



ETA Sector Strategies Technical Assistance Initiative:

# CHANGING ROLES FOR WORKFORCE SYSTEMS IN CARRYING OUT SECTOR STRATEGIES



**EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION**  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

## About This Brief

This resource is part of a series of integrated briefs to help workforce policymakers practitioners build a range of skills needed to launch and advance sector strategy approaches. The briefs are designed to be succinct and connect readers to existing resources, best practices, and tools. For more information, visit the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration's [Business Engagement page](#).

## About Sector Strategies

Sector strategies are regional, industry-focused approaches to building skilled workforces and are among the most effective ways to align public and private resources to address the talent needs of employers. While the approach is not new, there is a growing body of evidence showing that sector strategies can simultaneously improve employment opportunities for job seekers and the competitiveness of industries. As such, a number of national initiatives and federal laws (including the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) are driving workforce organizations, in particular, to embrace these approaches, to meet both the needs of workers and the needs of the economy.

At the heart of sector strategies are sector partnerships (sometimes referred to as industry partnerships, workforce collaboratives or regional skills alliances, among others). These partnerships are led by businesses—within a critical industry cluster—working collaboratively with workforce areas, education and training, economic development, labor, and community organizations. Sector partnerships are the vehicles through which industry members voice their critical human resource needs and where customized regional solutions for workers and businesses are formed.

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## INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

A central focus of the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is the establishment of sector strategies – regional, industry-focused approaches to building a skilled workforce. For years, many state and local workforce systems have carried out sector initiatives to meet the workforce needs of critical industries in their regions. However, WIOA sets the expectation that all workforce systems will develop and implement sector strategies and become involved in the facilitation of industry partnerships.

Implementing successful sector strategies, as envisioned by WIOA, requires a transformation in how workforce systems function at the strategic and operational levels. Implementing successful sector strategies, as envisioned by WIOA, requires a transformation in how workforce systems function at the strategic and operational levels. At a strategic level, local workforce areas, and Workforce Development Boards (WDBs), in particular, play a more visionary regional role in launching and catalyzing sector partnerships as they focus on addressing regional skill gaps and creating meaningful career pathways for workers.

In a sectors approach, services are also delivered differently. Businesses within target industries may be prioritized, and services like skills matching, worker assessments, and curriculum development are all done at scale, and more in-line with demand. Business service representatives, career counselors, and a host of others must do their jobs differently within a sector strategy approach.

This brief will help you better understand:

- The varied critical roles that workforce systems can play in carrying out sector strategies;
- How sector strategies can serve as a critical foundation for regional workforce systems change; and
- How sector approaches can realign strategy, service delivery, and organizational structure throughout local and regional workforce systems.

The following pages include examples of the various roles that workforce systems currently play in carrying out sector-focused work, and examine the changes these systems have made in implementing sector strategies.



## VARIED ROLES WORKFORCE BOARDS CAN PLAY IN SUPPORTING SECTOR STRATEGIES AND INDUSTRY SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

WIOA requires that local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) engage in regional planning to develop and implement sector approaches. WIOA also gives WDBs explicit authority to engage with employers and other entities to develop and implement strategies such as industry and sector partnerships to meet the employment and skill needs of workers and employers in demand industries; and to focus training activities using a sectors approach.

Local workforce boards should not only plan for, but should actively engage in sector work – providing support for the development and implementation of sector partnerships. Sector approaches also require strategic and operational changes in how workforce boards and systems generally do business.

Workforce Boards and workforce systems can play varied roles in carrying out sector partnership approaches – but they do not have to, nor should they, do this work alone. It is important that local boards understand the landscape in their regions, and take on the most appropriate functions in carrying out these activities. The following examples build on work earlier documented by the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB), the National Network for Sector Partners (NSSP) in [The Road to Sector Success: A Guide for Workforce Boards](#), and the Ray Marshall Center in its report, *Workforce Systems Sector Strategy Guide*. These examples range from workforce systems that help to initiate and provide supports for sector initiatives - to systems that convene industry partners and provide the day-to-day staffing for sector partnerships. Workforce systems can even play different roles for different sectors within a single region, depending on the needs of individual industries, their connections with employers in demand sectors, and the roles that other stakeholders may already be playing or are well suited to play in carrying out sector initiatives.

### Roles Workforce Boards Can Play in Supporting Sector Partnerships:

- Initiators
- Partners/Supporters
- Fiscal Agents/Vehicles for Financing
- Conveners/Intermediaries



*Following are examples of roles workforce systems perform in the implementation of sector strategies and industry sector partnerships. Note that many of these systems are playing multiple roles in carrying out sector work.*

## INITIATOR.

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*Workforce systems can play a critical role in initiating the development of sector strategies and industry partnerships. Workforce boards can analyze and share labor market data, host summits, lead policy and communication efforts, and carry out other functions to help make the case for investing in sector initiatives in their regions.*

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The **Workforce Alliance of South Central Kansas**, working with economic development partners in the region, has conducted labor market research and convened regional summits calling attention to the region's need for sector-based and career pathways strategies. Identification of in-demand industry sectors in their region is based on a location quotient – a way of quantifying how concentrated a particular industry, cluster, occupation, or demographic group is in a region compared to the rest of the country and its export opportunities. Through these efforts, the Alliance has played a critical role as an initiator of sector partnerships in aviation and advanced manufacturing, IT and healthcare in its region.

To identify the region's demand industry sectors, **WorkSystems, Inc., Portland, Oregon's workforce development system**, examines 12-13 data elements that focus primarily on the number of jobs (both absolute and relative share), current and projected openings, growth rate, demographics of the labor force, and wages that an industry sector is projected to yield. Labor market information analysts at WorkSystems review this data with employers with whom they have long-standing relationships. WorkSystems then engages employers by providing a venue for employer champions to meet – leaving to the employers the work of determining the best approach for meeting common skill needs across the sector. This initial core group of employers is charged with recruiting additional employers, rather than having business services staff at WorkSystems take on this role. Meeting agendas and discussions are also determined and led by employers. In this way, WorkSystems plays the important role of initiator -- encouraging the development of sector strategies and industry partnerships.





## PARTNER / SUPPORTER.

**Workforce systems can play critical roles as partners and supporters in the development and implementation of sector partnerships.** *Bringing to the table the resources of the WDB and workforce system - training, counseling, supports, and business services – can be invaluable to the work of a sector partnership. While not all workforce boards will assume the role of convener/intermediary, providing support and serving as a contributing partner can be just as important.*

There are four workforce areas that serve the tri-state area that includes **Cincinnati, Ohio, Northern Kentucky, and Southeastern Indiana** – the Southwest Ohio Region, Butler-Clermont-Warren, Northern Kentucky, and Southeast Indiana WDBs. These boards serve as critical partners and provide essential support for the region's sector strategies and industry partnerships in healthcare; advanced manufacturing; construction; IT; and transportation and logistics. The WDBs have revamped their service delivery systems to meet the needs of regional employers and have made their expertise and resources available for sector work. They demonstrate this through the provision of demand-driven services in the One-Stops and prioritizing training for targeted industries and occupations.

## FISCAL AGENT / VEHICLE FOR FINANCING.

*Workforce systems can also provide essential assistance to sector initiatives and industry partnerships by serving as fiscal agents for sector strategies, helping to access public and private funding (e.g., pursuit of competitive grants, business contributions, and alternative funding mechanisms) and/or managing funding.*

**In Pittsburgh, the Three Rivers WIB** served as the fiscal agent for a U.S. Department of Labor Workforce Innovation Fund grant that launched the region's "Made Right Here" (MRH) initiative – connecting regional postsecondary education, organized labor, and workforce organizations with entrepreneurs in an emerging digital manufacturing industry sector. In this variation on the traditional sector-based approach, MRH provides a "Tech Shop" – a commercial-grade facility that provides access to advanced manufacturing machinery and tools for member entrepreneurs. Apprentices are matched with entrepreneurs wanting to bring a manufacturing idea to market. The WIB serves as the fiscal agent and lead on the project, maintaining grant records and ensuring funds remain targeted to unemployed and aging workers.



## CONVENER / INTERMEDIARY.

*Workforce systems can play the roles of convener and intermediary for industry partnerships – convening employers with partners from education, workforce, economic development, labor, and others, as needed, to meet the employment and skill needs of workers and employers in targeted demand industries. Conveners/Intermediaries are the backbone organization for sector partnerships: serving dual roles with employers and workers; organizing multiple partners and funding streams; providing or brokering labor market services; and projecting a vision to guide partnerships and activities. For more information on the role of intermediaries see (Please refer to another brief in this series which details the role of Intermediaries).*

In **Anne Arundel County, Maryland**, the region's cyber security sector grew out of a partnership established with the **Anne Arundel County Workforce Development Corporation (AAWDC)** through a community-based job training grant. The sector's business advisory board transitioned to become the industry partnership – and the AAWDC plays the convening function for the partnership – convening industry employers, education and training stakeholders, and providing staff support through a designated industry navigator.

In **Seattle-King County, Washington**, the **Workforce Development Council (WDC)** convenes industry leaders in its focus sectors through sector panels – industry-driven partnerships that focus on workforce issues in one particular industry. The WDC facilitates and staffs the sector panels, providing ongoing follow through with employers and other stakeholders to ensure that outcomes are realized. The Board participates in the work of the sector panels in a variety of ways: providing customized support for sourcing talent, conducting layoff meetings, and meeting other workforce needs via the business services team; convening and facilitating the Sector Panels; cultivating and distributing up-to-date, sector-specific talent pipeline data; and participating in sector-focused events.

While all industry partnerships in **South Central Kansas** are industry-led, the **Workforce Alliance** serves as intermediary for the region's aviation industry partnership, convening sector employers and partners, providing staff support, providing supports for training, and serving as the fiscal agent. While the Workforce Alliance plays this lead role for the aviation industry sector as well as for advanced manufacturing, it plays important but not lead roles in other sector work in the region by identifying employers' education and workforce needs.





# Roles Workforce Boards Can Play in Implementing Sector Strategies/Industry Partnerships



## CHANGING THE STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL ROLES OF WORKFORCE SYSTEMS THROUGH SECTOR STRATEGIES

To make well-informed industry sector decisions, workforce boards need to use a combination of quantitative and qualitative information, including input from employers and system partners.

WDBs should work strategically with regional partners to analyze economic, labor market, and other relevant data to identify the industries and occupations essential to their regional economies, the skills needs and any gaps that may exist within those industries, and what it will take to address those skill needs. WDBs should fully engage industry employers to validate the results of these findings; identify the skills and credentials that are needed by employers in demand industries; and develop the education and training programs that will address industry needs. WDBs should also work regionally with employer and system partners to establish a strategic vision for their sector work.

### Sector-Focused Strategic Actions:

- ❖ Data-informed decision making
- ❖ Industry Employer Engagement
- ❖ Working Regionally
- ❖ Strategic Visioning
- ❖ Making Necessary Organizational and Service Delivery Changes

To ensure that workforce systems are fully prepared to engage in sector approaches, WDBs may also consider changes in their own board structure and in the organization and delivery of services in the broader workforce system, thereby increasing the likelihood that sector initiatives and strategies will become the new way of doing business. (Please refer to two other briefs included in this series on Understanding Workforce Supply and Using Data to Understand Demand)

## STRATEGIC CHANGES TO ENSURE SECTOR SUCCESS

**WDB Organizational Changes.** Local boards that are engaged in sector approaches often reexamine their own board structure and activities, to ensure that they reflect the region's economic priorities. As a result, many workforce boards add representatives from targeted demand industries to their membership to better reflect key industry sectors input on the board. Some WDBs form subcommittees to oversee sector work. Some also change the structure of their executive operations to reflect the importance of sector work to their overall mission. The **Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation** has established an Industry Engagement Committee on its board that looks across all sector strategies. The WDB has also created a new Office for Innovation, headed by a Chief Innovation Officer, who is responsible for strategic approaches, including sector strategies, and for ensuring the integration of strategic and innovative practice into the broader workforce organization.

**Data Driven Decision Making.** Workforce Boards play a critical strategic role in helping to identify which



industry sectors in the region should be targeted for sector initiatives, as well as in identifying the skill needs for those demand industries. Factors to consider in making such decisions include: the importance of the industry sector to the regional economy; its need for skilled workers and any skill gaps that exist; an analysis of the current capacity of the education and training system to meet skill needs; industry employers' interest and willingness to participate in an industry partnership; and the appropriate role of the workforce system in carrying out sector strategies and an industry partnership. WDBs must have the capacity to make data-informed decisions for addressing these issues and must also develop performance metrics through which they can determine system success and make continuous improvements in building a demand-driven system.

This topic is described in much more detail in another brief in this series on Understanding Workforce Supply, but to illustrate here, we have included some very brief examples of workforce systems that are using data to inform their sector work. **The Workforce Development Council (WDC) of Seattle-King County** conducts talent pipeline studies in industry clusters including Healthcare, Manufacturing, Trade & Logistics, and Maritime. They use this and other research to project occupational supply and demand as well as gaps in the skilled worker pipeline for these key industries. Every two years, the WDC examines this data and uses an established set of criteria to identify sectors on which to focus, based on economic size and scope; job demand; supply and demand alignment; and potential for impact. The **Workforce Development Board (WDB) of South Central Wisconsin** uses performance data, labor market information, and industry research to identify performance trends, results and the needs of employers. Data is also used to identify its "driver industries and sectors" – those industries where 49% of all jobs in the region are in occupations that both require training at the Associate Degree level or less and that offer a base wage of \$15 per hour or more. The **San Diego, California Workforce Partnership**, which has for years used labor market data and supplemental research to identify its region's high-demand industry sectors, has developed an LMI [dashboard](#), that identifies the region's priority sectors, the demand jobs in the regional labor market and relevant education and training programs available in the region. This tool is an excellent example of making data available to workforce leaders for decision-making, as well as sharing that information with employers, job seekers, and other system stakeholders.

**Industry Employer Engagement.** Successful sector strategies also require broad and deep involvement of targeted industry employers in the design and delivery of programs and services. This engagement is critical to ensuring that:

- Education and training is relevant to the skill needs of key industries;
- Competencies and credentials provided are those required for employment in targeted industries and occupations; and
- Individuals who complete education and training are prepared for employment and career progression in demand industries.

One of the most effective strategies for fully engaging employers in the design and delivery of sector strategies is through implementation of industry partnerships – as discussed earlier in this brief and more fully described in another brief in this series on Industry Champions. For example, **the Workforce Alliance of South Central Kansas** has worked closely with employers in its targeted industries of Aviation, Healthcare, and Information Technology for a number of years, fully engaging key employers in the design and delivery of education and training for these industries. In **Anne Arundel County, Maryland**, the **Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation**



(AAWDC) has been proactive in implementing sector strategies – with sector initiatives in cyber security; hospitality; information technology; the biosciences; construction trades; and marine trades. The AAWDC utilizes sector partnerships and industry roundtables, engaging employers to ensure that training is delivered in line with the needs of the region’s high-growth industries. Sector panels in **Seattle-King County** engage targeted industry employers in activities that include: defining career pathways for specific high-growth jobs within an industry; developing customized training for a specific high-growth area within the industry (e.g. welding technician to welding engineer); assisting businesses to address turnover and job retention; increasing skills for current employees to meet technological advances within the industry; encouraging more youth and/or job seekers to consider careers in the industry; documenting workforce skills and education that will be required in the near future; expanding apprenticeship opportunities; and developing or improving articulation agreements between educational institutions to advance the pipeline of trained workers.

***Strategic Visioning/Working Regionally.*** Because most economies are regional, sector strategies require a regional focus. It is therefore critical that local boards work with employers and system partners on a regional basis in the development and implementation of sector strategies. It is also critical that WDBs establish a strategic vision for sector strategies in their regions, as well as a vision for how the workforce system will engage in sector work. In addition to its critical work in Aviation, Healthcare, and IT, the **Workforce Alliance of South Central Kansas** is significantly expanding its regional sector focus, working with a number of business and economic development partners through the [Blueprint for Regional Economic Growth \(BREG\)](#), a collaborative regional effort that is focusing on eight strategic industry clusters, including: Aerospace; Advanced Manufacturing/Advanced Materials; Machinery and Metal; Healthcare; Data Services/Information Technology; Transportation and Logistics; Oil and Gas; and Agriculture. While the Workforce Alliance is not the convener for this initiative, and the BREG initiative’s focus is broader than workforce development, workforce has been identified as a critical cross-cutting issue on which the Workforce Alliance is taking the lead. For over 15 years, the four workforce areas that serve the tri-state area that includes **Cincinnati, Ohio, Northern Kentucky, and Southeastern Indiana** have worked together as a region – establishing the [Employers First Regional Workforce Network](#) in 2011, and partnering with the Greater Cincinnati Foundation and the United Way of Greater Cincinnati to create ***Partners for a Competitive Workforce*** – a regional partnership between businesses, workforce investment boards, chambers of commerce, secondary and post-secondary educational institutions, service providers and philanthropic funders. These partners are establishing a uniform vision for regional sector work, aligning all of the region’s demand-driven workforce efforts, and creating a common platform to communicate the region’s workforce priorities and progress.



## CHANGING THE ORGANIZATION AND DELIVERY OF SERVICES

Adopting a sectors approach is more than establishing sector programs or assisting with sector partnerships – it is a foundational change in how WDBs and workforce systems conduct business, including changes in the organization and delivery of services.

Workforce systems that implement sector strategies are demand-driven, with services designed to meet the skill needs of employers, particularly those in targeted industry sectors, as well as the needs of participants. This includes services provided through the One-Stop delivery system and through training programs. From reorganizing business services and staffing industry partnerships – to prioritizing training for in-demand industry sectors - service delivery is more strategic, aligned, regional, and business-focused.

### Sector-Based Service Delivery Requires:

- Changes in Business Services
- Changes in Customer Flow and One-Stop Services
- Changes in Training

### *Changes in Business Services.*

In the **Seattle-King County, South Central Kansas, South Central Wisconsin and Northern Kentucky workforce systems**, business services are now organized by targeted industry sectors, with business services staff specializing in the key industry sectors in their regions. This is actually the case in many workforce systems that carry out sector strategies. In this way, employers are assured of being served by staff who are expert in their specific industry. In **Anne Arundel County**, industry partnerships are staffed by industry navigators, AAWDC employees who are experts on the needs of their industry sector. They serve as the liaison between industry leaders and the workforce system; review labor market information and keep in touch with the pulse of businesses within the sector; manage the project and facilitate conversations among businesses, system stakeholders, and inform training; convene partnership meetings and discussions to ensure that the skill needs of the industry are met. While business services staff in the Anne Arundel workforce system remain distinct from industry navigators, there is purposeful and on-going interaction between business services and sector-focused staff, sharing information about the workforce and training needs of targeted industry employers and about employment opportunities within targeted sectors. **The tri-state region that spans the 22-county area including Cincinnati, Ohio, Northern Kentucky and Southeastern Indiana** provides business services through a streamlined, single point of contact approach. Through an employer training portal, employers can access a range of services that include: skills matching; sector-focused training; work readiness assessments and training; analysis of workforce trends; creation and implementation of a comprehensive communications plan around workforce efforts; and aligned funding and policy to support improvements along the talent supply chain. And in **South Central Kansas, the Workforce Alliance** hosts industry specific multi-employer job fairs and have even incorporated sector-focused job fairs into rapid response layoff services (e.g., holding a job fair at an affected company) to rapidly connect dislocated workers to new employment. Employers now guarantee interviews to completers of certain workforce-sponsored programs.



## *Changes in Customer Flow and One-Stop Services.*

Workforce systems take into account many variables in determining customer flow and the delivery of services in One-Stop Centers. While the degree to which customer services are impacted by sector involvement varies from region to region, there is no question that information and services provided to customers in regions with mature sector initiatives are influenced and enriched by these approaches. The **Seattle-King County** WDC is now in the process of transitioning to an integrated service delivery model where job seekers who enter a One-Stop will receive a quick assessment and immediately receive services. Seattle uses career navigators who play a critical role in fostering student persistence and success through direct guidance and coordination of participants' progress along pathways. The WDC has incorporated sector-specific career maps into their job seeker services, illustrating occupations and industry-wide pathways available in 10 different demand industry sectors. Available both as a booklet and on the web, *Map Your Career* shows the current trends, sample wages and career pathways offered in each industry sector. Participants are also provided tools such as CareerBridge and Woofound, assessment tools designed to help job seekers identify the sectors and occupations for which they may be best suited. The system has shifted over time to an industry-led approach where counselors provide job seekers with information and services linked to demand career opportunities in the Seattle-King County region. Seattle also uses a self-sufficiency calculator to help participants understand the kinds of jobs, skills, education, training and supports they will need to attain family-sustaining careers.

In **Louisville, KentuckianaWorks** has created two industry-focused One-Stop Career Centers. Since May 2013, the workforce system has overseen the Kentucky Manufacturing Career Center, in partnership with Jefferson Community and Technical College, Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) Adult Education, JCPS Career and Technical Education, and JCPS Iroquois High School Magnet Career Academy. The center offers manufacturing skills training that leads to certifications and college credit hours. This training is free to job seekers and available to employers who want their employees to receive the training. The center provides a single location for employers to advertise manufacturing jobs, carry out assessments, and provide specialized training for job seekers and existing employees. In the fall of 2015, the region opened a second sector-focused One-Stop – a partnership between KentuckianaWorks and the Health Careers Collaborative of Greater Louisville (HCCGL). The center provides career assessments, career advice for entering the healthcare field, training for demand occupations in healthcare, job leads and referrals for job seekers and work-based learning opportunities. The Center also offers services for healthcare employers seeking qualified job candidates – assisting with talent searches, pre-screening candidates, providing counseling and customized training, and coordinating job fairs.





## *Changes in Training.*

Successful sector strategies call for substantial changes in how workforce systems provide training. They work with industry employers and with education and training partners, often through sector partnerships, to design education and training focused on the skill and credential requirements of regional employers.

Sector-focused training should be designed in ways that provide job seekers and workers with skills assessments, counseling, and guidance – often in the form of pathways mapping that shows the most accelerated routes to credential attainment. Training entry points should build on participants' skills at that point in time. To the extent possible, job seekers and workers should be provided with credit for prior learning and for previously-attained certifications or coursework.

### Sector-Focused Training:

- Engages employers in program design and curricula
- Results in skills and credentials in-demand
- Is provided through career pathways approaches
- Provides jobseekers & workers with the most efficient routes to credential & employment attainment.

Career pathways approaches ideally have multiple entry and exit points that are aligned with stackable credentials and employment. Since each education level is carefully articulated to the next, job seekers and workers can engage in training in manageable segments – gaining credentials with value in the labor market, with the opportunity to continue in training for higher level credentials or reenter training at a later date. Career pathways should also offer flexible scheduling, contextualized learning, opportunities for work-based learning, and extensive supports and counseling services throughout. Sector-focused career pathways approaches help employers expand their pipeline of skilled workers and are particularly effective in helping low-skilled individuals and returning service members with relevant experience to successfully complete training.

If your workforce system does not yet have career pathways systems established that offer these gradations of training and credentials, working with employers and education and training partners, this is something your WDB should aspire to. The establishment of career pathways systems is another of the key reforms around which WIOA was designed. It is the intent of the new law that sector-focused career pathways systems will be established over time in every local/regional workforce area – offering significantly expanded skills attainment opportunities for a wide range of students, job seekers and workers.; To learn more about career pathways approaches to training and career pathways system design, you can link to [DOL's Career Pathways Toolkit](#).

Training for sector initiatives is typically purchased through WIOA contracts for cohorts of students. Many, if not most, of the workforce systems that are implementing robust sector strategies are using this contracting authority rather than using Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). WDBs have found that purchasing cohort-based training through contracts is much more flexible, time-responsive, offers opportunities to negotiate better pricing, and better enables sector partnerships to negotiate the development of curriculum to meet just-in-time skills requirements. Due to the limited funding available through WIOA for training, workforce systems are also actively pursuing other funding sources, including state funding, competitive grants, philanthropic funding, business contributions, and alternative financing mechanisms to pay for training. This ability to raise and leverage resources is critical to the sustainability of sector initiatives over time.



**The Columbia-Willamette Workforce Collaborative** is a partnership between Worksystems, Inc. (in Portland, Oregon), the Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council and the Workforce Investment Council of Clackamas County that invests \$16 million in training to support targeted industry sectors. The work of the Collaborative is driven by target industries with business leaders directly involved in the design, development and delivery of workforce services. The region uses career pathways approaches to fill gaps, link workforce supply with industry demand, and evaluate every initiative to ensure program quality and outcomes. Workforce staff are experts in the industries that they support and are continually analyzing the effectiveness of the programs and services. **In South Central Kansas, the Workforce Alliance and the Wichita Area Technical College (WATC)** partnered with the region's Aviation industry employers to establish career pathways training programs that met the skill needs of that critical sector in South Central Kansas. As the result of the aviation industry partnership, the WATC opened a new Aviation Training Center in 2009 to meet the skill needs of that industry sector. The Workforce Alliance, the adult education arm of WATC, and Goodwill Industries also partnered to create career pathways for under-prepared individuals into high demand aviation careers – developing a core set of stackable industry credentials in aviation manufacturing and providing intake, assessments, supports, and integrated educational instruction to ensure the success of program participants. Training in Seattle is also provided through career pathways approaches. **Seattle-King County** uses its career navigators to augment service delivery and to partner with other pathways approaches, including Washington's I-BEST program.



## CONCLUSION

Sector approaches and industry partnerships are among the most effective strategies that workforce systems can carry out for building regional talent pipelines, addressing skills gaps, and creating meaningful career pathways for a range of workers in important regional industries. Effective demand-driven sector strategies require that workforce systems and their partners act strategically. Steps include working to identify demand industries in their regions in need of deep investment and partnering with employers in those sectors, along with system partners, to identify and meet the skill needs of those industries.

This typically requires changes in how workforce systems operate – at both the strategic and operational levels. This brief and all of the materials and tools developed as part of ETA’s Sector Strategies Technical Assistance Initiative are designed to help workforce systems and their partners successfully engage in sector initiatives leading to optimal strategies at the state, regional, and local levels.

To learn more about the capabilities that are critical for the development and implementation of successful sector strategies, see ETA’s [Implementation Framework](#).



## About The Author

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Jobs for the Future (JFF) designs and drives the adoption of innovative, scalable approaches and models—solutions that catalyze change in our education and workforce delivery systems.



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