

WORKFORCE TRANSITIONS

A LOCAL OFFICIAL'S GUIDE TO DEFENSE INDUSTRY ADJUSTMENT



U.S. Department of Defense
Office of Economic Adjustment





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GUIDING THEMES IN WORKFORCE TRANSITION

In the coming years, significant cuts are expected in defense-related spending.

These cuts have the potential to create substantial industry contraction and will also create uncertainty in defense communities across the United States. The most important byproduct of these reductions is the potential for significant job loss, putting workers, their families and the communities in which they live at serious economic risk. In communities facing defense related workforce dislocations, local elected officials can make a difference by quickly mitigating risk and mobilizing the community to respond.

While strategies and tactics for overcoming defense workforce reductions may vary, there are several consistent themes:

- **Regional partnerships work.** Economies—and their workforces—are not bound by town, city or county borders and no single community can successfully handle the numerous workforce needs which arise in defense industry adjustment situations. The role of local elected officials is to provide leadership and direction, synchronize and align the assets of all partners and handle minor conflicts early on to maintain forward momentum.
- **Plan with a beginning, a middle and an end.** The most successful workforce transition efforts are phased and inter-connected efforts. What a worker needs one month after a layoff notice is different than what that same worker needs nine months later. Focus on the relationship between workforce development and economic development, and overall diversification efforts at specific points in time, and then lay out what that means for the worker and your local response to that worker.
- **Handle short-term needs quickly, but plan for the long term.** A long-term vision should guide all strategies and activities, be they short-, mid- or long-term. A clear vision for the region's economic future serves as a benchmark against which all partners can measure their success. Workforce transition efforts must then be aligned within the context of this broad economic development strategy.

THREE PHASES of WORKFORCE TRANSITION

1 Short-Term: Provide workforce information, reemployment and related services



- Engage Impacted Employers
- Engage and “Charge” Community Partners
- Initiate Rapid Reemployment Service Delivery
- Federally Funded Resources for Dislocate Workers
- Communication and Accountability

2 Mid-Term: Align training/education to workforce needs of employers in key industry sectors



- Understand Regional Industry Sectors and Identify Career Transition Opportunities
- Implement Sector Strategies through Industry Partnerships
- Connect Workers to Careers in Regional Target Industries

3 Long-Term: Deepen industry sector partnerships and build career pathways



- Engage additional employers in sector-based industry partnerships
- Align workforce development, economic development and education plans, policies, investments and services
- Target training to support economic diversification efforts
- Design and implement career pathways systems to develop talent pipelines
- Conduct ongoing economic, workforce and education data-gathering and analysis



- **Talent is a regional economy's most critical asset.** The defense industry workforce is extremely well trained, credentialed and highly skilled. In these types of workforce reductions, retaining impacted workers and transitioning them to careers in other industry sectors with growth potential is what makes the difference between strong and marginal economic recovery.

Elected officials and local government staff should always begin with the end in mind. However, effective defense workforce transition efforts typically involve the following three phases of activity:

1. In the short-term, impacted workers have urgent needs surrounding workforce information, services and reemployment. It is an emotional time, and the speed of your local response can help to lessen worker anxiety. Families may also need social supports, such as counseling, food and transportation assistance, and financial assistance. This phase can last from two to three months before layoff, until a year or more after the initial job loss.
2. The mid-term focus shifts toward planning to align specific workforce development and education investments, resources and services to the exact needs of employers in key industries. For example, a business might need workers who hold a very specific credential in order to diversify. So the mid-term focus must be on aligning that company's very specific need with available training and transition assets. This alignment of workforce needs to training assets should be a customized process for every company.
3. Over the long-term, regional leaders develop comprehensive and sustainable systems to promote career pathways, or roadmaps, in targeted industry sectors to create career opportunities for workers and foster economic growth in the region.

IMMEDIATE NEEDS: ORGANIZING PARTNERS AND ENGAGING EMPLOYERS AND WORKERS

When layoffs are announced, the first thing to do is listen. Set up community town hall events or other mechanisms and opportunities to ensure you are getting the best information about the immediate needs and concerns of affected workers. Ask the business community to lay out their requirements for workers and the skills they need those workers to have. Listen to the impacted workers themselves, white, blue and “gray” collar workers alike, because while their needs may differ slightly, they all will provide

you critical information that will help shape your response effort. By “impacted workers,” we primarily mean those who will be laid off at defense facilities and firms. However, workers in the area’s defense industry supply chains and in ancillary/networked industries (e.g., the retail sector, whose customer base may include a significant number of defense industry workers) may also be impacted over time and may require some assistance.

Engage Impacted Employers

Once you learn of an impending workforce reduction, engage with the impacted defense employers to gather initial information about the nature of the workforce transition. This information may include the timing and phasing of worker layoffs, the number of workers to be laid off and the types of workers that will be impacted (e.g., maintenance technicians, engineers, security personnel, etc.). It may also include information related to anticipated worker support needs. In initial outreach to impacted defense employers, it is critical to keep a few key points in mind:

- Employer outreach and engagement activities should be coordinated with other elected officials in the region and with organizations that have existing relationships with the impacted firm, such as Chambers of Commerce, economic development organizations and industry/trade organizations. The impacted company will not want to be visited multiple times by different individuals and organizations asking the same questions and offering a confusing array of programs and services. As important, the company will likely feel most comfortable



working with individuals and organizations with which it has an established relationship and level of trust. Therefore, the person or organization that has the strongest relationship with the impacted employer is best positioned to lead and “be the face” of the outreach and engagement effort, with others playing supporting roles.

- Defense companies experiencing workforce downsizing still have critical missions to fulfill and deliverables to complete prior to worker dislocations. A key objective for them, therefore, will be retaining workers until all contract obligations have been met. Impacted employers may incentivize workers to remain at the job site for the duration rather than find a new job prior to the layoff date. Given such business requirements, access to affected workers at the actual job site may also be limited. It is important to be attentive to these dynamics as you begin to consider strategies for assisting affected workers.
- Finally, many defense industry companies are conducting work that is sensitive, proprietary, related to national security and/or subject to privacy and confidentiality protections. So be aware that there will likely be information that affected employers either cannot share, or may be reluctant to share, with community leaders—this could even include detailed information about plans for worker layoffs. As relationships and trust are built among impacted companies and community leaders, information will likely be shared more freely. At the outset, however, expect and plan for limitations on the amount and depth of information that companies are able or willing to share.

Engage and “Charge” Community Partners

Once you have successfully connected with the affected employers in your area, you will want to organize regional partners to design a coordinated response. This is a key function of the Economic Adjustment Organization (described in more detail in OEA’s guide to *Organizing a Regional Economic Adjustment Response*). As early as possible, you will want to convene the area’s workforce development, education and economic development executives to share information about the impending workforce adjustment. Since regional problems require regional solutions, this meeting should be hosted in coordination with elected officials and staff from other impacted communities in the region. Invited executives may represent any number of organizations, including:

“There will likely be information that affected employers either cannot share, or may be reluctant to share, with community leaders.”

- Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIBs):
<http://www.servicelocator.org/WorkforceContacts.asp>;
- Entities responsible for providing services related to unemployment and employment and training (often known locally as One-Stop Career Centers, career centers, job centers or workforce centers):
<http://www.servicelocator.org/onestopcenters.asp>;
- Rapid Response teams, state and/or local staff that are dedicated to assisting businesses and workers experiencing layoffs: <http://www.doleta.gov/layoff/workers.cfm>;
- Community colleges;
- Four-year colleges and universities;
- Economic development organizations;
- Business organizations such as Chambers of Commerce and industry and employer associations;
- Human resources organizations, such as Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) chapters;
- Staffing and employment services firms; and
- Other community providers of employment, education and training services.

“It is critical that partners will work collaboratively and seamlessly to serve impacted workers.”

A key take-away of this initial meeting must be communicating the expected timing and impacts of the workforce reduction and discussing anticipated worker service needs. Getting everyone the exact same information early will pay dividends later.

This initial meeting of community partners is also an opportunity to begin the conversation with business and industry organizations around reemployment opportunities for impacted workers. These partners can provide critical intelligence about area industries that are growing, companies that are hiring and the required experience, education and skills necessary for open positions. This information will enable community partners to “cross-walk” dislocated workers’ skills and experience from defense industry occupations to occupations in other regional industry sectors that utilize similar skill sets and have similar requirements. This type of information-sharing and coordination will only further streamline reemployment for affected workers.

The people gathered around the table at this initial session are likely to form the core of your Economic Adjustment Organization’s workforce subcommittee or work team. As you begin to organize your partners and lay out a response, you should identify and “charge” a lead workforce partner to coordinate and oversee the efforts to provide services and support to impacted workers.

This partner might be a local Workforce Investment Board (LWIB), which oversees federally funded employment and training programs; the workforce development arm of the local community college, which typically provides workforce training for employers in its service area; or even a private-sector provider of employment and training services, such as a staffing firm.

Regardless of the organization you choose to lead, the partner should have demonstrated skill in both delivering worker services and working with industries and employers in the area to understand and meet their workforce needs. Throughout the transition process, this lead partner will be responsible for ensuring that reemployment assistance and related supports are offered in a timely and effective manner and, most importantly, meeting the stated needs of impacted workers and the businesses that will hire them.

Initiate Rapid Reemployment Service Delivery for Impacted Workers

Layoff announcements create tension for workers, their families and the community as a whole. The lead workforce organization and its partners can ease this tension by sharing information and providing services early on to support the reemployment and related needs of impacted workers.

The goal in communicating and engaging with impacted employees is to assess their needs and connect them seamlessly to relevant services. This means some thought must be given to how best to deliver those services. On site? Off site? During working hours? Or perhaps with extended service hours, for example 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.?

Excessively bureaucratic arrangements discourage worker participation. So, when you are designing a response mechanism and there is a judgment call to be made about how, how much, when and where services are delivered—always choose the path most convenient for the worker and rely on your workforce partner to ensure its administrative and managerial constraints are handled in a way that is invisible to the affected worker.

There are a variety of avenues for connecting with impacted workers, and it is helpful to communicate with them on a combination of fronts:

- Ideally, your workforce partners will have the opportunity to meet with workers on-site at the job location before the layoffs occur. Defense employers may be willing to provide time off from work for employees to attend a meeting, or they may prefer to schedule sessions for employees before or after work shift hours. Meeting with workers prior to layoff will enable you to conduct advance needs assessments and design proactive service plans.
- Employers may be willing to share information about workforce transition assistance through their communication channels with employees, such as newsletters or listservs for workers. Additionally, they may be willing to include worker assistance information in employee mailings, like pay stubs, or post information in places where workers congregate at the job site.
- Surveys can be used to gather workers' input on their anticipated employment transition needs and career

interests and goals. Depending on the workforce, paper surveys or free online platforms such as SurveyMonkey – <http://www.surveymonkey.com> – may be useful tools. Regardless of the method, surveys need to be coordinated with the affected company.

- Workers should be encouraged to meet with partners at local Career Center offices. Career Center partners can offer both group meetings for affected workers as well as individual career counseling for more intensive assistance. In some areas, Career Center staff have also opened “mini” Career Centers on-site at the job site in order to increase accessibility and convenience for workers. You may wish to explore this option with the impacted company and Career Center staff in your area.



- Partners can consider other ways to share information and engage with impacted workers in the places where they routinely congregate. These may include union halls, social or civic clubs, churches or other locations.
- Above all, communicate constantly. Many successful transition efforts have made good use of websites focused exclusively on affected defense workers. If you opt for this route, make sure the content is updated daily and information is always accurate. If your website acquires a reputation for constantly being out-of-date, workers will quickly find some other way to get their information.

In the immediate term, both prior to and directly following worker dislocations, the focus will be on retaining workers in the region, meeting their service needs and, ideally, getting them reemployed in new self-supporting jobs as quickly as possible. Many workers will not need additional training before moving into new positions;

however, workforce partners can offer a range of reemployment services to give them a “leg up” in their search.

- Workers who are unable to find immediate reemployment will likely need to apply for unemployment benefits for short-term financial stabilization. They and their families may also need additional short-term financial assistance, such as housing, health care, food or utilities help. Information about these services should be available through a single point of contact.
- Comprehensive assessment of workers’ skills, experience, aptitudes and interests can help in the design of effective workforce transition assistance. Such assessment may be provided by a number of partners depending upon the local area, such as the public workforce system (Career Center staff) or the local community college. Data gathered during this assessment process not only helps the worker in his or her job search, but also provides your leadership group with data to refine and sharpen your regional vision.
- Individualized career coaching and job search assistance will be important for many workers. These services include educating workers about the regional labor market and job opportunities, and providing resume development and interview skills training.
- Job clubs, in which groups of dislocated workers provide one another peer support, career development and job search assistance, are often very effective in facilitating workers’ rapid reemployment.



Federal Resources for Dislocated Workers

There are a variety of programs to support worker reemployment efforts. Many of these are federally funded and administered at either the state or local levels. As an elected official, it is not your responsibility to navigate the array of programs available and the services they offer; that is the responsibility of your designated community partners in workforce development and education. However, it may be helpful for you to understand, at a high level, the kinds of federally funded programs that can provide assistance to workers:

- **Dislocated Worker programs:**

http://www.doleta.gov/programs/general_info.cfm

Dislocated Worker programs through the Workforce Investment Act: The U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration supports Rapid Response programs for laid-off workers – <http://www.doleta.gov/layoff/workers.cfm>, which are administered at the state or local level, and funds additional assistance for dislocated workers. This assistance is typically overseen by Local Workforce Investment Boards. Dislocated worker programs provide both reemployment and retraining assistance to eligible workers.

- **Job search, referral and placement assistance under the Wagner-Peyser Act:**

http://www.doleta.gov/programs/wagner_peyser.cfm

Administered by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, the Wagner-Peyser Act supports employment services staff to provide labor exchange services, including job search assistance, job referral and placement assistance for jobseekers; re-employment services for unemployment insurance claimants; and recruitment services for employers. These services are typically provided through local Career Centers and via state online labor exchange and job matching systems.

- **National Emergency Grants (NEGs):**

http://www.doleta.gov/neg/eta_default.cfm

NEGs temporarily expand the service capacity of Workforce Investment Act Dislocated Worker training and employment programs at the state and local levels by providing funding assistance in response to large, unexpected economic events that cause significant job losses, including defense workforce reductions. NEGs generally provide additional resources to states and Local Workforce Investment Boards to quickly

“Frequent and transparent communications with employers and workers will allow you to gather information and report on progress and results.”

reemploy laid-off workers by offering training to increase occupational skills. Generally speaking, state workforce agencies and Local Workforce Investment Boards are eligible to apply for NEGs to build their capacity to address defense industry worker dislocations.

In addition to these federally funded programs and services, there is likely a variety of additional programs and supports for dislocated workers that are available in your state, region or local area. Your Local Workforce Investment Board and local community college, among others, can be useful partners in identifying and accessing these additional programs and services.

Focus on Communication and Accountability

As you and your community partners engage with impacted defense employers and workers in these early stages, stakeholders should meet regularly to share progress, address issues or barriers as they arise and ensure that services for impacted workers and employers are meeting their needs and resulting in desired outcomes. Just as important, frequent and transparent communications with both affected employers and workers will allow you to gather information and report on progress and results.

MID-TERM STRATEGIES: RESEARCH AND PLAN TO ALIGN REEMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING EFFORTS WITH TARGETED REGIONAL INDUSTRY DEMANDS

Understanding Critical Regional Industry Sectors and Identifying Career Transition Opportunities for Impacted Defense Workers

Once an immediate response has been organized and put into action, the elected official's role shifts to leading and incentivizing the area's workforce development, economic development and education systems. Efforts are on aligning each of these systems with one another to meet the current and projected workforce needs of employers in regionally-important industry sectors. This mid-term focus is concerned with two primary and interconnected goals: (1) Strengthening the viability and competitiveness of companies in your area's non-defense sectors and clusters; and (2) Building a skilled talent pipeline for vital regional industry sectors and clusters. The first is a critical component of diversifying the region's economic base away from defense spending. The second will enhance the health of companies in your area, while creating improved career opportunities for workers, including dislocated defense workers who may need retraining or "up-skilling" to obtain employment in another industry.

It all starts with research. Your region may already have studies identifying target industries. Ideally, if such studies exist, they all recommend targeting the same sectors, thus indicating a level of preliminary alignment and creating a basis for consensus among your economic adjustment partners.

However, if your region has not identified target industry sectors (or the studies are outdated), elected officials can commission a third-party regional economic and workforce data study

to determine critical regional industries and ascertain key occupational needs within those industries. Generally speaking, target industry sectors are those in which the region has a distinct competitive advantage relative to other regions; those that are historically important to the region; and those that are new or emerging and poised for growth. The economic and workforce data study should help you and your community partners better understand areas of industry growth and decline; occupations within industries that are forecast to expand or contract; educational attainment and skill requirements for growing occupations; and skill and education levels among the existing workforce relative to the needs of employers in regionally-important industries.

As part of the Economic Adjustment Organization's efforts to determine what types of training and services may be necessary to help displaced defense workers find new jobs in the area, the community may choose to conduct a targeted analysis of the impacted workforce to identify their occupations, key skills, credentials and education attainment levels.

Cross-walking the defense workforce analysis to the analysis of the broader workforce needs of targeted industry sectors will help you identify clear areas of rapid worker transferability, as well as skill and training mismatches and gaps that will need to be addressed. To view an example of how the Southeast Arkansas region analyzed a defense workforce facing reductions relative to the workforce needs of targeted non-defense industry sectors, visit:

http://www.sgiregion.com/uploads/page_uploads/SE_Arkansas_Workforce_Assessment_and_Industry_Analysis_20100714.pdf.

Implementing Sector Strategies through Industry Partnerships

At this phase in a defense industry adjustment, the assembled regional economic data and workforce analyses provide an important foundation for development and implementation of mid-term strategies focused on targeted industry sectors and undertaken in collaboration with industry partners. Working with other community leaders, you can support the formation of industry sector-based partnerships of regional employers to validate data gathered to date, gain additional insight on industry dynamics and trends and more deeply explore industries' projected occupational and workforce skill needs. Sector-based industry partnerships will assist you in providing better career transition opportunities for impacted defense workers, while simultaneously improving your region's ability to meet broader talent pipeline development needs over the long term.

Industry sector strategies and initiatives are regional, industry-focused approaches to workforce and economic development that improve access to good jobs and/or increase job quality in ways that strengthen a regional industry's workforce and therefore its competitiveness. Through investment in sector initiatives, regional economies can create good jobs and plentiful advancement opportunities, improve individuals' access to these jobs and opportunities, support industry growth and diversification and improve communities' economic vitality.

Sector initiatives share four overarching elements that distinguish them from conventional workforce development approaches:

1. They focus intensively on a specific industry over a sustained time period, customizing solutions for multiple employers within a regional labor market, rather than working "transactionally" with individual employers on a case-by-case basis.
2. They strengthen economic growth and industry competitiveness by creating new pathways into targeted industries and toward good jobs and careers.

3. They utilize credible workforce intermediaries, organizations that have a deep understanding of worker and employer issues in an industry and within a regional labor market. These organizations facilitate the many stakeholders involved to develop and implement industry-based workforce solutions.
4. They promote systemic change that achieves "win-win" benefits for the industry, workers and communities.

Focusing on specific industry sectors will allow you and your community partners to develop greater understanding of workers and employers in the field, engage meaningfully and credibly with employers in your area and develop targeted and responsive training and education solutions. Regional partnerships of key stakeholders help sector initiatives obtain important input and buy-in, mobilize resources and leverage financial support. Typically, these stakeholders include employers and industry organizations; labor unions and labor-management partnerships; workforce development organizations (Local Workforce Investment Boards and Career Centers); economic development organizations; secondary and post-secondary education institutions; community- and faith-based organizations; and providers of work-related supportive services, such as transportation and child care.

Sector strategies are not a one-size-fits-all, cookie-cutter approach. The strategies you choose to pursue will necessarily depend upon your regional economy, the specific industry sector(s) targeted in your area and the nature of your worker populations, both in the defense community and outside of it.

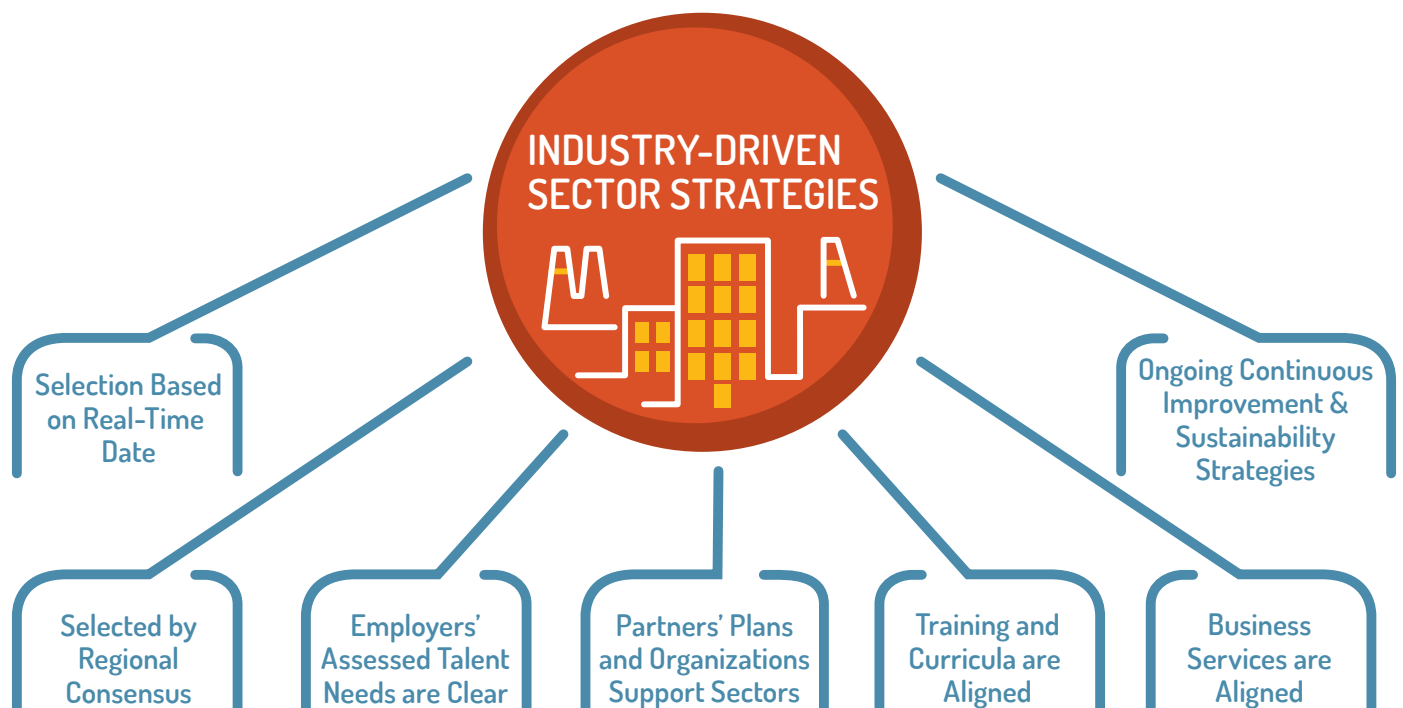
“Sector strategies are not a one-size-fits-all, cookie-cutter approach.”

Regardless of the combination of strategies you and your partners pursue, successful regional industry sector initiatives commonly demonstrate the following critical characteristics:

- 1. Sectors are selected based on real-time data:** Current data serves as the driving force behind selecting the most appropriate target industry sectors.
- 2. Sectors are selected by regional consensus:** Because the success of a sector strategy is dependent upon the alignment of multiple organizations, services and resources across city, county and other jurisdictional lines, the decision about which industry sectors to target must be made through regional consensus.
- 3. Employers' assessed talent needs are clear:** Once a target industry sector has been identified, partners must engage employers to validate and refine data findings and establish an accurate and comprehensive picture of employers' current and future workforce needs.
- 4. Partners' plans and organizations support the sector initiative:** Across organizations, programs and funding streams, successful sector partners align their strategic and operational plans, investments and front-line services to sector development goals, "boardroom to mailroom."
- 5. Education and training programs and services are aligned to the sector effort:** Education and training systems (K-12 and post-secondary education, workforce development providers, etc.) align programs, investments, curriculum and capacity to meet the workforce needs of employers in targeted sectors.
- 6. Services for businesses are aligned to the sector effort:** Outreach and engagement activities, incentives, training investments and curriculum, business retention and expansion services, entrepreneurship and R&D support and other business services are targeted to the specific needs of employers in the sector.
- 7. Continuous improvement and sustainability are intentional areas of focus:** Sector strategies require intensive and ongoing assessment and responsive adaptation to meet new and evolving needs over time and ensure long-term sustainability.

Connecting Impacted Defense Workers to Careers in Regional Target Industries

Of critical interest to you and your community partners, of course, is how to engage impacted defense industry workers, as well as your region's broader workforce, in sector-focused workforce



initiatives. Worker engagement strategies will vary depending upon their existing skills and competencies and the transferability of those skills and competencies to other non-defense industry sectors. In any case, worker engagement strategies will require the solid support, resource commitment and involvement of your partners in workforce development and education, such as your local community college and the Local Workforce Investment Board.

- Based on the cross-walk of defense workers' occupations, skills and education to occupational requirements in targeted industry sectors, you will likely be able to identify a number of workers who are "reemployment-ready" and can move quite seamlessly from defense-related occupations to occupations in others sectors that have similar workforce needs, without additional training.
- You will likely identify another sub-set of impacted defense workers in need of some short-term, limited training and skill development in order to transition from defense to non-defense positions. Workforce development and education partners can provide targeted training and education to these workers in order to get them reemployed as quickly as possible. In many cases, these workers can benefit from short-term on-the-job training at their new places of employment, rather than stand-alone training, to reduce the amount of time that they are separated from the workforce.
- You and your partners may encounter a small sub-set of defense workers whose skills are so specialized or defense industry-specific that they may need significant retraining in order to find a new job. Should this be the case, ensuring workers' financial stability while they are retraining will be critical. "Earn and learn" training models such as Registered Apprenticeship provide workers a living wage while they participate in training. Compressed and modular training approaches enable workers to earn "stackable" credentials more quickly, enhancing workers' competitiveness in the regional labor market and enabling them to become reemployed sooner. Training models that combine contextualized education and the ability to earn a paycheck will enhance your community's ability to retain impacted defense workers and sustain their participation in your labor market and economy.

“Worker engagement strategies will require the solid support, resource commitment and involvement of partners in workforce development and education.”

- Keep in mind that some impacted workers may prefer alternate career paths. For example, some workers may be good candidates for beginning their own businesses, given the appropriate guidance and support. Others may wish to leave the region and relocate to new areas with an existing workforce shortage.

Identifying resources that provide support services for workers, particularly resources for worker education and retraining, will be a chief concern. As discussed previously, there are a variety of federally funded programs that can assist workers, such as Dislocated Worker programs administered by the local workforce development system and National Emergency Grant funding for significant job loss events. Federal financial aid programs for post-secondary education, including Pell grants for qualifying workers, also provide important supports for worker retraining. Other non-federal resources may also be available at the state and local level. In addition, impacted workers may receive severance packages or retention bonuses for staying on the job through mission completion and layoff. If so, workers may wish to use a portion of these resources to support training and education for their new careers.

LONGER-TERM STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC GROWTH

Once your community has successfully addressed the immediate employment-related needs of dislocated defense workers, identified target industry sectors and begun to implement sector-focused workforce development strategies in partnership with area employers, your attention can turn to longer-term strategies for economic diversification and talent pipeline development.

This longer-term effort may include activities such as:

- Working with community partners to engage additional employers in sector-based industry partnerships and enhance the region's understanding of and ability to respond to industry trends and evolving workforce needs over time.
- Leading the effort to align the region's workforce development, economic development and education strategic plans, policies, investments and services. This requires all partners to embrace a shared vision, mission and goals, and to work actively to overcome "turf" issues and break down "siloed thinking" among different agencies, funding streams and programs.
- Expanding incumbent worker training. Incumbent worker training—training that is provided to already-employed workers—can be an important component of your region's efforts to increase the competitiveness of companies in non-defense sectors and thus strengthen and diversify the economic base and reduce defense sector dependence. "Up-skilling" the existing workforce enhances the talent pipeline and the business bottom line for employers and creates career advancement opportunities for workers.
- Encouraging the design and implementation of career pathway systems in each targeted regional industry sector. Career pathways are "roadmaps" that align education (K-12 and post-secondary), training and related services and supports to the workforce needs of employers. For workers, pathways offer a clear sequence of employer-validated education coursework and/or training that result in meaningful credentials.
- Conducting ongoing and regular regional economic, workforce and education data-gathering, analysis and benchmarking to understand how your economy is changing in real-time. This in turn allows you to notice trends, needs, challenges and opportunities immediately and implement response strategies accordingly.

“At this stage, focus your attention on longer-term strategies for economic diversification and talent pipeline development.”

- Actively soliciting, evaluating and responding to input and feedback from both industry/employer partners and worker/job seeker customers in your community. The point here is to monitor and ensure that workforce development, education and economic development efforts pursued in your area are in fact relevant to determining needs, adding value and delivering results that contribute to long-term economic resilience and community prosperity. If these programs and services are not solving an identified problem, they are pulling valuable resources away from the delivery of effective solutions.

The graphic that follows encapsulates the details of these activities.





CLOSING NOTES

Defense industry workforce transitions are complex and challenging, and can shake the very foundations of a community's sense of stability. However, communities which have successfully navigated previous rounds of defense workforce reductions highlight those critical success factors that can help guide and support other communities facing similar situations. They also offer hope for the future of today's defense communities.

Foremost among these success factors is the importance of strong and robust community partnerships, in which partners are committed to a shared vision for the region's economic future and invest their time and resources in support of achieving that vision. Successful workforce transitions occur in communities where partners begin with the end in mind, embrace change as the potential for new opportunities, check their "turf" issues and demonstrate a willingness to innovate and go beyond the status quo. Fostering such a culture in your community will be essential to the success of your workforce transition efforts, and, ultimately, to your region's capacity to emerge from a defense industry shock stronger, more resilient and better positioned for long-term prosperity.



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