



STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

TEXARKANA REGION

July 2015

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1.0 Background

This Strategic Implementation Plan represents results of a consultation engagement aimed to identify a set of regional strategies and actions to help retain skilled workers within the region and maximize opportunities for economic growth. The outcome is to provide a detailed implementation strategy, including identifying responsible parties and aligning economic growth efforts.

This Strategic Implementation Plan work was funded through a partnership between the United States Department of Defense Office of Economic Adjustment and Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas. The initial defense community grant was precipitated by concerns regarding the workforce alignment and future of the Red River Army Depot (RRAD). This is an industrial complex, located in Bowie County Texas, which provides responsive and innovative solutions for the Department of Defense in repair, overhaul, remanufacture, and conversion of combat systems and tactical vehicles. RRAD currently has approximately 6400 employees, and is the largest employer in the region.

In response to potential labor cuts at RRAD, Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas applied for and was awarded a grant from the Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA). The grant funds were used to develop a broad strategic action plan focused on workforce retention and economic growth for the region surrounding RRAD. This plan, titled *Regional Talent Retention and Economic Growth Strategy* (2014) lays out significant analysis of the region, and a comprehensive set of potential strategic actions.

The Strategic Implementation Plan presented in this report aims to move the work from 'strategy to action' and builds off the foundation established in the recently completed *Regional Talent Retention and Economic Growth Strategy* report. The following document summarizes the results work over a 2-month period, in June and July 2015, which included stakeholder surveys and a key stakeholder workshop (on 11 June 2015). This work was designed to engage the local stakeholders representing the regional economic and workforce 'eco-system' into building a cohesive and aligned regional action and implementation plan.

Overall, the Implementation Plan will help the region focus on efforts that can contribute to the reemployment of potentially dislocated workers from RRAD and regional defense contractors, and build a strong viable and resilient local economy.



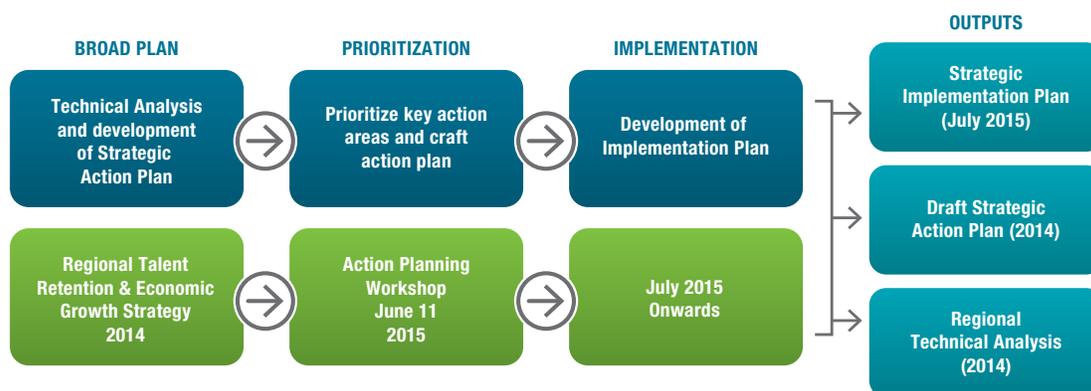
2.0 Strategic Implementation Planning Process

The *Regional Talent Retention and Economic Growth Strategy (2014)* report, and associated regional technical analysis, lays out a broad plan with the following key Strategies and Goals:

- Enhance the regional talent management system
- Strengthen the region’s business development capacity
- Expand critical infrastructure to support new investment and developments
- Enhance “quality of place” throughout the region

The purpose for the current Strategic Implementation Consultation (undertaken by Future iQ Partners in June and July 2015) is to develop an implementation strategy and plan, including identifying responsible parties and actions to align the regions economic growth efforts. This work aims to move the regional discussion from ‘strategy to action’.

Strategic Implementation Planning Process



The implementation plan in this report represents the culmination of a two-month study that included stakeholder surveys, facilitated workshop and analysis of strategic implementation options.



3.0 Prioritizing Strategic Action Areas

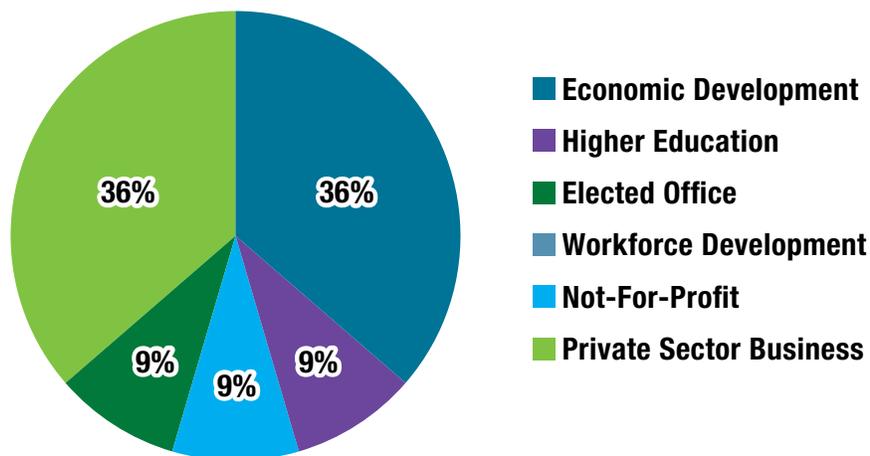
The first step in this implementation planning process was to determine the high priority Strategic Actions, from the list presented in the previous study. The purpose was to identify and target those actions that can be implemented in the short and medium term, and to identify actions that may lead to a shift in the region’s future orientation. The previous study presented 21 Strategic Action areas (and numerous sub-actions), but there was no assessment of relative priority or ability to implement. Each of the 21 proposed Strategic Actions requires the coordination of significant resources. As such, it is important that they are prioritized in order to capitalize on the resources already available, or those that may become available to the region.

3.1 Stakeholder Respondent Characteristics

Regional Strategy Prioritization Surveys were sent to approximately 40 key local stakeholders. The surveys were sent on 1 June 2015, and people were given a week to complete the survey. The stakeholders included in the survey list reflected many who in some manner had participated in the previous regional strategic planning sessions.

Respondents were asked two characterizing questions as a means of grounding them within a regional context. They were first asked to identify the type of organization that they are affiliated with. The distribution of responses is summarized in the chart below.

Q3: What type of organization do you represent?

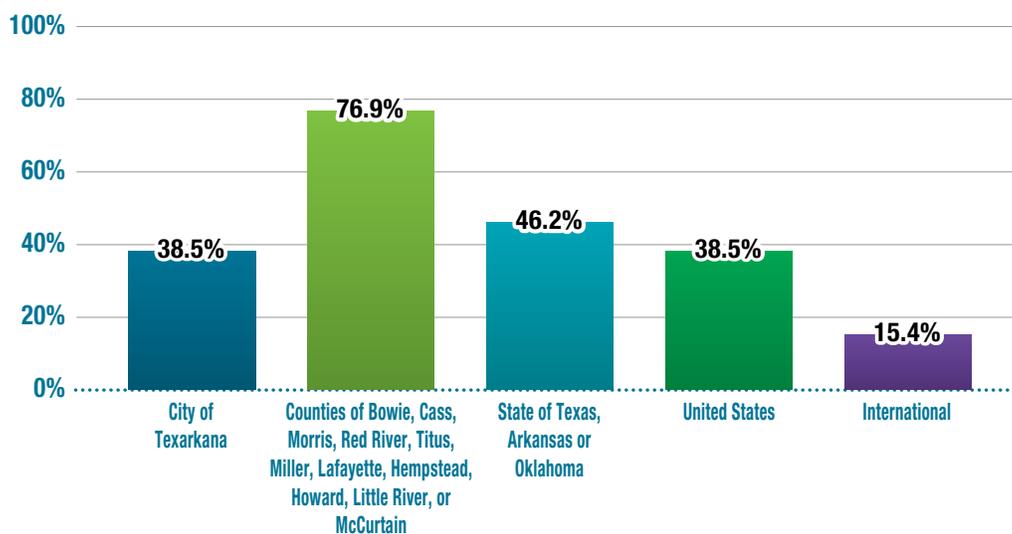




Survey respondents were fairly evenly divided between private and public sector interests. However, it should be noted that the total number of survey respondents was only 13, however they did include many key stakeholders. Also, most of these people subsequently attended the 11 June 2015 workshop, providing important continuity.

Respondents were also asked to associate their organization with the markets in which it operates. This question was designed to identify both degree of 'locality' expressed in the survey, as well as the extent to which respondents viewed themselves as being active in a broader regional context. The distribution of responses is included in the following table. Please note that respondents were asked to identify each of the markets in which they are active, which frequently yielded multiple responses.

Q4: Which markets or location do you operate in? (Select all that apply)



The distribution here suggests that while the bulk of respondents to the survey are located within the local region, they consider their respective markets as having a broader scope.



3.2 Prioritizing Strategic Actions

In the surveys, the stakeholders were presented with the Strategic Action areas identified in Regional Talent Retention and Economic Growth Strategy report (2014). These Strategic Actions were grouped into each of the 4 major goal areas presented in that report.

Survey respondents were asked “As you complete the survey, please reflect on the ways that you believe that the region can focus its economic and community strengths to create change in the areas of talent management, business development, critical infrastructure and ‘quality of place’. As a survey respondent, you will be asked to assess the relative importance of each proposed strategy, and to assign a rank value. No estimated costs have been assigned to any specific action at this stage. When considering your ranking, consider the anticipated impact and benefit of each strategy over the next 5 years.”

Each participant was asked two key sets of questions:

- **Importance** - For each Strategic Action, they were asked to rate the importance of each proposed strategy on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being unimportant to 5 being absolutely crucial to the region’s future success.
- **Ranking** - For each goal area, participants were asked to rank the 4-6 Strategic Actions within that goal. For example, “How would you rank the six options presented above in terms of relative value and expected effectiveness, with 1 representing the highest rank and 6 representing the lowest?”

These rankings were subjected to a weighted-value analysis, and then adjusted based on the number of actions in that goal area. An individual rank score was achieved by calculating weighted value divided by number of actions in that goal area and then multiplied by 100. This produced a unique relative ranking for each of the 21 Strategic Actions. The Ranking score approach was included to both prioritize the Strategic Actions, and also to take account of variable numbers of Strategic Actions in each goal. The higher the ranking score number, the higher the overall rank. For example, a maximum ranking score of 100 would mean that every survey participant ranked that Strategic Action as the most important in that goal area.

The use of questions about both importance and ranking is an additional verification process. For example, some Strategic Actions may be deemed important on an individual basis, but not ranked high relative to other options. The ultimate purpose is to have some relative measure of importance and ranking across all 21 Strategic Actions. Those that were deemed



high in importance and high rank score are assumed to represent the highest priority actions, likely to deliver the greatest outcome to the region.

Respondents were not asked to consider the relative cost of each action as ranking, as these estimated figures were not included in the original study. The survey results are presented in the following tables.

3.2.1 Goal 1: Enhance the regional talent management system

Proposed Strategy	Importance Score	Rank Score	Rank
Strategy 1: Retain RRAD workers affected by military downsizing	4.38	71	2
Strategy 2: Align education and training needs with existing and targeted industries.	4.92	88	1
Strategy 3: Raise awareness and perception of middle-skill career opportunities	4.77	64	4
Strategy 4: Strengthen business and education partnerships	4.54	67	3
Strategy 5: Promote opportunities for emerging leaders and young professionals to engage in civic and economic development affairs.	4.08	38	5
Strategy 6: Recruit former students to 'come home' by highlighting employment options and opportunities	3.77	26	6

Note: Importance score: 1 = unimportant; 5 = absolutely crucial

The process of ranking the proposed Strategic Actions presents a clearer picture of regional needs and priorities. Clearly there are some proposed Strategic Actions that in a relative sense are not deemed either important or ranked high. The Strategic Action regarding 'Align education and training needs with existing and targeted industries' was deemed to both be absolutely crucial and highest priority. There is some misalignment between 'importance' and 'ranking score' in subsequent Strategic Actions; however, the second high priority Strategy 'Retain RRAD workers affected by military downsizing' still has a relatively high importance score.



3.2.2 Goal 2: Strengthen the region’s business development capacity

Proposed Strategy	Importance Score	Rank Score	Rank
Strategy 1: Establish a comprehensive Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) program led by Texarkana Chamber of Commerce	4.25	78	2
Strategy 2: Formalize a regional business attraction program led by TexAmericas Center	4.17	82	1
Strategy 3: Develop an international marketing and awareness campaign.	3.75	31	5
Strategy 4: Promote entrepreneurship and small business development	4.25	65	3
Strategy 5: Build economic development capacity in the rural areas of the region	4.00	47	4

The two Strategic Actions based on Business Retention and Expansion, and Business Attraction were both rated as relatively important, and highest priority. There is a significant drop in ranking scores for the remaining three proposed Strategic Actions. In terms of developing a medium term implementation strategy, these results would give some credence to a view of dropping lower ranking Strategic Actions to some future date.

3.2.3 Goal 3: Expand the critical infrastructure to support new investment

Proposed Strategy	Importance Score	Rank Score	Rank
Strategy 1: Ensure long term industrial water rights for TexAmericas Center, RRAD and other industrial sites	4.50	76	1
Strategy 2: Expand the inventory of shovel-ready sites and shell buildings	4.08	56	4
Strategy 3: Create an I-30 logistics corridor	4.33	51	5
Strategy 4: Ensure the long term development of I-69 and I-49	4.58	72	2
Strategy 5: Develop redundant broadband infrastructure at TAC to improve high-speed internet connectivity	4.17	72	2
Strategy 6: Hold regional summit to identify, discuss and prioritize the infrastructure improvements	4.33	42	6



The Strategic Action of ‘Ensure long term industrial water rights for TexAmericas Center, RRAD and other industrial sites’ was the highest priority action. In addition the Strategic Actions of ‘Ensure the long term development of I-69 and I-49’ and ‘Develop redundant broadband infrastructure at TAC to improve high-speed Internet connectivity’ were ranked highly. These are core infrastructure issues in the region.

3.2.4 Goal 4: Enhance the “quality of place” throughout the region

Proposed Strategy	Importance Score	Rank Score	Rank
Strategy 1: Update the Texarkana Comprehensive Plans reflect current development patterns	3.75	65	2
Strategy 2: Continue enhancing recreational amenities and aesthetics	3.67	52	4
Strategy 3: Initiate a new regional marketing campaign	4.25	77	1
Strategy 4: Establish Digital Ambassadors program	3.58	56	3

Of these proposed Strategic Actions, only ‘Initiate a new regional marketing campaign’ gathered significant support for importance. Generally speaking, items that score below 4.0 on an importance score are not viewed as critical actions. In this Goal area, only this one action was viewed as significantly important.

3.2.5 High Priority Proposed Strategic Actions – by Ranking

First Tier Priority - The table below presents the First Tier Priority (top 5) proposed Strategic Actions, ranked across all 21 Strategic Actions presented. All of them have importance scores above 4, so are considered crucial to the future. These top 5 are presented in order of ranking. The table shows which goal area they came from, and a brief description.



Goal	Strategy #	Importance	Rank Score
1	STRATEGY 2: Align education and training needs with existing and targeted industries.	4.92	88
2	STRATEGY 2. Formalize a regional business attraction program led by TexAmericas Center.	4.17	82
2	STRATEGY 1. Establish a comprehensive Business Retention & Expansion program led by the Texarkana USA Chamber of Commerce.	4.25	78
4	STRATEGY 3. Initiate a new regional marketing campaign (internal and external) highlighting Texarkana's strength as a regional center for education, retail, and dining.	4.25	77
3	STRATEGY 1. Ensure long-term industrial water rights for TexAmericas Center, RRAD, and other industrial sites in the region.	4.50	76

Second Tier Priority - The table below displays the next 7 ranked Strategic Actions. These all achieved a Rank Score above 65 and in all but one case had importance scores above 4.0. This group likely represents the Strategic Actions seen as important, but not as time critical and urgent as the first five.

Goal	Strategy	Importance	Rank Score
1	STRATEGY 1: Retain RRAD workers affected by military downsizing.	4.38	71
1	STRATEGY 3: Raise awareness and perception of middle-skills career opportunities.	4.77	64
1	STRATEGY 4: Strengthen business and education partnerships.	4.54	67
2	STRATEGY 4. Promote entrepreneurship and small business development.	4.25	65
3	STRATEGY 4. Ensure the long-term development and expansion of I-69 and I-49.	4.58	72
3	STRATEGY 5. Develop redundant broadband infrastructure at TAC to improve high-speed Internet connectivity.	4.17	72
4	STRATEGY 1. Update the Texarkana (Texas and Arkansas) Comprehensive Plans to reflect current development patterns.	3.75	65



3.2.6 Relative Ranking of Overall Goal Areas

In addition, survey respondents were asked to rank the four overall goal areas against each other. In applying the ranking they responded to the question of ‘How would you rank the four broad regional Goals presented above in terms of relative value and expected effectiveness in impacting the regional future, within the NEXT 5 YEARS?’ This question aims to explore the medium term perspective of where the greatest impact will be achieved.

Goal	Rank	Rank Score
Goal 1: Enhance the regional talent management system	4	48
Goal 2: Strengthen the region’s business development capacity	2	70
Goal 3: Expand critical infrastructure to support new investment and developments	1	80
Goal 4: Enhance “quality of place” throughout the region	3	52

This gives an indication of the different relative value and expected effectiveness of action areas, over a 5-year timeframe. The Goal ‘Expand critical infrastructure to support new investment and developments’ was ranked highest. This appears to be partly based on the demonstrated beneficial impact of infrastructure developments that have occurred in recent years. However, when the workshop participants discussed priority action areas to tackle in the implementation phase, the Infrastructure area was not included. This was due to their view that key work was already well underway, and this was progressing satisfactorily.

The Goal regarding ‘Enhance the regional talent management system’ was ranked lowest taking into account a 5-year time frame. In workshop discussions, this was considered to be partly a result of the recent ability to RRAD to attract additional contracts, and partly that the economy is to a large degree based around large employers, and supported by a transient local workforce. Building a higher skilled, locally based workforce was seen as important, but would take significant time and effort.

The Goal to ‘Strengthen the region’s business development capacity’ was ranking high, and appears to offer an area with great potential to implement some new activity that would produce meaningful local results in the next 5-years.



3.2.7 Organizational Interest and relevance – by Goal Areas

Survey respondents were also asked where they believed their organization could best contribute resources and efforts in building a regional approach. The following tables shows results of the Relevance Scoring.

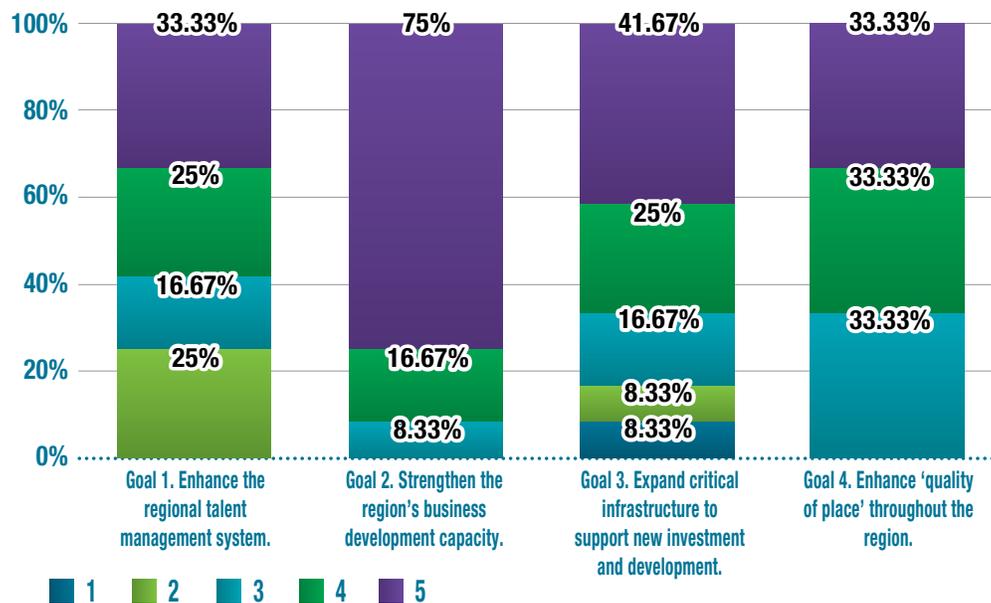
Goal	Relevance Score
Goal 1: Enhance the regional talent management system	3.7
Goal 2: Strengthen the region’s business development capacity	4.7
Goal 3: Expand critical infrastructure to support new investment and developments	3.8
Goal 4: Enhance “quality of place” throughout the region	4.0

Note: Relevance Score: With 1 being not of interest or relevance, and 5 being absolutely relevant and where you can definitely contribute resources and effort, from you and your organization.

This table shows that the Goal 2: ‘Strengthen the region’s business development capacity’ was of keen interest and relevance to almost all organizations that completed the survey. This can be further highlighted in the following table that expands the relevance score by Goal.



Q30: Please tell us where you believe you and your organization can best contribute resources and efforts in building our regional approach. Rank each proposed Goal on a scale 1 to 5, with 1 being not of interest or relevance, and 5 being absolutely relevant and where you can definitely contribute resources and effort, from you and your organization. You will also be asked to assign a rank order to these recommendations as a guide.



This question was asked to examine the match or gaps between priority needs and local interest and capacity. Clearly in the case of the Goal 2: 'Strengthen the region's business development capacity', there is a strong match between perceived value and the organizations interest and willingness to contribute. Based on the survey respondents, there may be some resource gap in the Goal 1 and Goal 3 areas, however the small survey sample size makes this difficult to judge with great accuracy.

3.2.8 Using the Regional Strategy Prioritization Surveys results

The Regional Strategy Prioritization Survey results were presented to the 11 June Stakeholders workshop. The results, together with the workshop discussion provided an ideal method to distill the larger original set of 21 major strategic actions into a series of high priority specific implementation steps. The implementation planning process and results are presented in the following section.



4.0 Strategic Implementation Plan - Recommendations

The recommendations that are presented in the following section have been developed from a range of sources including:

- Material and strategic actions contained in the '*Regional Talent Retention and Economic Growth Strategy*' report (2014), commissioned by Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas.
- Stakeholder's surveys conducted in June 2015 to validate and prioritize the various strategic actions in the aforementioned report.
- Stakeholder workshop conducted on 11 June to refine priority strategic actions and develop outline of implementation plans.
- Additional recommendations were included based on best practice and experience in similar defense related communities.

The strategic implementation actions recommended presented in this report are designed to enhance the capacity and alignment of organizations currently engaged in the region, and fill some identified gaps. The recommendations are not intended to duplicate or replace any existing activities, but aim to enhance the capacity of the region's community, economic, and workforce development infrastructure.

4.1 Moving from Strategy to Action

At the Stakeholder workshop held on 11 June 2015, approximately 20 key stakeholders from across the region attended the workshop, and undertook planning discussions based on implementation needs. As well as defining priority steps, the workshop participants were asked to specifically consider:

- Does the region have the assets that it needs to execute on identified priority actions?
- What specific actions do the organizations in the region need take to better capitalize on these opportunities?

The outcomes of this workshop, and the associated preceding surveys, informs the core of the following implementation recommendations and plan. The work covered in this planning document lays the foundation to develop a regional implementation plan.



4.2 Key Emergent themes from Prioritization

The preceding study '*Regional Talent Retention and Economic Growth Strategy (2014)*' document highlighted four main strategic actions areas, as follows:

- **Goal 1:** To Enhance the regional talent management system
- **Goal 2:** Strengthen the region's business development capacity
- **Goal 3:** Expand critical infrastructure to support new investment and developments
- **Goal 4:** Enhance "quality of place" throughout the region

During the preceding surveys, stakeholders identified priority actions in each of these four core areas. As previously mentioned, during the workshop discussions the stakeholders unanimously agreed that significant and effective work was currently being carried out on the Infrastructure Goal, and this did not need additional implementation planning at this time. As a result, the workshop participants self-selected into three breakout groups to work on implementation plans for Goal 1, 2, and 4. Goal 2: 'Strengthen the region's business development capacity' attracted the most interest in these breakout sessions. The breakout groups used the survey results (presented in previous section) to develop and target the higher priority specific implementation steps. They were given time to build an implementation framework, taking into account the following aspects:

- **Action** - describe the specific action(s)
- **Key Partners** - who needs to included
- **Resources needed** - \$ and other
- **Timeline** - next 12-18 months
- **Bright ideas** - include brain-wave ideas



In addition, the workshop participants highlighted the need to further develop a 'systems thinking' approach across the region. It was recognized that many organizations do effective work within their 'silos', but there may be considerable opportunity in more collaborative and coordinated approaches to core issues. To reflect this, an implementation area based on regional collaboration and communication has been included in this final report. Therefore the four key emergent implementation themes are:

- **Regional Collaboration and Network Building**
- **Business and Economic Development**
- **Workforce Development**
- **Regional Promotion**

The results from the workshop discussions are included in the following specific implementation plan sections. Anticipated funding needs have also been allocated where identified by workshop participants or in follow-up research. It is important to remember that the recommendations presented in the following sections are not intended as a comprehensive solution to all of the issues that the region may face in the future. Rather, they have been identified as actions that may play a catalytic role in the transformation of the region's economy and workforce. They are intended to represent a series of medium-term (12 to 24 months) proposals that most effectively leverage existing community assets to capitalize on new potential funding.



4.3 Regional Collaboration and Network Building

Opportunities and Challenges

The Texarkana Region economic and business development ecosystem confronts a unique challenge in that it straddles a State boundary. This creates some divisions in what is essentially a single large regional center and economic region. The previous OEA funded work, and the efforts of local leaders over time, has helped build a more unified multi-county approach to regional economic and workforce development. However, regional stakeholders have highlighted the lack of a cohesive vision and unifying mechanism in relation to economic and workforce development.

Best practice in regional development shows that collaboration as a critical success factor. Expanding the current group of strong community and business leaders could represent a considerable advantage for the region. The region must assume a culture of proactive collaborative leadership where opportunities are both identified and acted upon quickly and efficiently. Many of the implementation recommendations that follow require application of collaborative practices, future thinking and proactive long-term planning.

Implementation Recommendations (next 24 months)

1

1. **Prepare a Phase 2 application to OEA.** The stakeholder workshop unanimously endorsed Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas to continue to act as the key fiscal grant recipient for the region. The organization has the track record and fiscal management capability to act as grant recipient, but may not have existing staff to undertake a large regional project. (Estimated Cost \$0)

2

2. **Appoint a Regional Project Coordinator and Convener.** This following implementation plan will require considerable convening, coalition building, collaboration and management of various studies and research projects. It is recommended that a Project Co-coordinator and Convener be appointed to implement the plan. This person should have technical skills and experience, but also be a 'people person' who can engage and mobilize the organizational and business community. (Estimated Cost \$200,000)

3

3. **Stakeholder Network Mapping.** Internal communication to the broader regional stakeholder group will be critical. Given the unique nature of the region, it is recommended that a detailed information flow network mapping study be undertaken. This will allow an objective view of the networks across the region, which is currently made somewhat opaque by factors such as regional and State boundaries. This will allow a useful tool to help convene the right stakeholders, understand existing collaboration patterns, and define the underlying information flow pathways. (Estimated Cost \$50,000)



4. **Stakeholder Communication Plan.** Building effective communication with the stakeholder network will be critical. The following features must define the engagement and communication plan:

- Should be viewed as impartial, and be relevant across State boundaries.
- Implement coordinated regional communications plan for internal stakeholders. This plan should keep stakeholders informed of progress, key studies underway, success stories and performance measures.
- Aims to help coordination of consistent internal regional data and messaging.

This engagement and communication plan represents a way to keep the key stakeholders on track and supportive of the overall process. It will help build information flows and timely updates. (Estimated Cost \$50,000)



Bright Ideas

- Regional collaborations should look to include strong participation from private sector interests. This includes the development of leadership roles and collaborative funding mechanisms.
- Community leaders in the region should actively engage their counterparts in neighboring counties and nationally to build additional capacity and a strong regional identity.
- The region should also look to examples in other defense community regions, and nationally regarding collaboration and partnership formation.



Resources Needed

The resources need for the first 24 months includes:

- Continued organization support of Workforce Solution Northeast Texas.
- Grant funding for \$300,000 over a two year period.
- Dedicated project coordinator and convener.



4.4 Business and Economic Development

Opportunities and Challenges

The region has a unique opportunity to develop a detailed understanding of its own economic drivers, and position itself on the larger national and international stage as an attractive location for business. Best practice examples show how other successfully growing regions have been able to capitalize on the economies of scale associated with presenting a unified development plan and portfolio of regional assets to prospective investors and companies. There are a number of additional possible benefits to such collaboration in this region, including:

- Identifying common objectives and assets will lead to a more effective distribution of resources and specializing duties among the organizations with the most local knowledge in them.
- A shared regional economic development strategy instills a sense of accountability among organizations, as their participation will be vital to the success of the plan.
- A coordinated economic development strategy can be better communicated to decision makers, funders, and the general public – and can help break down the artificial and real barriers defined by State and other boundaries.

There is already a good foundation on which to build. For example, the TexAmericas Center (TAC) Vision 2025 is a robust effort to define a strategic position, and it has been used to build local understanding within the business and public sectors. There are also a number of other successful team based approaches that have delivered results.

However, it is recognized that the region, while doing many things well, is not yet operating at a 'systems level'. Developing a detailed understanding of what is driving the local economy, and how economic development can be implemented in an integrated manner, was defined as a high priority. The following implementation recommendations attempt to build this systems approach.

Implementation Recommendations (next 24 months)



1. **Undertake a Vertical Market Assessment.** This study should include a detailed Industry Cluster Analysis and associated Product Opportunities and improvement factors. This work will help define the competitive areas of the economy, and areas where natural growth and extension could occur. (Estimated cost \$150,000)



2

2. **Conduct a Regional Supply Chain Analysis.** This analysis should cover the full supply chain, and include a focus on the primary sectors that drive the economy, and including sectors such as Defense, Automotive, Logistics (Intermodal), Forestry/Woods, Metals, Health Care and Food Processing. This study will help understand where opportunities and vulnerabilities may occur. (Estimated cost \$200,000)

3

3. **Develop a Regional Economic Development Plan and Organization.** It has been identified that there could be considerable benefits from developing a regional ED plan and ultimately a unifying organization. Benefits are likely to include:
 - Capacity to conduct more targeted industry studies, considering the whole region, which is defined as a 50-70 miles radius area.
 - Developing greater regional integration will support existing and new business attraction efforts, and reduce internal competitive behavior.
 - Bi-State Coordination could enhance access to essential regional data, stimulate high level prospect coordination, and drive political and policy coordination at Governor Level downwards.
 - Better messaging and intelligence gathering with existing companies and increased ability to target 'Deal Carriers' to attract new investments to the region.

The development of a regional economic plan would take some effort and time, but the process itself could be catalytic in terms of further consolidating a regional approach. The concept of a regional organization, that could link activities has significant merit, and would build future sustainability into such a process. These efforts should be able to be well progressed in a 24 month period, including the necessary coalition building, planning and engagement, research and infrastructure. (Estimated Cost \$500,000)

4

4. **Boost Business Retention and Expansion.** The Texarkana USA Chamber should continue to formalize and lead BR&E activities, and strengthen ties to Workforce Development, Research Implementation, and Second Stage Growth. The studies referenced above should be used as the foundation to expand the BR&E activities. This work has been seen as a high priority, and should be boosted. (Estimated Cost \$150,000)



Bright Ideas

- Leverage Multi Agency funding sources and coordinate through multi-organization process (maybe via meeting regularly).
- Promote Financial Sustainability via utilizing multiple funding sources including public resources and private sector contributions.
- Connect to University driven Entrepreneurship – Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer.



Key Partners

Building a regional plan and coalition will involve the engagement and participation of many organizations and sectors. The following represent key stakeholders identified by the workshop participants:

- University/Colleges
- City and County Governments – Staff and Elected Officials
- Utilities such as American Electric Power (AEP) and Southwestern Electric Power Company
- Existing State Economic Development Organizations
- Ark-Tex Council of Governments
- Chambers of Commerce
- TexAmericas Center (TAC)
- Key Industry representatives



Resources Needed

The broad set of implementation actions outlined represent key steps to build a stronger regional economy and boost the resilience and vitality. Some of the key resources that will be required include:

- Grant funding to support studies, research and plan development. This is estimated to be \$1.0 million over the first two years (combined total).
- Specialized Expertise – that can be sourced from consulting groups, Universities and other expert organizations.
- Commitment from local industry, governments and organizations to support and participate in the studies and engagement.



4.5 Workforce Development

Opportunities and Challenges

The stakeholder survey identified the Strategic Action ‘Align education and training needs with existing and targeted industries’ as the highest rated regional priority. In addition two of the second tier priority actions were ‘Strengthen business and education partnerships’ and ‘Raise awareness and perception of middle-skills career opportunities’. These survey outcomes suggest that workforce development presents a key issue and opportunity for the region.

Many regional manufacturing workforces are confronted with challenges due to retirements, the application of advanced technology, and global competition. These factors are reshaping the manufacturing landscape, and impacting regional economies. This creates a tremendous opportunity to reassess workforce needs and better align the region’s training providers with future workforce needs. In addition, the ability to attract and retain young workers will play a key role in sustaining the regional economy. Addressing this challenge requires taking a regional strategic approach given the nature of the labor markets.

The region currently has a below-average education attainment rate. This has impacts on lifetime trajectories of the young people, but also places a limitation on the future regional workforce capacity. In many regions, support for career exploration and workforce-training activities throughout all aspects of education has grown over the course of the last decade as parents and students consider the return on investment of postsecondary education.

These factors, taken together suggest there is an important opportunity to begin reshaping the regional workforce to anticipate future needs. These efforts take time, and require close alignment of the industry leaders and education and training institutions.

Implementation Recommendations (next 24 months)



1. **Assess future regional workforce needs.** It is proposed to conduct a future workforce needs assessment and gap analysis. This will include gathering information from existing employers about their current and future training and workforce occupation needs. This will help understand the shape of the future workforce 5,10 and 20 years into the future. This should include some research work looking at the future of manufacturing, to help anticipate changes. (Estimated Cost \$100,000)



2. **Align education and training providers.** Based on the above findings, the employers, industry leaders and regional education and workforce training providers should convene to align and develop future training pathways. This should include career pathways, support for ‘maker-culture’ training in schools and institutions, and promoting technical skill development. (Estimated Cost \$150,000)



3. **Promote post-secondary education.** Provide information to the community, primarily parents and students, about the impact of post-secondary education. The educational attainment level needs to be lifted in the region in order to retain workforce competitiveness. This should include best practice examples and connection to career guidance. (Estimated Cost \$200,000)



Bright Ideas

- Examine best practice ideas and case studies of regional communities finding new ways to present manufacturing and technical careers to K-12 students.
- The recently passed federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act may provide opportunities to develop workforce development plans across the State borders, and build a unified and cohesive workforce development plan.



Key Partners

- Local education institutions, including the K-12 system, career centers, and colleges and universities can help develop comprehensive training solutions.
- Industry groups and employers, including the larger manufacturing and technology based employers.
- Labor Unions, such as the United Auto Workers, can help inform current and projected needs and required skillsets.



Resources Needed

- Grant funding of \$450,000



4.6 Regional Promotion

Opportunities and Challenges

The stakeholder surveys and workshop highlight a regional promotion process as a high priority implementation step. The region has suffered from a lack of a coordinated communication plan and message for the community and investors. To some degree, this is likely to be due to the fractured nature of the economic region, split by State boundaries.

Some of the past challenges identified include piecemeal promotion, lack of a unified message, and no single or identified entity with the authority or resources to develop and present a regional promotion. In addition, the region has yet to really define its core vision and desired message. Historically the Chamber of Commerce has led marketing initiatives, however, what is being proposed may exceed their existing capacity. There is a concern that the promotion message must have authenticity, and present the region on its economic and investment strengths.

Implementation Recommendations (next 24 months)



1. **Define unique regional proposition.** It is recommended that the region engage a specialized marketing consultant to explore the most advantageous and authentic promotion message (Statement of Purpose / Unique Proposition). This work should include:
 - Engaging local stakeholders to identify the unified and agreed message.
 - Identify the target market segments and the most appropriate communication and promotion channels.
 - Develop promotional products and materials.

(Estimated Cost \$150,000)



2. **Implement targeted promotional campaign.** This will require identifying a key host entity, which has not yet been done. The Chamber of Commerce could undertake this role, but would likely need additional expertise and staff resources. (Estimated Cost \$200,000)



Bright Ideas

- Include and appeal to youthful perspectives – that may attract young professionals, entrepreneurs and workers.
- Ensure authenticity of message and make it real. Connect the regional strengths to the message.



Key Partners

Key partners are seen as those who can attract businesses, jobs and a workforce to the region, including:

- Industry and business representative and companies; such as RRAD, Domtar, Cooper, IP, Swepeco
- Hospitals and Healthcare entities, Educational Institutes and Public Schools
- Professionals, Retail, Non-Profits
- Texarkana Workforce Representatives and economic development professionals



Resources Needed

- Estimated budget is \$350,000 to hire professional marketing support and implement promotional work.
- A host entity to implement a unified regional promotional campaign has yet to be identified.



4.7 Summary of Recommended Actions and Cost

The table below summarizes all of the recommended implementation actions presented in the preceding sections. It also tabulates the estimated costs associated with each action. These actions are to be implemented in a 24-month period.

Recommended Action	Estimated Cost
Regional Collaboration and Network Building	
Prepare a Phase 2 application to OEA.	\$0
Appoint a Regional Project Coordinator and Convener	\$200,000
Stakeholder Network Mapping	\$50,000
Stakeholder Communication Plan Implementation	\$50,000
Total	\$300,000
Economic and Business Development	
Undertake a Vertical Market Assessment	\$150,000
Conduct a Regional Supply Chain Analysis	\$200,000
Develop Regional Economic Development Plan and Organization	\$500,000
Boost Business Retention and Expansion	\$150,000
Total	\$1,000,000
Workforce Development	
Assess future regional workforce needs	\$100,000
Align education and training providers	\$150,000
Promote post-secondary education	\$200,000
Total	\$450,000
Regional Promotion	
Define unique regional proposition	\$150,000
Implement targeted promotional campaign	\$200,000
Total	\$350,000
TOTAL OF ALL RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS	\$2,100,000

The Implementation Plan recommendations represent a total funding requirement of \$2.1 million, depending on actual costs.



4.8 Recommended Implementation sequence

The table below summarizes all of the recommended short and medium term implementation actions presented in the preceding sections. This table presents a recommended implementation sequence spread over 24 months.

Major Implementation Area	Implementation Action	Step 1 0-6 months	Step 2 6-12 months	Step 3 12-24 months
Regional Collaboration and Network Building	Prepare a Phase 2 application to OEA.	■		
	Appoint a Regional Project Coordinator and Convener	■		
	Stakeholder Network Mapping		■	
	Stakeholder Communication Plan Implementation		■	■
Economic and Business Development	Undertake a Vertical Market Assessment	■		
	Conduct a Regional Supply Chain Analysis	■		
	Develop Regional Economic Development Plan and Organization		■	■
	Boost Business Retention and Expansion			■
Workforce Development	Assess future regional workforce needs	■		
	Align education and training providers		■	■
	Promote post-secondary education			■
Regional Promotion	Define unique regional proposition		■	
	Implement targeted promotional campaign			■

This implementation plan represents a compressed timeline. This has been proposed in order to build sufficient momentum for required systemic change. It is recommended that the implementation plan be reviewed at the end of 12 months, and a longer 5-10 year timeframe is then assessed. This will allow for incorporation of new data collected during this phase, and to better understand the impacts of existing activities.



5.0 Conclusion and Next Steps

The recommendations presented in this Strategic Implementation Plan were developed through an exploration process that highlights the regional strengths and the assets, and focuses on priority action areas. It has refined on the strategic actions laid out in the precursor study *'Regional Talent Retention and Economic Growth Strategy'* (2014), and has moved the focus from 'strategy to action'.

The community and regional stakeholders who have been engaged in developing this implementation plan recognize the potential and challenges that exists within the region. Many of them have participated through the course of the OEA funded work, and their efforts have provided an important continuity.

The challenges faced by the Texarkana Region and the Red River Army Depot are common to a number of manufacturing and defense industry based regions throughout the United States. This region has some unique challenges, including being split by a State boundary line. To build a more competitive and resilient regional economy, will require finding innovative ways to overcome regional challenges. The recommendations presented in this report lay out a two-year program of work that aims to build knowledge, capacity and collaboration.

This Strategic Implementation Plan marks the end of the initial phase of work funded by U.S. Department of Defense Office of Economic Adjustment. In total, this work has explored strategic options, developed priorities and lays out a pathway for implementation. In order to realize the potential of the regional economy, and of the content of these reports, it will require additional funding and sustained effort over time from many key stakeholders.

Numerous local people have contributed to this Strategic Implementation Plan formulation, and their time and effort is acknowledged and appreciated.



6.0 About Future iQ Partners

Future iQ Partners is a market leader in the development and application of scenario planning; network analysis; industry and regional analysis; and, community engagement and capacity building. The company specializes in applying innovative tools and approaches to assist organizations, regions and industries shape their economic and community futures. Future iQ Partners takes a practical, hands-on approach to working with groups and communities. With over a decade of business experience, the company has grown to have a global clientele spanning three continents.

To learn more about Future iQ Partners, and our recent projects visit www.future-iq.com or by email at info@future-iq.com.

Report And Action Planning Workshop Prepared By:

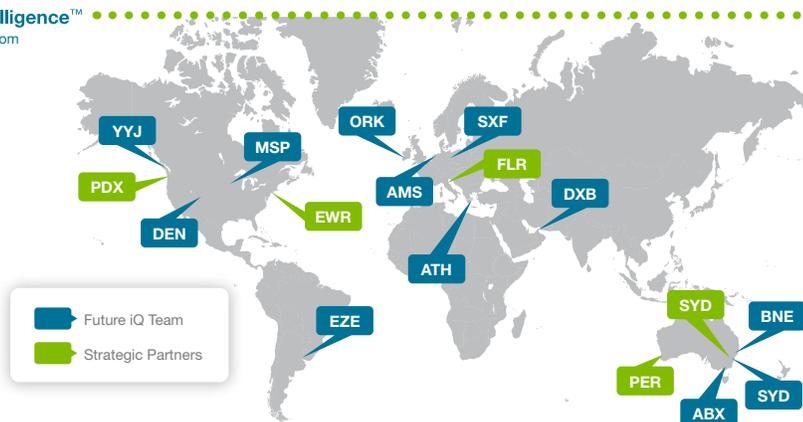


David Beurle, CEO, Future iQ Partners

As CEO of Future iQ Partners, David specializes in creating future planning approaches for the use in regional, community and organizational settings. David has worked in the field of organizational and regional economic and community planning for over 20 years. His work in community and economic development has earned his work international, national and state awards.



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7.0 About Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas

This study is one of several to be produced under an award issued by the U.S. Department of Defense Office of Economic Adjustment to Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas. This award aims to assist the region's related economy adjust and develop strategies to ensure the future economic health and vitality of the broader region.

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