ETA Sector Strategies Technical Assistance Initiative:
BEST PRACTICES:
SOUTH CENTRAL WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD

EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
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INTRODUCTION

This case study was originally written as a part of the Workforce Systems Sector Strategies Guide, a document created through a partnership of Maher & Maher and the Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources, as a part of the USDOL Employment and Training Administration’s multi-year Sector Strategies Technical Assistance Initiative.

The Guide focused on innovation employed in the design and implementation of sector strategies within workforce development over the last two decades. The programs included in the case study portion of the guide demonstrated advanced thinking in one or more of the five elements of ETA’s Sector Strategies Framework: Data-Based Decision Making, Industry Engagement, Organizational Capacity and Alignment, Sector-Based Service Delivery, and Sustainability and Continuous Improvement.

SOUTH CENTRAL WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD (HARRISBURG, PA)

SECTOR STRATEGY OVERVIEW

The South Central Workforce Investment Board (SCWIB) has a history of strong sectors-based business engagement and service delivery. The Board capitalized on Industry Partnership funding made available through the State of Pennsylvania several years ago to build robust sector partnerships in transportation/logistics, healthcare and advanced manufacturing. Those partnerships continue to thrive and provide customized training essential to the industries’ growth. Changes in capacity and focus over the last few years, however, has limited SCWIB’s continuous expansion and innovation in sector partnerships, but new leadership and a renewed focus from the Local Workforce Investment Board (LWIB) has brought a commitment to engage, partner and serve the employer community in a way that makes sense to business and will help the regional economy grow.

The State of Pennsylvania has twelve key industries that employ 83% of the population. The region covered by the SCWIB includes the industries noted above (transportation/logistics, healthcare and advanced manufacturing) as well as food processing and wood product development. Manufacturing, in particular, is strongly embedded in the
region’s economy, history and culture. SCWIB is in the process of structuring its board to ensure maximum input and engagement from those key industries.

SCWIB is focused on collaboration with its strategic partners to advance sector partnerships. SCWIB participates in a regional economic development consortium and leadership from local economic development is currently on the SCWIB. In fact, SCWIB and its partners have a shared focus on being “networked” organizations which means they strive to share board members and fully engage as partners in key efforts in their region. For example, SCWIB is currently in the process of identifying key human services representatives for their Board which will help to support the development of cross-strategies that streamline employer engagement while leveraging capacity and organizational strengths.

DATA-INFORMED DECISION MAKING

SCWIB employs a multi-faceted approach to collect, analyze and use critical data to make decisions around employer engagement, as well as service design and delivery. For quantitative data, SCWIB looks at traditional Labor Market Information (LMI) from the State of Pennsylvania regarding in-demand occupations, wages, market penetration and other key factors. SCWIB also collects some economic development data derived from a tool called Implan. This information is verified with qualitative data collected through direct engagement with employers at industry partnership meetings and input from Business Service Representatives who also interface directly with employers.

SCWIB is continuously looking for additional methods of collecting quality data. Future efforts will likely include surveys (both a survey of general business trends as well as a detailed inquiry by sector), engagement with a contracting firm to do an in-depth analysis of the key jobs in each sector and the tie between those jobs and regional economic impact, and a potential partnership with other WIBs in the state to build up research and analysis expertise through the use of data products such as EMSI or Burning Glass.

SCWIB produces various products to share data with employers and other partners, but never does so without first asking employers what data they need and how to package it for maximum usability. Currently, the key SCWIB data sharing product is a one-page document outlining top skills and job prospects.

SCWIB also develops a one-page information sheet for its strategic plan that outlines the agency’s targets for each of the top 4-5 key industries. This document is shared with partners to advise them of SCWIB’s focus and priorities for the coming year.

INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT

SCWIB is using WIOA to bring partners to the table, but Kevin Perkey, Director, admits that it is going to take time to further expand existing sector partnerships and build new ones. Kevin notes that SCWIB pushes a key message that employers across industries are all part of a talent ecosystem that depends on one another to develop talent
that will move up and across career pathways over time. As a result, employers are encouraged to partner (by sector) through skill development to build a pipeline of talent that benefits all.

SCWIB is an eight county region which includes about 1.4 million people and 700,000 in the workforce. Pennsylvania has not yet formally designated regions under WIOA, however, SCWIB’s size and demographics would lend itself to operating as a single LWIB region.

### SECTOR-BASED SERVICE DELIVERY

SCWIB is in the process of realigning its business services to reflect the following key priorities: operating the workforce system at the speed of business, using information from sector partnerships to drive how funding is allocated and services are delivered, and capturing and articulating the workforce system’s impact on business. To support these priorities, SCWIB plans to have a business services representative for each identified key sector – and many of those representatives will be hired out of the sector they will serve or have past experience working directly in the identified industry. SCWIB will also likely organize case managers by industry to ensure staff working directly with job seekers have a strong understanding of specific employer needs. This approach will also support an effective working relationship between the workforce system staff making the critical match between supply and demand.

SCWIB also makes a strong compliance and financial administrative team a key component of its strategy for serving employers. Highly competent staff in those areas ensures compliance which then frees leadership and service-based staff up to explore strategic, sector-based operations. SCWIB also handles program and financial compliance on the back-end which leaves those complex elements out of the conversation with business.

By building peer groups of employers across sectors, SCWIB has established a forum for peer problem solving which often runs into areas other than workforce development, including infrastructure, tax credits and immigration issues. SCWIB then shares the information back to its partners to identify solutions for the identified challenges. This resource for business helps to build trust, which is critical to gathering the input needed to devise effective training and other services provided by the workforce system and its partners.

### SUSTAINABILITY AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

SCWIB recognizes meaningful outcome measurement as a critical management tool to drive continuous improvement and is interested in adopting new business services measures. The organization is considering adoption of market penetration as a key measurement, as well as growth in wage over time, and measurements that answer the question of how the workforce system is addressing industry workforce needs such as retention and upskilling to fill voids through retirement, attrition, business expansion, etc.
ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND ALIGNMENT

SCWIB’s new organizational structure is driven by sector knowledge and solution development based on identified employer needs. The attached diagram depicts the critical role that sectors play in service design and delivery at SCWIB.