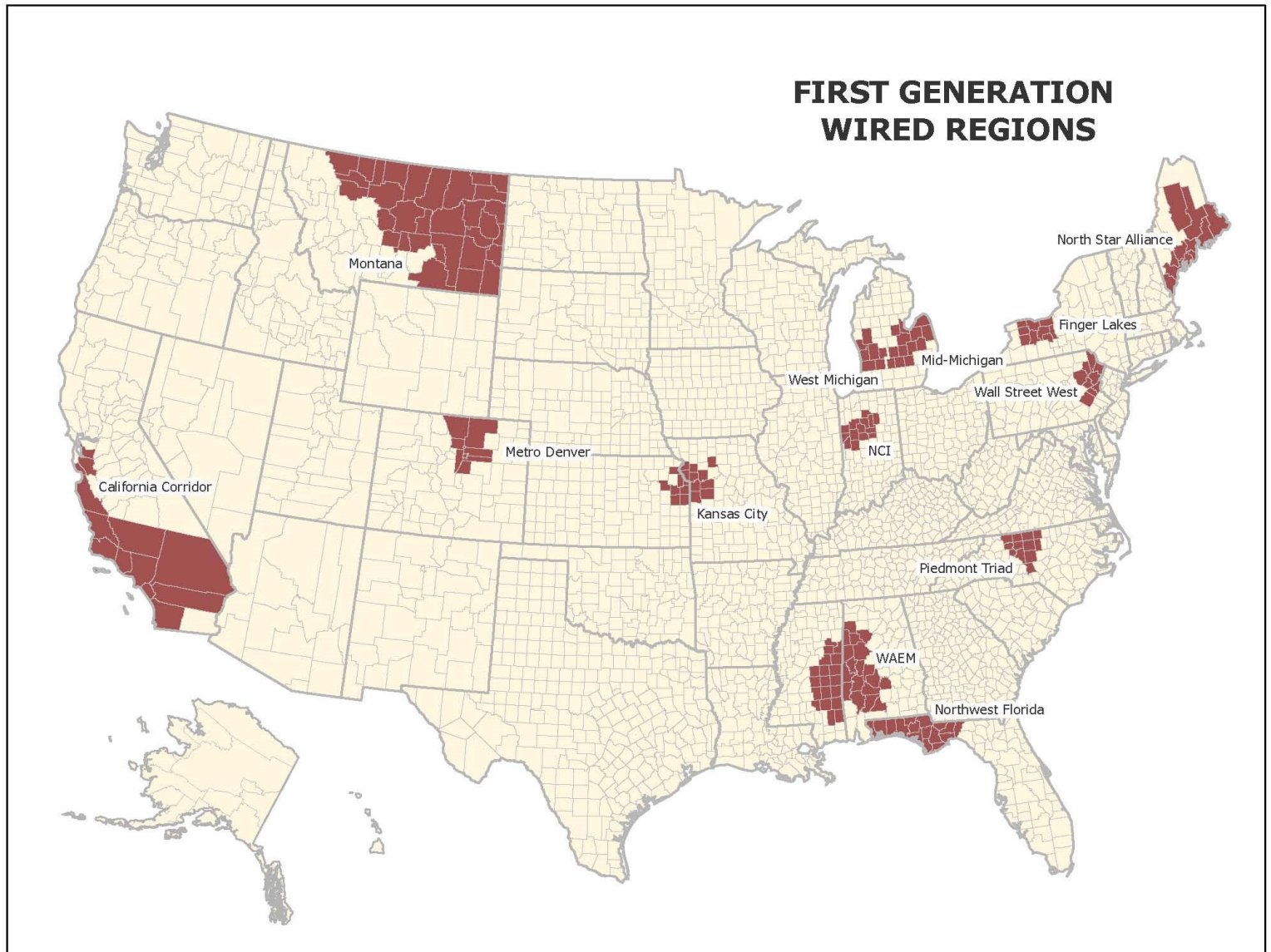


Evaluation Goals

- Provide key insights into dynamics of regional social change and identify enablers and barriers
- Accumulate new knowledge about effective implementation of regional collaborative efforts for systems change and economic transformation
- Document achievements and value of ETA's investment in regional initiative
- Understand roles of federal, state and local governments and key industry, education, community and other public and private stakeholders in strengthening the nation's economic health and global competitiveness



The First 13 Regions – Generation I



Evaluation design

Four major study components:

1. Site Visits – 4 days, 2 staff, 3 times over 3 years
 - Development and quality of collaboration and partnerships
 - Change in institutional practices
 - Development of regional identity
 - Commitment of time and resources
 - Risk-sharing among partners
2. Social network analysis
3. Partner survey
4. Secondary analysis of national data
 - **Workforce Employment and Wages** – National Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Internal Revenue Service, WIASRD.
 - **Measures of Innovation and Commercialization** – Dun and Bradstreet, National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health
 - **Education and Talent Development Measures** – US Department of Education Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)



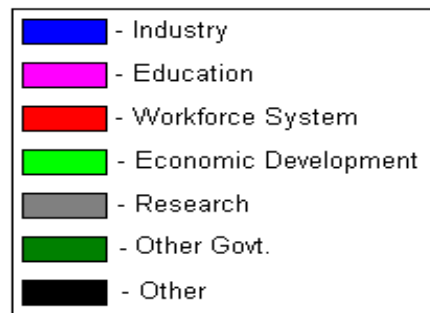
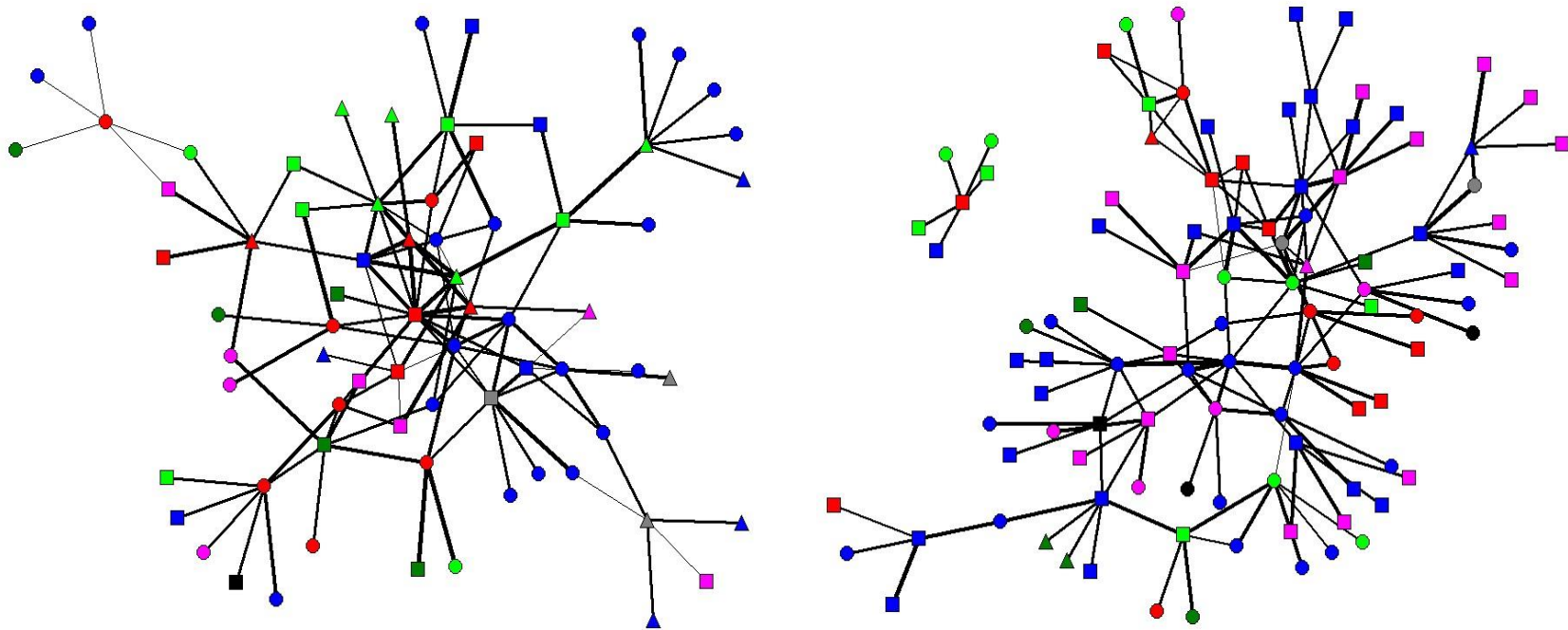
Social Network Analysis

Identify “five individuals with whom you have significant contact in the context of the Initiative, outside of your own organization,” and provide:

- Name
- Organization
- Job title (later coded as “level in organization”)
- Frequency of contact



Social Network Maps



Challenges in building region-wide collaboration

- Geographical isolation, and lack of a history of positive interaction
- History of inter-jurisdictional competition and friction
- Lack of trust
- Insularity of various systems
- Reluctance to discuss problems or share ideas with individuals outside one's own organization
- Tradition of self-reliance and a lack of history of collaborating
- Lack of regional identity or regional perspective



Strategies for building effective partnerships

- Think creatively about common goals
- Allow relationships to develop over time - “Trust. Can’t force it; can’t rush it; can’t regulate it; can’t mandate it.”
- Focus collaboration on activities and tasks
- Build on personal relationships
- Make expectations clear, expect the best, establish guidelines for working together



Evaluation design challenges

- Systems change and economic transformation are long-term processes. Measurable outcomes may not manifest themselves within the time frame of the evaluation.
- Regional collaboratives are dynamic and flexible with changing partnerships, strategies and external circumstances.
- Regions differ dramatically from one another -- evaluation needs flexibility to accommodate variation, and caution in making comparisons across regions.
- Regional partnerships are complex with multiple political jurisdictions, labor markets, education systems, business communities, as well as multiple social and cultural environments.



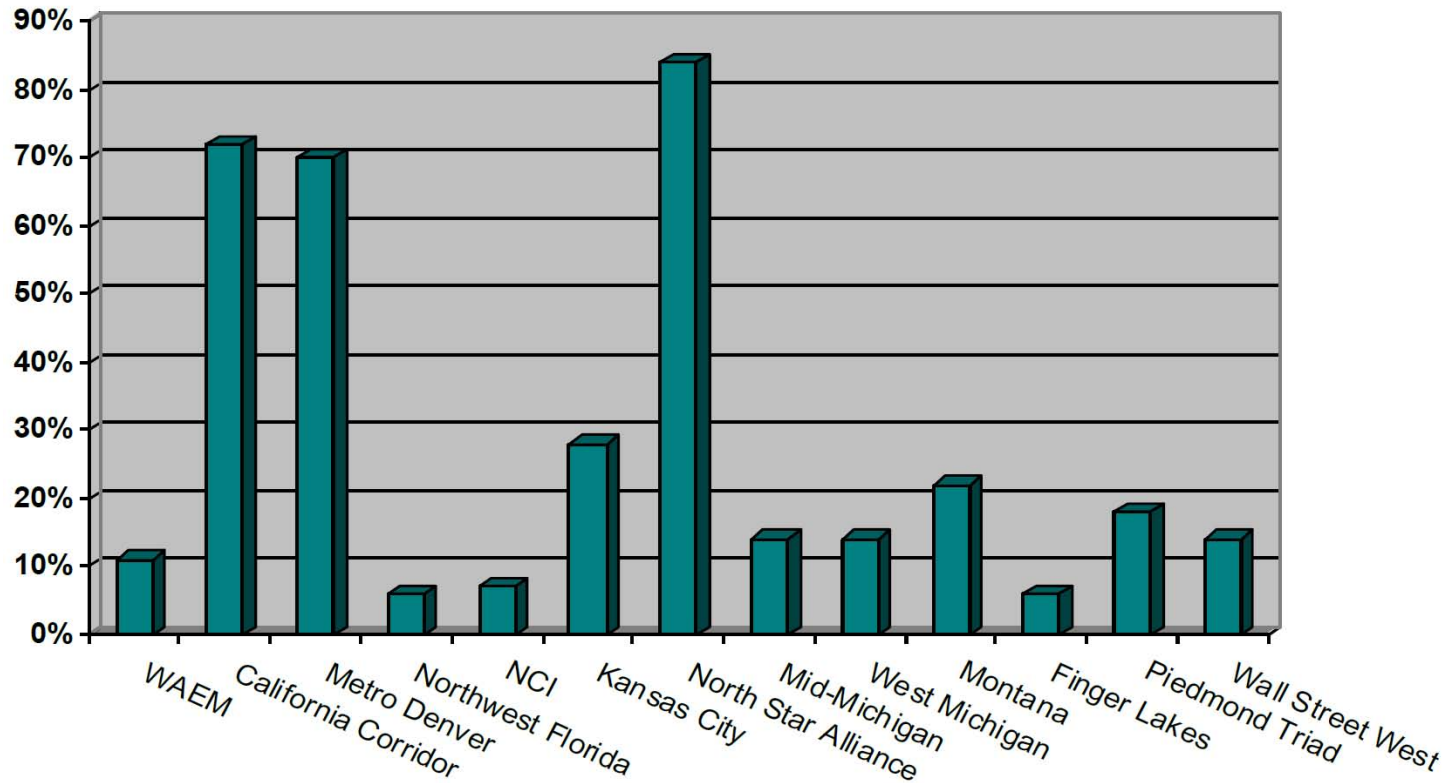
Variation among regions

- Economic needs they address
- Regional assets and gaps
- Particularities of local political and jurisdictional boundaries and policies
- Readiness for WIRED vis-à-vis inter-organizational/ cross-jurisdictional collaboration and identities
- Extent to which civic institutions, private funders and key business leadership are involved
- Extent to which social and cultural values are congruent with the requirements of economic transformation



Variation among regions– how big are they?

% of State Population



Values for two-state regions (WAEM and KC) are calculated by averaging



Changes in the national economic context

Montana Agro Energy Program:

- Encouraged farmers to grow potentially more lucrative oil seed for bio-diesel production when wheat prices were low.
- Spike in oil prices during Summer 2008 sparked demand for corn to produce ethanol. The decline in the amount of corn on the market increased the demand for wheat, a complementary good.
- Increased demand for wheat increased wheat prices that, coupled with federal crop insurance available for wheat but not for oil seed, served as a disincentive to growing the safflower and canola seeds needed for bio-diesel production.



Changes in the national economic context

Wall Street West:

- Planned and started soliciting funds to build a fiber optic cable network that would enable synchronous back-up operations for Wall Street
- This galvanized significant energy for collaboration, especially among economic development agencies
- Shrinking revenues in the private sector make capital investment in this effort unlikely in the near future
- The initiative expanded its target industries to include information technology, STEM occupations, and business continuity services, and increased its focus on workforce training and talent pipeline development.
- Vision centered primarily on strengthening the existing and emerging workforce is less attractive to original partners



Addressing evaluation challenges

- Build large team of senior staff
- Broad range of substantive knowledge – workforce system, economic development, education, innovation, technology transfer, etc.
- Breadth of methodological expertise – evaluation design, site visits, survey, analysis of extant data, social network analysis
- Stable team – need continuity of knowledge about each region
- Supplement traditional data sources -- attend national academies and conferences, listen in on ETA meetings with grantees, attend regional events, read ETA and key stakeholder communications.
- Retain flexibility to adapt to moving target – national policy changes, innovation, national economy, implementation challenges



For more information

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– click on Publications, Workforce and Small Business Development

