Region 1 Emerging Industry Cluster Analysis

Strategies

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R1

CONTENTS

Deliverable Description

This document contains the goals, strategies, and actions created for the Region 1 Emerging Industry Cluster Analysis. These strategies and actions are intended to help accelerate the rate at which the Tri-County Region develops and expands the four emerging industry clusters—Electric Vehicles, Renewable Energy, Innovative Agriculture, and IT Innovation—and to help support economic prosperity in the area.

SPECIFIC TARGETED SECTOR STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS:

The following are specific strategies and actions within each of the emerging targeted sectors.

Electric Vehicles

Overall Priority as Targeted Sector – High

National and global market conditions and opportunities include:

- Electrification of transportation – automobiles, buses, trucks, marine vehicles, farm vehicles, aircraft, recreation vehicles, and more. Each of these presents different market dynamics.

- Transitions in the market along with hybrid options – adoption of electric vehicles will likely continue to occur alongside hybrid options, which will continue to rely on traditional fuels for combustion.

- Charging methods and charging infrastructure – along with battery and energy storage, production, and supply chains.

- Advancement across multiple technologies – energy, materials, IT, and more. Chips and electronic components, advances in materials, advances in renewables to power electrification

- The Tri-County Region's existing specialization and assets in automotive and parts manufacturing as well as advanced manufacturing

Positive national market trends including private and public sector investment and state and federal support, combined with existing regional strengths, including the restart and related investment plans of Stellantis in Belvidere, existing workforce, supportive education and training, and infrastructure and logistics to support supply chain. This is a high priority target sector for the region.

Goal: Encourage EV and EV-related manufacturing growth in the Tri-County Region

Responsibility: (Lead: Growth Dimensions; Supporting: local, regional, and state economic and workforce development partners, higher education)

1. **Strategy: Provide a coordinated local, regional, and state effort to expand EV-related manufacturing at Stellantis (Priority: High)**
   a. Action: Support Stellantis and its startup (Priority: High) (Immediate and on-going)
   b. Action: Expand EV and EV-related component manufacturing in the area to capitalize on Stellantis' move to restart the Belvidere plant (Priority: High) (Immediate and on-going)
   c. Action: Continue to work with state and federal partners to assist Belvidere in securing needed workforce, financial support, and policy support for the plant and companies in the region within the supply chain (Priority: High) (Immediate and on-going)

Goal: Expand EV charging infrastructure throughout the Tri-County Region

Responsibility: (Lead: R1; Supporting: local and regional economic development and planning, transportation entities, ComEd, and public and private sector)

2. **Strategy: Continue to implement the Region's Electric Vehicle Readiness Plan and build out awareness and electrification/charging capacity (Priority: High)**
   a. Action: Continue to implement the Region's Electric Vehicle Readiness Plan by working with businesses and other partners to increase installation and service capacity of charging stations (Priority: High) (Immediate and on-going)
   b. Action: Encourage the electrification of public vehicle fleets (Priority: Medium) (Immediate and on-going)

Goals: Develop and implement a coordinated regional marketing and communications strategy specific to the EV targeted industries that includes webpages specific to targeted industry development; and develop and implement a strategic industry attraction campaign

Responsibility: (Lead: Local EDOs; CEDS Steering Committee to advocate for collaboration; Supporting: workforce development, education partners, businesses in the region)

3. **Strategy: Implement a focused regional business expansion and attraction campaign (Priority: High)**

a. Action: Focus on competitive subsectors (Priority: High) (Q3 2024-Q1 2025)

Based on national and regional market trends and the work conducted for this strategy specific subsector opportunities to focus on for expansion and attraction are:

- EV auto and vehicle manufacturing

- Batteries – become suppliers to the EV industry including batteries as a whole, parts such as casing, and recycling related

- EV charging stations and related components and services

b. Action: Prioritize and market regional large sites that are shovel-ready to attract manufacturers (EVs, parts, batteries) (Priority: High) (Q3-Q4 2024)

c. Action: Package and promote local, regional, and state incentives and supportive policies as well as regional assets in workforce and infrastructure (Priority: High) (Q1 2025)

d. Action: Design and implement a business attraction strategy (Priority: High) (Q4 2024-Q1 2025)

- Generate leads and intelligence through online presence (web and social media) and capture, monitor, and track these contacts

- Conduct initial targeted marketing/lead generation campaign

- Capture, track, and follow up on leads; coordinate with local subregional and local economic development partners

e. Action: Foreign investment and exports - Work with state economic development for assistance with foreign attraction and investment (Priority: Medium) (Q2-Q4 2025)

Geographies that offer potential based on recent trends include Canada, Mexico, Germany, China, South Korea.

Goal: Develop and implement initiatives that address critical workforce gaps

Responsibility: (Lead: The Workforce Connection (TWC), McHenry County Workforce Network; Advocate for collaboration: CEDS Advisory Committee; Supporting: economic and workforce development, education partners, business and industry representatives)

4. **Strategy: Support and further build-out the workforce needed to support growth and development of the industry (Priority: High)**

   This includes at the K-12, higher education, and career/trade levels for skills and certifications; job and career awareness including pathways, skills, openings, and opportunities to future and current jobseekers, guidance counselors, and parents; creation of apprenticeships and certifications; and programs to access underserved populations to increase labor force participation.

   a. Action: Support and expand critical workforce and training programs (Priority: High) (Q1 2024 and on-going for existing programs)
      - ~~Projected workforce gaps: Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers are likely to be in high demand over the next 5 years, with an average annual gap of over 1,300 workers.~~

      - Priority occupations based on the data and interviews include:

        - Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators
        - Industrial Engineers
        - Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers
        - First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers
        - Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand
        - Machinists
        - Cutting, Punching, and Press Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plastic
        - Industrial Production Managers
        - Mechanical Engineers
        - Tool and Die Makers
        - Electricians
        - Multiple Machine Tool Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plastic

- o Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers

- Many needed occupations start at entry- to mid-level, requiring low to moderate training and education. Others, including engineers and managers, typically require a bachelor's degree.

Goal: Strengthen and support the regional entrepreneur and innovation ecosystem and identify lead entrepreneur and ecosystem builder-focused entity
Responsibility: (Lead: Growth Dimensions through the Automotive Innovation Network; Supporting: economic development, entrepreneur, SBDC, and higher education partners)

5. **Strategy: Work to increase entrepreneurship and innovation networks and capacity in the region (Priority: Medium)**
   This includes environment for innovation including engaged R&D and entrepreneurial community regionally, connections to R&D and entrepreneurship outside of the region, higher education, and existing companies.

   a. Action: Build and strengthen network (Priority: High) (Identify lead entrepreneur and ecosystem builder focused entity by end of Q4 2024)

   Collaborations with industry/companies including automakers, but also companies across the whole value/supply chain, utility companies, education and workforce development, unions, entrepreneurs, and entities involved in R&D and commercialization, local and state policymakers, and intra-regional economic development. Other stakeholders to develop integrated solutions for EV adoption.

   Key stakeholders include:

   - Northern Illinois University, Rock Valley College, McHenry College, and Highland Community College – with academics and research and development activity in fields specifically related to the emerging targeted sectors.

   - Entrepreneurs and related organizations within the Chicago MSA, which is strong in entrepreneurial and innovation assets and activity nationally, including within the emerging sectors

b. Action: Support incubators and accelerators focused on companies and entrepreneurs within the EV technology and industry space (Priority: Medium) (Assessment completed by end of Q2 2025)

Important support includes funding for on-going operations as well as special programs, technical assistance, creating or sponsoring networking events and opportunities, grants, and communications/information sharing. Based on recent venture capital investment in Illinois technology areas to concentrate efforts on include EV software, batteries, grid management, and supply chain management. The size and scale would need to be determined through a more detailed market analysis. First and next steps would include:

- Assessment of need
- Assessment of lead entity, partners, sponsors, and supporters
- Assess possible models:
    - Co-location and partnership with economic development, research, and academic institutions
    - Location as part of industry commercial development potentially including within an innovation district or technology park
    - Location within an existing building
- Market and financial feasibility analysis
- Financial and operations plan including 3–5-year budget, funding sources, operations, desired purpose, and market
- Assess detailed functions/components:
    - Facility – for companies, entrepreneurs needing space; for service providers; space for training/programing; possible space for co-working
    - Programs and services – technical assistance (finance, business planning and developing, technical operations, market research, mentoring, etc.) can be made available to tenants as well as non-tenant members

c. Action: Establish recycling programs for used EV batteries to reduce waste and recover valuable materials, promote sustainable practices in battery production and recycling (Priority: Medium) (By end of Q2 2025)

Renewable Energy
Overall Priority as Targeted Sector - High

Global and national markets for renewable energy and related industries, including manufacturing and technology, are rapidly expanding. Several factors are driving market trends and opportunities, including:

- Falling costs – technological advancements and learning effects have significantly decreased wind and solar costs
- Increasing consumer demand
- State and federal policy and support – federal, state, and local policies have provided incentives and mandates for renewable energy deployment
- Utility decarbonization and corporate sustainability goals

State and regional assets and activity including:

- Strong manufacturing base to support manufacturing elements of the cluster
- Strength in transportation and logistics to support the supply chain
- Synergies with EV's and defense in terms of commitment to renewable energy and cleantech

These regional strengths, combined with global and national trends, make this a targeted sector a high priority for the region.

Goals: Develop and implement a coordinated regional marketing and communications strategy specific to the Renewable Energy targeted industries that includes webpages specific to targeted industry development; and develop and implement a strategic industry attraction campaign

Responsibility: (Lead: Local EDOs; CEDS Steering Committee to advocate for collaboration; Supporting: workforce development, education partners, businesses in the region, Northern Illinois Council of Governments and state government, local utilities)

6. **Strategy: Implement a focused regional business expansion and attraction campaign (Priority: High)**
   a. Action: Focus on competitive subsectors (Priority: High) (Q2 2024-Q4 2024)

   Based on national and regional market trends and the work conducted for this strategy specific subsector opportunities to focus on for expansion and attraction are:

- Wind – opportunities not just for installations, but also parts/equipment manufacturing. Strong manufacturing and transportation/logics in the region as well as available space provide competitiveness for the region
- Solar – opportunities not just for installations but also parts/equipment manufacturing. Strong manufacturing and transportation/logics in the region as well as available space provide competitiveness for the region
- Electrification – including electric vehicles, charging, and storage, but also grid management and related technologies
- Hydrogen

Additionally, opportunities exist in Biomass and Carbon Capture – production of energy through processing of biomaterials. Within the region this activity and opportunity are connected to the region's agriculture base and waste management facilities.

b. Action: Prioritize and market regional large sites that are shovel-ready to attract manufacturers (solar, wind, and electrification) (Priority: High) (Q3-Q4 2024)
c. Action: Package and promote local, regional, and state incentives and supportive policies as well as regional assets in workforce and infrastructure (Priority: High) (Q4 2024)
d. Action: Design and implement a business attraction strategy (Priority: High) (Q4 2024)

- Generate leads and intelligence through online presence (web and social media) and capture, monitor, and track these contacts

- Conduct initial targeted marketing/lead generation campaign

- Capture, track, and follow up on leads; coordinating with local subregional and local economic development partners

e. Action: Foreign investment and exports - work with state economic development for assistance with foreign attraction and investment (Priority: Medium) (Q4 2024-Q3 2025)

Geographies that offer potential based on recent trends include Portugal, Italy, and France for foreign investment and Mexico Canada, China, Germany, Japan for exports.

Goal: Develop and implement initiatives that address critical workforce gaps

Responsibility: (Lead: The Workforce Connection (TWC), McHenry County Workforce Network; Advocate for collaboration: CEDS Advisory Committee; Supporting: economic and workforce development, education partners, business and industry representatives)

7. **Strategy: Support and further build-out the workforce needed to support growth and development of the industry (Priority: High)**

   a. Action: Support and expand critical workforce and training programs (Priority: High) (Q1 2024 and on-going for existing programs)

   - ~~Projected Workforce Gaps: Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers (Hand) are likely to be in high demand over the next 5 years, with an average annual gap of over 1,300 workers. This is also true for Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators, with an average annual gap of 775 workers.~~

   - ~~Many needed occupations start at- entry to mid-level requiring low to moderate training and education. Others, including engineers and managers, typically require a bachelor's degree.~~

   - Work to address professional and technical subsector deficiency that includes analysts, IT and software professionals, and scientists. This is a challenge for many regions in the US and highly competitive.

   - Priority occupations based on the data and interviews include:
     - Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters
     - Electricians
     - Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers
     - General and Operations Managers
     - Construction Laborers
     - Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers
     - Electrical, Electronic, and Electromechanical Assemblers, Except Coil Winders, Tapers, and Finishers
     - Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators
     - Construction Managers
     - First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers
     - Machinists
     - Civil Engineers

- o Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand
- o First-Line Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers
- o Project Management Specialists
- o Mechanical Engineers
- o Sheet Metal Workers
- o First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers
- o Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers
- o Architectural and Engineering Managers

Goal: Ensure sufficient energy related infrastructure is available and maintained for the long-term adoption and expansion of renewables

Responsibility: (Lead: R1PC for regional planning and facilitation; Supporting: economic development and utility partners, state and local government)

8. **Strategy: Support, planning, and funding over the long-term for infrastructure are important for the advancement of renewable energy infrastructure (Priority: High)**
   Work and related funding is already occurring nationally and within the state. This will need to be continued as demand and opportunities for renewables continue to grow.

   a. Action: Include investment in grid integration, management, and transmission infrastructure into regional planning priorities (Priority: High) (Immediate and on-going)
      - Grid Integration: This can involve enhancing the transmission and distribution infrastructure, such as building new lines or upgrading existing ones. It can also involve deploying smart grid technologies, such as energy storage, demand response, or microgrids. These can help balance the variability and intermittency of renewable energy sources. For example, Denmark has successfully integrated high levels of wind power into its grid, reaching 47% of its electricity generation in 2019. Success is already occurring in the region. Recently, DOE awarded the Tri-County Region, Rockford, and ComEd a $50M grant for grid integration technologies.
      - Transmission Infrastructure: Support and accelerate the build-out of transmission infrastructure at both the regional and state level in Illinois. This will improve efficiency, allow power to where it is most needed, improve

reliability, connect huge amounts of affordable clean energy to the grid, and provide opportunity for union workers.

- Work to support final mile/build out to priority sites. Identification of missing infrastructure. Prioritized list of economic development projects.

Goal: Strengthen and support the regional entrepreneur and innovation ecosystem and identify lead entrepreneur and ecosystem builder focused entity

Responsibility: (Lead: CEJA Steering Committee; Supporting: economic development., entrepreneur, SBDC, Accelerating creatives and entrepreneurs (ACE), and higher education partners)

9. **Strategy: Work to increase entrepreneurship and innovation networks and capacity in the region (Priority: Medium)**

   This includes environment for innovation including engaged R&D and entrepreneurial community regionally; connections to R&D and entrepreneurship outside of the region, higher education, and existing companies.

   a. Action: Build and strengthen network (Priority: High) (Identify lead entrepreneur and ecosystem builder focused entity by end of Q4 2024)

   Collaborations with industry/companies across the whole value/supply chain of solar, wind, biomass, and electrification; utility companies, education and workforce development, entrepreneurs and entities involved in R&D and commercialization, local and state policymakers, and intra-regional economic development.

   Key stakeholders include:

   - Northern Illinois University, Rock Valley College, McHenry College, and Highland Community College – with academics and research and development activity in fields specifically related to the emerging targeted sectors.
   - Entrepreneurs and related organizations within the Chicago MSA, which is strong in entrepreneurial and innovation assets and activity nationally, including within the emerging sectors

b. Action: Support incubators and accelerators focused on companies and entrepreneurs within the renewable energy space (Priority: Medium) (Assessment completed by end of Q2 2025)

Clean Tech Accelerators are currently a rising part of cleantech innovation ecosystems. They support early-stage start-ups to bring their solutions to the market, providing mentorship, resources, and networking opportunities to founding teams. Chain Reaction Innovations, located in Chicago, is a great example. It is a program at Argonne National Laboratory that supports entrepreneurs who are developing technologies to address energy and sustainability challenges.

Important support includes funding for on-going operations as well as special programs, technical assistance, creating or sponsoring networking events and opportunities, grants, and communications/information sharing. Based on recent venture capital trends in Illinois, technology areas to concentrate on are wind, solar, grid management, and energy storage including component parts.

An example of public and private partnerships within the Tri-County Region is the partnership between Aqua-Aerobic Systems and Four Rivers Sanitation Authority. Four Rivers has entered into a long-term agreement allowing Aqua-Aerobics to build an on-site research facility located at the Authority's central treatment plant, which will be used for applied research and demonstration of new products. This will create opportunities in cleantech particularly related to sanitation and clean water but with application potentials in renewable energy and industrial technologies.

First and next steps would include:

- Assessment of need
- Assessment of lead entity, partners, sponsors, and supporter
- Assess possible models:
    - Co-location and partnership with economic development, research, and academic institutions
    - Location as part of industry commercial development potentially including within an innovation district or technology park
    - Location within an existing building
- Market and financial feasibility analysis

- Financial and operations plan including 3–5-year budget, funding sources, operations, desired purpose, and market
- Assess detailed functions/components:
  - o Facility – for companies, entrepreneurs needing space; for service providers; space for training/programing; possible space for co-working
  - o Programs and services – technical assistance (finance, business planning and developing, technical operations, market research, mentoring, etc.) can be made available to tenants as well as non-tenant members

Innovative Agriculture
Overall Priority as Targeted Sector - Medium

Innovative agriculture and agtech is the overlap of new and emerging technologies, business models, and processes within the traditional agriculture industry sectors. In the Tri-County Region the traditional agriculture base is centered around corn and soybeans along with dairy, cattle/beef, and hogs.

Emerging trends at the national level include:

- *Precision agriculture*

- *Robotics, automation, and drones*

- *Sensors*

- *Indoor and vertical farming and horticulture*

- *Energy, environment, and climate resiliency*

- *Biomaterials and biopharmaceuticals*

- *Data, analytics, and artificial intelligence* (and related software, tools and platforms)

- *Agriculture biotech*

The Tri-County Region is positioned well for growth opportunities in Innovative Agriculture and can build by leveraging the following existing assets:

- A strong agriculture base in the Tri-County Region and Illinois including legacy companies such as John Deere
- Excellent location, transportation and logistics infrastructure and industries
- Location within a larger US region strong in agriculture: the Midwest
- Supportive ecosystem including education programs at community colleges and other higher education with new programing aimed at new technologies, cooperative extension, and more
- Strengths in manufacturing including vehicles and related parts

It is a *"Medium Priority "* overall as a targeted sector in that it is less of an immediate opportunity relative to EV's and Renewables particularly given the state and federal support these later two sectors.

Goals: Develop and implement a coordinated regional marketing and communications strategy specific to the Agriculture Innovation targeted industries that includes webpages specific to targeted industry development; and develop and implement a strategic industry attraction campaign

Responsibility: (Lead: entity assigned on-going operations and management of regional initiatives; CEDS Steering Committee to facilitate process and oversight; Supporting: economic and workforce development, education partners)

10. **Strategy: Implement a focused regional business expansion and attraction campaign (Priority: Medium)**
    a. Action: Focus on competitive subsectors (Priority: Medium) (Q1 2026-Q4 2026)

    Based on national and regional market trends and the work conducted for this strategy, specific subsector opportunities to focus on for expansion and attraction are:

    - Integration of technology into farm- and agriculture-related machinery and equipment including precision agriculture (spraying, planting), robotics, electrification, and automation.
    - Attraction of tech startups in agricultural innovation space in Silicon Valley and Chicago, both of which have strength in technology innovation for agriculture and food.
    - Advancement in agriculture processing, as well as related transportation and logistics.
    - Sustainable agriculture and energy including biomass and bio reactors (for below surface irrigation).

    b. Action: Prioritize and market regional large sites that are shovel-ready to attract manufacturers (EVs, parts, batteries) (Priority: Medium) (Q1 2026)
    c. Action: Package and promote local, regional, and state incentives and supportive policies as well as regional assets in workforce and infrastructure (Priority: Medium) (Q1 2026)
    d. Action: Design and implement a business attraction strategy (Priority: Medium) (Q1 2026)

    - Generate leads and intelligence through online presence (web and social media) and capture, monitor, and track these contacts
    - Conduct initial targeted marketing/lead generation campaign
    - Capture, track, and follow up on leads; coordinating with local subregional and local economic development partners

e. Action: Foreign investment and exports - work with state economic development for assistance with foreign attraction and investment (Priority: Low) (Q1 2027)

Geographies that offer potential based on recent trends include Germany and Italy for foreign investment as well as China, Mexico, South Korea, and Japan for exporting.

Goal: Develop and implement initiatives that address critical workforce gaps

Responsibility: (Lead: regional targeted industry workforce and talent pipeline taskforce; Facilitation and oversight: CEDS Advisory Committee; Supporting: economic and workforce development, education partners, business and industry representatives)

11. **Strategy: Support and further build-out the workforce needed to support growth and development of the industry (Priority: Medium)**

    This includes at the K-12, higher education, and career/trade levels for skills and certifications; job and career awareness including pathways, skills, openings, and opportunities to future and current jobseekers, guidance counselors, and parents; creation of apprenticeships and certifications; and programs to access underserved populations to increase labor force participation.

    a. Action: Support and expand critical workforce and training programs (Priority: Medium) (Q1 2024 and on-going for existing programs)

    - Projected Workforce Gaps: Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers are likely to be in high demand over the next 5 years, with an average annual gap of over 1,300 workers. While these workers constitute a relatively large share of the cluster's workforce, this cluster represents a small share of this occupation's workforce demand across the economy.
    - Many needed occupations start at entry requiring low to moderate training and education. Others, including analysts and managers, typically require a bachelor's degree.
    - Highland Community College in Stephenson County, IL and McHenry County College in McHenry County, IL both have specific programs important to the industry and should be supported and leveraged.
    - Workforce Training and Education: particularly related to business management and technology adoption.

- Like in most industries, there is a deficiency of CDL licenses for transportation in agriculture.
- Priority occupations based on the data and interviews include:
  - Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand
  - Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers
  - Packaging and Filling Machine Operators and Tenders
  - Packers and Packagers, Hand
  - Farmworkers and Laborers, Crop, Nursery, and Greenhouse
  - Food Batchmakers
  - Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators
  - Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products
  - Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers
  - General and Operations Managers
  - Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers
  - Farmworkers, Farm, Ranch, and Aquacultural Animals
  - Maintenance and Repair Workers, General
  - First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers
  - Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators
  - Light Truck Drivers
  - Agricultural Workers, All Other
  - Industrial Production Managers

Goal: Strengthen and support the regional entrepreneur and innovation ecosystem and identify lead entrepreneur and ecosystem builder focused entity

Responsibility: (Lead: CEDS Steering Committee to facilitate process and oversight with eventual regional lead identified; Supporting: economic development., entrepreneur, and higher education partners)

12. **Strategy: Work to increase entrepreneurship and innovation networks and capacity in the region (Priority: Medium)**

    This includes environment for innovation including engaged R&D and entrepreneurial community regionally; connections to R&D and entrepreneurship outside of the region, higher education, and existing companies.

a. Action: Build and strengthen network (Priority: High) (Identify lead entrepreneur and ecosystem builder focused entity by end of Q4 2024)

Specific examples of opportunities include:

- Connection of industry and entrepreneurs in the region to entrepreneurs and start-ups in Silicon Valley and Chicago – both have strengths in new technologies for food and agriculture and seek to connect top areas strong in agriculture and manufacturing.

- Continue to support the R&D and entrepreneur efforts of academic entities within the region. Of note is the test plot and related work at Highland Community College, which is a test bed for precision agriculture.

- Develop relationships with University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (which is nationally strong in agriculture and related innovation).

b. Action: Support incubators and accelerators focused on companies and entrepreneurs within the agriculture innovation and technology industry space (Priority: Medium) (Assessment completed by end of Q4 2024)

- Important support includes funding for on-going operations as well as special programs, technical assistance, creating or sponsoring networking events and opportunities, grants, and communications/information sharing.
- Agtech center in partnership with academic, R&D, entrepreneurial, and industry partners focused on precision agriculture, electrification of machinery and equipment, and/or robotics.
- Support and look to expand sustainable farming entities such as Angelic Organics to further capture sustainable environment, climate, and energy trends.
- Support programs to connect companies and entrepreneurs in the region with entrepreneurs and innovation companies in agtech from Silicon Valley (technology epicenter), the Midwest states (heavy on agriculture and related companies), and Chicago (strength with regional start-ups and growth companies in technology)
- Based on recent venture capital trends in Illinois, technology areas to concentrate on are precision agriculture, agricultural machinery technology, food processing technology and automation, digital platforms and technology for supply chain, and sustainable agriculture

First and next steps would include:

- Assessment of need

- Assessment of lead entity, partners, sponsors, and supporters
- Assess possible models:
  - Co-location and partnership with economic development, research, and academic institutions
  - Location as part of industry commercial development potentially including within an innovation district or technology park
  - Location within an existing building
- Market and financial feasibility analysis
- Financial and operations plan including 3–5-year budget, funding sources, operations, desired purpose, and market
- Assess detailed functions/components:
  - Facility – for companies, entrepreneurs needing space; for service providers; space for training/programing; possible space for co-working
  - Programs and services – technical assistance (finance, business planning and developing, technical operations, market research, mentoring, etc.) can be made available to tenants as well as non-tenant members

IT Innovation

Overall Priority as Targeted Sector – Medium in terms of building and supporting IT skills and occupations, Low as an industry for attraction

The IT industry is based on core IT applications and technology (programing and software development, networking, data processing and storage) as well as supporting hardware and infrastructure (computer and electronic equipment, telecommunications equipment, and infrastructure). But it is more than an isolated industry, as it has currently advanced to be part of every industry and nearly every related occupation. The technology (digitalization) of everything in industry sectors has and will continue to impact every targeted industry. Examples specific to the Tri-County Region's targeted sectors include:

- Agtech – IT enabling and supporting precision agriculture, automation, robotics as well as analytics, sensors, and operations management and trade
- Cleantech – IT for sensing and measuring, monitoring controls, grid management, and more
- Manufacturing 4.0 - the advancement and integration of information technologies into manufacturing production, processes, controls, and logistics is transforming the industry
- Transportation, Warehousing, and Logistics - to support processing and manage all points of the supply and value chains including tracking, automation, packing, planning, and more
- Additionally, the integration of IT into all sectors and work is dramatically increasing the demand for cybersecurity service, business, workers, and skills

The Tri-County Region, like many areas with smaller cities, lacks density in IT-specific companies and to an extent in workforce as well. This makes it less competitive for regional business attraction. This is not to say that no attraction efforts should be made nor that they cannot succeed over the long term, rather as a regional targeted industry it is a lower opportunity for business attraction than the other targeted sectors.

However, the targeted sectors of EV's, Renewable Energy, and Agriculture Innovation, as well as Manufacturing and Aerospace (which both have a strong presence in the Tri-County Region) all have needs for IT workers and skills. Therefore, as a high priority, the Tri-County Region should focus its IT strategies on workforce, including training, education, and investment through partnership and collaborations

Goal: Develop and implement at least one initiative that addresses critical workforce gaps

Responsibility: (Lead: regional targeted industry workforce and talent pipeline taskforce; Facilitation and oversight: CEDS Advisory Committee; Supporting: economic and workforce development, education partners, business and industry representatives)

13. **Strategy: Support and further build-out the workforce needed to support growth and development of the industry as well as IT occupations and skills needed in all the targeted sectors (Priority: High)**

    This includes at the K-12, higher education, and career/trade levels for skills and certifications; job and career awareness including pathways, skills, openings, and opportunities to future and current jobseekers, guidance counselors, and parents; creation of apprenticeships and certifications; and programs to access underserved populations to increase labor force participation.

    a. Action: Support and expand critical workforce and training programs (Priority: High) (Q1 2024)

    Projected workforce gaps: Most occupations related to IT are projected to meet workforce demand in the next five years given current completion rates at regional educational institutions. Software Developers and Computer User Support Specialists are projected to see the largest gaps, at 43 workers and 34 workers per year, respectively.

    Some occupations start at entry levels requiring low to moderate training and education, but many are technical, including programmers, analysts, and managers and typically require a bachelor's degree.

    Given the focus on manufacturing as well and transportation and logistics' importance to the emerging targeted industries, workers and skills will be needed at the cross sections of each with IT and manufacturing, including cybersecurity, mechatronics, robotics, automation, logistics systems and analysis, sensors, and more.

    Priority occupations based on the data and interviews include:

    - Software Developers
    - Computer User Support Specialists
    - Computer and Information Systems Managers
    - Computer Systems Analysts
    - Network and Computer Systems Administrators
    - Computer Network Support Specialists and Architects
    - Data Scientists
    - Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers
    - Database Administrators
    - Information Security Analysts

- Computer Programmers

b. Action: Attract IT talent through workforce attraction including remote workers (Priority: High) (Q1 2024 – Q4 2025)
- Collaborate among workforce and industry partners for talent attraction. Launch and market through digital campaign with associated web resources
- Target workers in areas with dense IT talent and higher costs of living than the Tri-County region
- Tie into improvements to the region's broadband infrastructure, housing, and quality of life amenities

Goal: Strengthen and support the regional entrepreneur and innovation ecosystem and identify lead entrepreneur and ecosystem builder focused entity

Responsibility: (Lead: CEDS Steering Committee to facilitate process and oversight with eventual regional lead identified; Supporting: economic development., entrepreneur, and higher education partners)

14. **Strategy: Work to increase entrepreneurship and innovation networks and capacity in the region (Priority: Low)**

This includes environment for innovation including engaged R&D and entrepreneurial community regionally; connections to R&D and entrepreneurship outside of the region, higher education, and existing companies.

a. **Action: Build and strengthen network (Priority: High) (Identify lead entrepreneur and ecosystem builder focused entity by end of Q2 2025)**
- Connection of IT specialists, small companies, and entrepreneurs to existing industry partners in the region in need of partners or contractors
- Support the creation of an IT entrepreneur network through existing entities (such as chambers) or development of a new convening entity
- Connect to entrepreneurs and related networks in Chicago. The overwhelming number of venture deals and associated dollars occurred in Cook County tied to the Chicago MSA, representing over 90% of all VC investment dollars in the period
- Based on venture capital activity, market trends in the targeted sectors technology areas to focus on are cybersecurity, AI and analytics, automation, and digital technologies for logistics.

FRAMEWORK

Based on the analysis of data, interviews conducted, and research of emerging trends and practices, the following is a framework for strategies and actions. These are organized by themes that provide the reason and imperative for action.

Connecting Themes – These themes apply to each of the targeted sectors and by building capacities for action, will support the growth and development of each:

- **Local and Regional Targeted Effort** – Organizing and acting locally and regionally to support and grow targeted sectors are all important. This includes understanding the targeted opportunities and challenges, adopting the strategy framework, and collaborating with partners and stakeholders for action. Much is already being done within the local and regional economic, education, and workforce development ecosystem in the region. These strategies involve continuing existing support for those efforts and further building capacity for action including collaborating to establish and support industry-specific initiatives; regional marketing for impactful industry expansion and attraction opportunities that extend beyond local-only efforts; business attraction to the region as a whole; identifying critical real estate sites within the industry targets; and packaging of potential incentives and support for specific attraction, expansion, and development opportunities.
- **Workforce, Talent, and Skills** – All industries are experiencing difficulties attracting and retaining workforce to support business operations and further growth and development. It is a top area of priority for economic development currently and will likely continue well into the future based on labor and demographic trends. There are many common elements of need identified in the analysis and many of these cut across the targeted sectors. This includes the need for basic essential skills training (for example teaming, communication, problem solving); digital skills; modern trades (for example physical work and craftsmanship while integrating technology and information); and advanced professional and technical knowledge and skills requiring education and training (for example engineers, computer specialists, management, and analysts). Strategies within this theme should include building the future workforce pipeline (K-12 through higher and continuing education), supporting industry-informed and industry-driven initiatives for integration into the workplace (internships, apprenticeships, credentialing, on-the job training, and continuing education); development and communication of career pathways for in-demand and emerging occupations; creating opportunities for underserved and non-traditional job-seekers and workers through diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. Success requires continual communication and collaboration among economic, business, workforce, education, and service partners.
- **Real Estate, Sites, and Infrastructure** – Business expansion and attraction require readily available real estate (land and building sites) and supporting infrastructure (water, sewer, energy, telecommunications, roads, rail, and air and related ports). While specific requirements vary by industry and business type and size, common elements for success include availability of sites that can be developed and occupied quickly and already have general support (locally and regionally) expressed through accommodating zoning, known potential costs, and known potential local and regional support/assistance.

- **Entrepreneurship and Innovation** – Each of the targeted industry clusters considered in the analysis requires entrepreneurship and innovation. This includes start-ups, scale-ups, and mature companies seeking growth. It also includes learning and adopting entrepreneurship and innovation among workers. Strategies within this theme include supporting and working with R&D entities and higher education; supporting networks of entrepreneurs and connections both within and outside the region; exposing K-12 and higher education learners to entrepreneurship; supporting incubators and accelerators; and building networks and supporting start-ups and accelerators in targeted sectors. It also involves supporting entrepreneurship for undercover populations through diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives such as those of Think Big in Rockford.
- **Cross-Connection with and Leveraging Existing Industry Strengths –** The targeted industry clusters do not operate in isolation. They are connected to other industry assets and strengths within the region. In the Tri-County Region a specific strength in terms of workforce, skills, education, businesses, and related assets is manufacturing. Manufacturing exists as a base outside of the specific targeted sectors in the region but also within and related to electric vehicles, clean energy, agricultural innovation, and information technology. This includes machinery and equipment, automobiles and related parts, electronic and communications parts and equipment, energy equipment and parts, and aerospace manufacturing.

Framework Strategies and Actions

These are strategies and actions to implement the framework above and are important for all of the targeted industries. They put in place the economic development system needed for industry-specific initiatives and outcomes at a regional level.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL TARGETED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

Goal: Create capacity to plan, implement, and support targeted industry initiatives at the regional level
Responsibility: (Lead: CEDS Steering Committee to facilitate and lead process; Supporting: economic and workforce development, education partners)

15. **Strategy: Develop and support regional planning and implementation for the critical elements of the Tri-County Region's targeted industries (Priority: High)**

    a. Action: Clarify roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders, including local and regional government, economic development organizations, and industry stakeholders (Priority: High) (Q2 2024)

    The region has a strong local system of economic development, each entity focused on specific communities and parts of the region. It also has the R1PC, with a focus and capacity for planning, including support of regional economic development through the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) process, designations as an Economic Development District through the US Economic Development Administration (EDA), and Metropolitan Planning Organization designation by the Federal Transit Administration. To succeed in targeted industry strategies for emerging opportunities that are impactful across the region, this base needs to be built upon and expanded to include a regional network with technical and initiative capacity. All of the opportunities in the targeted sectors have a presence and connections throughout the region. Many of the functions needed to support development and growth of the targeted emerging industries require resources and assets beyond any single community or even sub-region entity including funding and support for industry-driven initiatives (such as grant programs and region-wide industry specific-workforce initiatives), growing entrepreneurial networks, and business and investment attraction.

    There is no one "right" model for regional targeted industry initiatives. Rather, they must be grounded in the culture and strengths of economic, business, and workforce development entities already within the regional economic system. They must also coordinate and allow for differences and efforts at the local level. The model should result from consensus and commitment by the partners in the system so that it can be resourced and sustained.

The following actions provide important first steps to implement this strategy:

- Share and communicate results from this targeted industry strategy with local and regional partners
- Convene the advisory committee (can be the CEDS Steering Committee and updated/supplemented as warranted)
- Review the recommended strategies and actions and for the highest priorities adopt a clearly defined implementation scope further delineating partner responsibilities and local versus regional roles
- Develop a partnership executive team that includes industry leaders (this would be an "overarching" team among partners overseeing regionally prioritized, industry specific initiatives)
- Form targeted industry advisory groups for each sector (based on the priorities established for each sector, start with advisory groups for EV and Renewable Energy)
- Determine regional staffing and technical capacity to sustain, and fund efforts and initiatives
- Assign or create a regional organization lead to oversee on-going management and operations
- Develop and adopt metrics and processes to measure and track progress and guide future work
- Conduct regular progress reporting and adaptation to changing conditions

b. Action: Continue to support the upgrade and expansion plans for sewer and water infrastructure to ensure sufficient capacity to serve future growth (Priority: Medium) (On-going)

c. Action: Support existing initiatives to make sites shovel-ready and prioritize and market regional development sites that are: (Priority: High) (Q4 2024)

- Served by infrastructure (sewer, water, power, telecommunications, access to critical transportation)
- At or near "shovel-ready"
- Consistent with land-use and zoning policies for local willingness to support
- Meet targeted industry needs (see Appendix for typical site characteristics by targeted sector use)
- Can develop with significant scale and impact regionally

d. Action: Continue to support a rail-served industrial park near Chicago Rockford International Airport (Priority: High) (2024 & on-going)

- Support the city, county, and airport in making this development progress and establishing as a local and regional priority
- Seek federal and state funding support
- Include in priority site marketing

e. Action: Continue to support and work with partners to implement the recommendations from the recently completed Regional Freight Study for the Rockford Region (Priority: High) (2024 & on-going)

Two specific recommendations stand as especially important and related to the emerging targeted sectors:

- Infrastructure improvements for increased weight capacity and creation of highway grade crossings. Both are needed to increase the safety and efficiency of freight movement in the region
- Support in building out balanced intermodal plan

Additionally, a third recommendation of the freight study to continue "further advances of transportation and logics hub and related economic cluster", which will create additional synergies between the transportation and logistics sector and the emerging targeted sectors.

f. Action: Continue to expand broadband infrastructure throughout the Tri-County Region with a goal of fiber to provide service throughout the region achieved by filling remaining gaps (Priority: Medium) (Q4 2026)

This includes the 10-year plan of the Four Rivers Sanitation Authority in Rockford (the largest sanitation district, as well as plans by other districts within the region).

Goals: **Develop and implement a coordinated regional marketing and communications strategy specific to the targeted industries that** ~~incudes regional website~~ **specific to targeted industry development**
Responsibility: (Lead: Local EDOs; CEDS Steering Committee to advocate for collaboration; Supporting: economic and workforce development, education partners)

16. **Strategy: Craft and implement a coordinated regional marketing and communications strategy specific to the targeted industries (Priority: Medium)**

    a. Action: Develop a unified regional web presence focused on targeted industries (Priority: High) (Q4 2024)
    ~~A regional targeted industry website should combine relevant data~~ and intelligence for companies, developers, and investors; be consistently up to date; and share company and partner success stories and cases. It should make the case for the advantages and strengths of the regional location, including relevant and up-to-date data on:

    - Available land, sites, buildings

    - Infrastructure

    - Policies and incentives to support

    - Economic and industry data

    - Workforce (programs, assets/resources, and up-to date data)

    - Ecosystem: companies, organizations, etc.

    - Recent projects and investments

    The website should be connected to newsletters and social media posts and should also allow for capturing relevant visitation and use intelligence, including through search engine optimization, site analytics, and capturing and integrating leads into a CRM system for follow-through.

    b. Action: Design and implementation of a business attraction strategy (Priority: Medium) (Q1 2025)
    - Define the relationships and capacity needed to carry out the function along with roles and responsibilities in the region
    - Prioritize campaigns starting first with EV's (the most immediate opportunity), followed by Renewable Energy

- Generate leads and intelligence through online presence (web and social media) and capture, monitor, and track these contacts
- Conduct initial targeted marketing/lead generation campaign
- Capture, track, and follow up on leads; coordinating with local subregional and local economic development partners

c. Action: Develop local, regional, and state incentives and support "packages" for business expansion and attraction (Priority: Medium) (Q1 2025)

These need not necessarily be new programs or policies, but they should include clear communication of existing programs and clearly indicate the specific support and incentives that may be utilized for qualified projects. This should indicate:

- Any existing Federal Opportunity Zones

- State incentives

- Local incentives such as tax abatements and special district incentives

- Benefits within existing foreign trade zones

- Other existing local and regional incentives

Workforce, Talent, and Skills

Goal: Develop and implement workforce development initiatives that align with emerging industry needs and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion

Responsibility: (Lead: The Workforce Connection (TWC), McHenry County Workforce Network; Advocate for collaboration: CEDS Advisory Committee; Supporting: economic and workforce development, education partners, business and industry representatives, DCEO, IMEC)

17. **Strategy: Create planning capacity to address the workforce development needs across all targeted sectors (Priority: High)**

    a. Action: Develop a targeted industry workforce and talent pipeline taskforce (Priority: High) (Q2 2024)

    The taskforce should include representatives from industry, K-12, career and technical education, adult education, higher education, and the workforce system and focus on enhancing or sustaining existing efforts, or filling critical gaps including:

    - Reviewing data and trends on in-demand skills, education and certification completions, employment projections

    - Providing industry and career exploration opportunities for educators, guidance counselors, students, workers, and partners through company tours, field trips, work experiences, testimonials, and classroom visits and projects

    - Develop and communicate career pathways for in-demand occupations to support employers and job seekers with employee recruitment, training, and career pathway planning

    - Promoting career awareness via marketing and publication of relevant information for in-demand occupational projections, in-demand skills, average wages, employers that are currently hiring, training programs, worker testimonials and videos, and upcoming industry events

    - Increasing teacher capacity through "teaching the teacher" – this can include paid sabbaticals, summer boot camps, or other methods that provide awareness, expertise, and resources/compensation. An example of a best practice is the Aspiring Teachers Program utilized by Rockford Public Schools. Teachers who participate in the comprehensive year-long training will receive $15,000 annually and are eligible for benefits

- Coordinating soft skills training including showing up on time, showing up every day, dressing appropriately, interpersonal communication, conflict resolution, and basic customer service

- Coordinating removal of barriers to work with local and regional community development and related stakeholders specifically for access and affordability of childcare, housing, and transportation

- Digital upskilling and training. Example: Digital literacy and digital skill resources and training could be achieved via partnership with Techspark or a similar organization. Techspark and their partner LinkedIn Learning provide a <u>wide array of online resources</u>, training courses, and certifications (many of them free). These can be customized for the community at large, workers looking to increase their digital skills, IT workers, and educators

If an existing regional entity already exists that can lead and carry our this "task force", then it should be utilized.

b. Action: Support diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the workforce (Priority: High) (Q4 2024 and on-going)

Work with employers and training providers to improve equity, opportunity, and workforce retention among women, people of color, and other disadvantaged populations by providing clear expectations regarding pathways for advancement, opportunities for cross-training, and gaining in-demand skills. Perform targeted training, outreach and recruiting. This is particularly important among occupations that earn substantially below a living wage and are more likely to be held by women or people of color:

Electric Vehicles:

- Cutting, Punching, and Press Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plastic
- Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers
- Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Materials Movers, Hand

Renewable Energy:

- Electrical, Electronic, and Electromechanical Assemblers, Except Coil Winders, Tapers, and Finishers
- Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Materials Movers, Hand

Innovative Agriculture:

- Drivers/Sales Workers
- Farmworkers and Laborers, Crop Nursery, and Greenhouse
- Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand
- Packaging and Filling Machine Operators and Tenders
- Packers and Packaging, Hand
- Stockers and Order Fillers

IT Innovation:

- *None*

Have high earnings but low shares of women or people of color:

Electric Vehicles:

- Electricians
- Industrial Engineers
- Industrial Production Managers
- Mechanical Engineers

Renewable Energy:

- Architectural and Engineering Managers
- Civil Engineers
- Construction Managers
- Electrical Engineers
- Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers
- Electricians
- First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers
- First-Line Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers
- First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers
- General and Operations Managers
- Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers
- Industrial Engineers
- Machinists
- Managers, All Other
- Mechanical Engineers
- Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators
- Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters
- Project Management Specialists

- Sales Representatives of Services, Except Advertising, Insurance, Financial Services, and Travel
- Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products
- Sheet Metal Workers

Innovative Agriculture:

- First-Line Supervisors of Production & Operating Workers
- First-Line Supervisors of Transportation & Material Moving Workers, Except Aircraft Cargo Handling Supervisors
- General and Operations Managers
- Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers
- Industrial Production Managers
- Management Analysts
- Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products

IT Innovation:

- Computer and Information Systems Managers
- Computer Network Architects
- Computer Network Support Specialists
- Computer Programmers
- Computer Systems Analysts
- Computer User Support Specialists
- Database Administrators
- Information Security Analysts
- Network and Computer Systems Administrators
- Operations Research Analysts
- Software Developers
- Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers
- Web and Digital Interface Designers
- Web Developers

c. Action: Support education and training in specific occupations and related skills that cut across all industry sectors and are in the advanced manufacturing fields of work (Priority: High) (Q4 2024 and on-going)

Manufacturing occupations and skills cut across the four emerging targeted sectors and provide a niche advantage for the region. Therefore, the region should support education and training in occupations and skills specifically related to manufacturing and its future. These include:

- Robotics
- Mechatronics
- Industrial Engineers
- Industrial Production Managers
- Mechanical Engineers
- Machine Operators
- Engineering and Manufacturing Technology
- Electrical Engineers
- Electrical Techs and technicians

Many of these exist or are being addressed to some degree at existing education and training entities within the region, however additional support is needed to continue and grow for the demands to support emerging industries.

Entrepreneurship and Innovation

Goal: Expand opportunities within the innovation and entrepreneur ecosystem

Responsibility: (Lead: ACE; Supporting: economic development, entrepreneur, and higher education partners, DCEO, SBDC)

18. **Strategy: Increase access to the entrepreneur and innovation ecosystem (Priority: Medium)**

    a. Action: Advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in entrepreneurship (Priority: High) (Q4 2024)

    This action can be supported in the region through:

    - Supporting existing organizations like Think Big in Rockford, Illinois – specializing in assessing minority small business and entrepreneurs

    - Direct financial support for organizations already providing services to these populations (such as Think Big in Rockford)

    - Helping set up special programs focused on the emerging industry sectors

    - Facilitating connections to entrepreneurs and companies within the emerging targeted industries

    - Providing access to local and regional bids and purchases

    b. Action: Increase emerging innovation and technology through public and institutional purchasing practices (Priority: Medium) (On-going by public and institutional stakeholders)

    Examples within each of the emerging targeted sector include:

    - Electric Vehicles – electrifying the public works and transport fleets, supporting the build-out of charging stations (a program currently part of the Electric Vehicle Readiness Plan for the Rockford Region completed by R1PC in April 2021)
    - Renewable Energy – installing clean energy generation and related equipment and purchasing clean energy for operations such as wind, solar, biomass, and more using local sources and providers
    - Agriculture Innovation – purchase of food from local and regional farms (indoor and outdoor) utilizing new technology and innovation

- Information Technology – purchasing IT services for emerging technology in cybersecurity, AI, networks, data centers, etc. from regional providers

Connecting and Leveraging Existing Regional Industry Strengths

Based on the analysis conducted for this emerging targeted industry strategy and the Regional CEDS, both manufacturing (including aerospace and defense) and transportation and logistics are regional strengths that are critical on their own and to the emerging sectors.

Goal: Integrate both manufacturing and transportation/logics priorities and assets into targeted industry planning

Responsibility: (Lead: CEDS Steering Committee to facilitate and lead process; Supporting: economic and workforce development, education partners)

19. **Strategy: Leverage connections among existing regional industry strengths in manufacturing and transportation and logistics with emerging target industry sectors for economic growth (Priority: Medium)**

    a. Action: Seek and pursue collaborative opportunities and programs across these sectors (Priority: Medium) (On-going as part of CEDS and targeted industry planning process)

    • For regional economic development use a "lens of cross-sector opportunities for marketing, attraction and expansion, workforce, and entrepreneurship." Many grant programs at the federal and even state level look positively on initiatives that cut across multiple sectors for maximum economic impact.

    • Examine and prioritize opportunities for major partner initiatives for future grant funds that address and leverage all the emerging targeted sectors along with manufacturing and transportation and logistics. This could culminate in the creation of a major multi-industry national hub and center around an innovation and industry district.

    • Priority opportunities based on market trends and regional assets include battery and EV parts manufacturing, EV charging equipment, manufacturing specifically related to Renewable Energy (solar and wind components), electronic component manufacturing, and electrical power equipment.

Combine with strategy 15