



Strategic Action Plan Report

The WISE Plan

Workforce Innovation for a Strong Economy



The **Workforce Innovation for a Strong Economy (WISE) Plan** is the culmination of a nearly yearlong effort to understand and address the workforce preparation, retention and recruitment challenges faced by businesses and communities across the 7 Rivers Alliance Region.

Through a series of interviews, working group sessions, subject matter forums and significant economic research, the **WISE Plan workforce gap analysis revealed that the 7 Rivers Region needs to attract and retain 1,500-2,000 more workers each year during the next decade to keep up with employer demand.**

This is a daunting challenge, but the WISE Talent Plan outlines strategies for tackling these overarching issues, and identifies champions who can lead efforts to improve **Talent Preparation, Recruitment, and Retention** prospects throughout the region.

This work was made possible thanks to the generous support of the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), and the 7 Rivers Alliance & Regional Partners. The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views or recommendations of EDA or WEDC.

Prepared by



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CREC CENTER FOR REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS

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regional planning commission



WISE Plan development

The development of the WISE Plan involved input from more than 500 businesses and community leaders during 28 small group interviews, three talent working group sessions, six subject matter forums, four Steering Committee working sessions and research.

Key workforce challenges

- Declining population
- Aging workforce
- Misperceptions about the region's employment opportunities
- Mismatch of skills between what is being produced by the region's post-secondary institutions and the needs of local employers
- Lack of diversity within the region
- Outmigration and out-commuting
- Limited childcare options and affordability
- Attracting people to the area
- Competition from nearby employment centers

How it will be done

The WISE strategies will focus on three specific areas: **Talent Preparation, Talent Recruitment and Talent Retention.**

Preparation: Promote programs and activities that build stronger connections between students and business and inform and educate about the opportunities that exist within the region.

Recruitment: Market the region and its assets, sharing stories and messages of success and inclusion, and ensuring that new families are welcomed and supported.

Retention: Share best practices with the region's employers that support and enhance the experiences of current employees, reduce out-migration and slow the rate of retirements.

Key WISE Plan goals

- Increase student and worker employability skills
- inclusive regional communities to better attract minority Educate students, educators, parents, and other community members about the educational requirements for high paying, in-demand careers
- Prepare incumbent workers and mature jobseekers to have greater flexibility in the workplace
- Promote the 7 Rivers Region to targeted groups about the region's benefits
- Foster and underrepresented individuals
- Assist and engage newly arriving families to area communities
- Provide businesses and jobseekers with comparative economic information
- Ensure the availability of affordable housing for the region's workforce
- Provide information and tools that help companies prepare for pending retirements
- Develop public-private childcare partnerships to increase childcare facility capacity and address affordability gaps
- Bolster more connections and relationships between currently enrolled students, regional employers, and local communities
- Inspire businesses to implement initiatives that position them as "Employers of Choice"
- Improve transit, ridesharing, and multi-modal transportation options, and make transportation system more accessible

For a full copy of the WISE Plan, including the strategies, go to www.7riversalliance.org/wise-project/