



WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

PHASE II:

DEVELOP A STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS

Introduction

A comprehensive approach to workforce development requires substantial employer engagement, deep community connections, career advancement, human service supports, industry-driven education and training, and the establishment of strong networks. Dr. Robert Jacobs and Joshua D. Hawley, professors of Workforce Development and Education at Ohio State University, define workforce development as “the coordination of public and private-sector policies and programs that provides individuals with the opportunity for a sustainable livelihood and helps organizations achieve exemplary goals, consistent with the societal context.”

The Workforce Solutions position at The Siouxland Initiative (TSI) is not intended to function as a substitute for the workforce recruitment activities and responsibilities of individual companies. However, its role in serving as a conduit between public and private stakeholders, as well as a resource for talent recruitment tools and information, is key to the success of the Siouxland region’s workforce solutions strategy.

After collecting valuable input from hundreds of individuals from throughout the Siouxland community, TSI is pleased to present the following Strategic Workforce Action Agenda. While we recognize our strategy must remain flexible and will likely evolve with economic and labor conditions, this document will help to provide a blueprint for long-term success. Furthermore, by executing the following concrete action steps and tangible initiatives, we will be able to better measure our progress and achievements.

I. The Siouxland Initiative (TSI) must continue to develop and subsequently maintain a contemporary and comprehensive understanding of the critical workforce needs and challenges of our regional employers, as well as the opportunities and resources available to help meet those needs. To this end, TSI aims to:

- Continuously update and educate the local business community on the numerous workforce development initiatives being implemented by the respective Siouxland states, regional educational institutions and local non-profits;

- Share private sector tactics and strategies that are proving effective for private sector companies;
 - Co-sponsor events to promote available opportunities for the reskilling and upskilling of today's workers (e.g. Registered Apprenticeship forum on May 23, 2016);
 - Host a minimum of at least two educational forums per year for our local human resources and talent recruitment professionals;
 - Support professional career development programs such as the Siouxland Chapter of SHRM and the Nonprofit Management Alliance, a partnership of Iowa State University Extension and Outreach – Woodbury County, the Siouxland Chamber of Commerce and United Way of Siouxland;
 - Identify opportunities to further engage Siouxland's diverse racial and ethnic populations into our ongoing workforce development efforts;
 - Support and promote ongoing initiatives by our regional education institutions to customize their curriculums and establish new programs in order to meet the workforce needs of the business community (e.g. Morningside College's Regina Roth Applied Agricultural and Food Studies Program);
 - Provide our local businesses with strategic tools to help enhance their current workforce recruitment efforts, including new Siouxland community marketing materials and a social media "how-to" user's guide;
 - Actively participate in regional, state and national workforce development conferences and initiatives; and
 - Continually identify new partnerships and synergies amongst our key stakeholders (business, education, public sector, media and labor).
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II. TSI must continue to collaborate with our educational partners on creating a pathway to guide students from high school into occupational programs that will help meet the workforce needs of our business community. TSI plans to:

- Serve as a leading advocate for the establishment and expansion of technical and career training programs in our local schools, as well as efforts to encourage young people to pursue in-demand skilled labor professions;
- Co-sponsor events that help to educate the business community on local training curriculums and encourage their active participation in these initiatives (e.g. Sioux City School District's Career Academy Breakfasts);
- Partner with local school districts to help facilitate internships, as well as externships and job shadow programs for teachers and guidance counselors;

- Support and participate in high school career readiness events, such as Sioux City's Sophomore Career Fair and South Sioux City's Key to Success event; and
 - Champion state and federal legislation that strengthens technical and career training initiatives, including statutes that provide for the creation of regional career academy programs. (e.g. TSI was a vocal proponent of HF 2392 in the 2016 Iowa Legislature, which provides for the establishment of a Career Academy under an agreement between multiple school districts that have formed a Regional Career and Technical Education Planning Partnership and a community college).
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III. TSI must continue to partner with higher education institutions in an effort to retain recent college graduates, as well as recruit previous graduates back to the Siouxland area. TSI intends to:

- Help to identify new opportunities to connect graduating students with the local business community, as well as support ongoing efforts to better introduce college students to the Siouxland community (e.g. Sioux City Growth Organization's GO University);
 - Host employer/student career luncheons that allow employers the unique opportunity to visit one-on-one with potential future employees (the inaugural luncheon was held at Wayne State College on March 30, 2016);
 - Co-sponsor the Intern Connect conference on September 29, 2016, with the goal of educating the local business community on how to effectively recruit interns, as well as how to best utilize those interns in creating a future workforce;
 - Encourage local businesses to promote internship opportunities on the new mysiouxcityjobs.com website;
 - Promote the diverse, professional career opportunities that are available within the agribusiness, agriscience and biotechnology sectors, and to educate future graduates of the many occupational possibilities that exist in "their own backyard;"
 - Represent the Siouxland business community at college career fairs; and
 - Work with postsecondary education officials on developing a marketing campaign to help recruit previous graduates back to the Siouxland area.
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IV. TSI must continue to be part of a concerted effort to build a postsecondary culture within the Siouxland community. TSI proposes to:

- Actively participate in efforts to ensure all students have the opportunity to pursue and complete a college degree or other postsecondary credential, and to help deliver a comprehensive and coordinated set of services to students and families to pursue postsecondary education (e.g. TSI is a lead partner in the local College Changes Everything initiative);

- Support initiatives launched by the respective Siouxland states geared toward increasing the number of individuals with postsecondary degrees and credentials (e.g. TSI has been active in the Future Ready Iowa campaign);
 - Advocate for our local universities and colleges, while also identifying the potential for satellite programs and cooperative partnerships with higher education institutions from outside of the immediate Siouxland region; and
 - Help to educate the general public that the definition of “college” includes both baccalaureate and associate degrees, as well as other postsecondary credentials.
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V. TSI must continue to partner with local stakeholders to help foster a creative, culturally-vibrant community, as well as build upon the region’s many existing quality-of-life attributes that will help retain young families and prove attractive to employment prospects new to the Siouxland region. TSI will:

- Support and actively participate in efforts to improve and increase recreational and cultural opportunities throughout the entire Siouxland area, including completion of the PlyWood Trail, Cone Park and the redevelopment of the Missouri River riverfront;
 - Advocate for individual communities’ ongoing beautification initiatives (e.g. TSI will play an active role in the task force being formed to address the findings and recommendations of national tourism expert Roger Brooks);
 - Support regional efforts to rectify stigmas that have been associated with the Siouxland area and have negatively impacted workforce recruitment and retention efforts (i.e. odor mitigation); and
 - Partner with local agencies such as Siouxland Cares and United Way of Siouxland to help address employers’ concerns with the increasing number of applicants who are failing employment drug screening.
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VI. TSI must help to attract outside talent to the Siouxland area. TSI plans to:

- Work with local stakeholders to develop an aggressive and comprehensive marketing campaign to attract new workers to the Siouxland area. This campaign will utilize social media as well as traditional media sources (radio, television, billboards and print);
- Identify and target specific demographic labor markets, including larger metropolitan areas as well as smaller communities throughout NW Iowa, SE South Dakota and NE Nebraska;

- Represent the Siouxland community at career fairs outside of the immediate geographic area;
- Participate in initiatives to recruit military veterans to the Siouxland area (e.g. Home Base Iowa and the Hero2Hired Veterans Career Fair);
- Support the development and implementation of multi-sector strategic plans for welcoming and integrating new Americans (e.g. TSI has been involved in trying to secure regional funding through the Gateways for Growth Challenge);
- Work closely with Performance Contractors officials as they begin to dramatically reduce their workforce at the CF Industries expansion project in Port Neal in an effort to retain skilled workers; and
- Continue to maintain and promote the new mysiouxcityjobs.com website. More than just a simple jobs board, the site contains links to an array of other valuable community data from current events and housing to recreation and entertainment.

Summary

In order for the Siouxland area to maintain a pattern of continued economic growth, it will be vital to both grow and train our local labor force. **While it is neither the mission nor the intent of TSI to replace the existing workforce recruitment efforts of individual companies**, TSI can play an integral role in complementing and supplementing these efforts by facilitating and overseeing a strategic course of action that will benefit the entire Siouxland community.

In his book, *America Needs Talent*, Lumina Foundation President/CEO Jamie Merisotis asserts that flourishing communities “take advantage of the educational resources at their disposal, focusing them on what the individual needs to be successful in the community. They use the ingenuity and drive of the private sector, combined with smart public policies, to create a higher level of success. And they recognize that talent comes from many places, including from the outside, in ways that amplify and complement the talent that’s already in place.”

Solving the Siouxland region’s workforce challenges will not happen overnight. However, The Siouxland Initiative’s development of a Strategic Workforce Action Agenda with tangible actions and initiatives will help to ensure that our regional employers have access to a sustainable pipeline of trained talent now and into the future.

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