

# Mid Iowa Growth Partnership

## Regional Innovation Grant Implementation Plan

*January, 2011*

*Submitted to:*



*Submitted by:*

**Maher & Maher**  
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## Shared Vision

The “Future Fortunes” vision sees the MIGP region as a cutting-edge and vibrant region that has mastered the art of creating its own future. It has the ability to leverage its own local assets and has created a local workforce that drives innovation. The region is renowned in its ability to be first to market with high value food and bio-products that are at the cutting edge of design and technology. The region is at the forefront of the rural renaissance as the creative manufacturing sector creates high value jobs and career paths in leading global industries.

The MIGP region is reaping the benefits of decades of investment in a sophisticated and specialized education and workforce development system. It is globally connected and draws educational expertise from around the world to its centers of excellence, which in turn drive the talent development in the region. There is a strong regional community, with a focus on community engagement and youth participation. The environment is regarded as a precious resource; both for its recreation and aesthetic values, as well as its important productive potential.



# Contents

<b>Part I: Executive Summary and Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
A. Project Evolution.....	1
1. Background .....	1
2. Timeline.....	2
B. Themes and Goals .....	4
C. Strengths and Opportunities.....	5
D. Sustainability .....	6
E. Plan Organization .....	7
<b>Part II: Six-Step Regional Planning Process.....</b>	<b>8</b>
A. The Six-Step Regional Planning Process .....	8
B. Themes Arising From the Core Team Planning Process.....	19
<b>Part III: Core Team Plans.....</b>	<b>21</b>
A. Core Team Goal and Strategy Development .....	21
B. Technology & Infrastructure Team Plan.....	22
1. Discussion .....	22
2. Technology & Infrastructure Team Matrix.....	28
C. Talent Development Team Plan.....	32
1. Discussion .....	32
2. Talent Development Team Matrix.....	35
D. Entrepreneurism, Innovation and Commercialization Team Plan.....	43
1. Discussion .....	43
2. Entrepreneurism, Innovation and Commercialization Team Matrix.....	45
<b>Part IV: Sustainability and Transition from Planning to Implementation .....</b>	<b>50</b>
A. Engagement, Collaboration, and Coordination .....	52
B. Financing.....	54
C. Communications .....	54
<b>Appendices - (please refer to separate file for Appendices).....</b>	<b>59</b>

## Part I: Executive Summary and Introduction

### A. Project Evolution

#### 1. Background

In 2005, representatives of nine contiguous counties in north-central Iowa recognized their economic interdependence and formed the Mid Iowa Growth Partnership (MIGP) for the purpose of promoting, expanding and sustaining the shared regional economy. The Board includes representatives from the economic development community in each of the nine counties, the three community colleges in the region, and utility providers that serve the region.

Due to a stagnant economy, loss of population and diminishing employment opportunities, MIGP began exploring the possibility of applying for a Regional Innovation Grant (RIG) in January of 2008. However, it was not until severe flooding in May of 2008 caused widespread business and agricultural disruption, that it became evident that the region would be RIG-eligible and a RIG Task Force was established that added new partners to the MIGP core group. In the application submitted to the US Department of Labor/Employment and Training Administration by Iowa Workforce Development on behalf of MIGP, the RIG Task Force recognized a disconnect between the regional economic development plan established by MIGP and the workforce recruitment, employment and training initiatives developed by Iowa Workforce Development, the region's WIA service provider and its three community colleges. The RIG Partnership sought to support MIGP's mission – to consolidate assets and facilitate a collaborative effort for economic growth and vitality in the region. The RIG Implementation Plan would seek to remedy that disconnect.

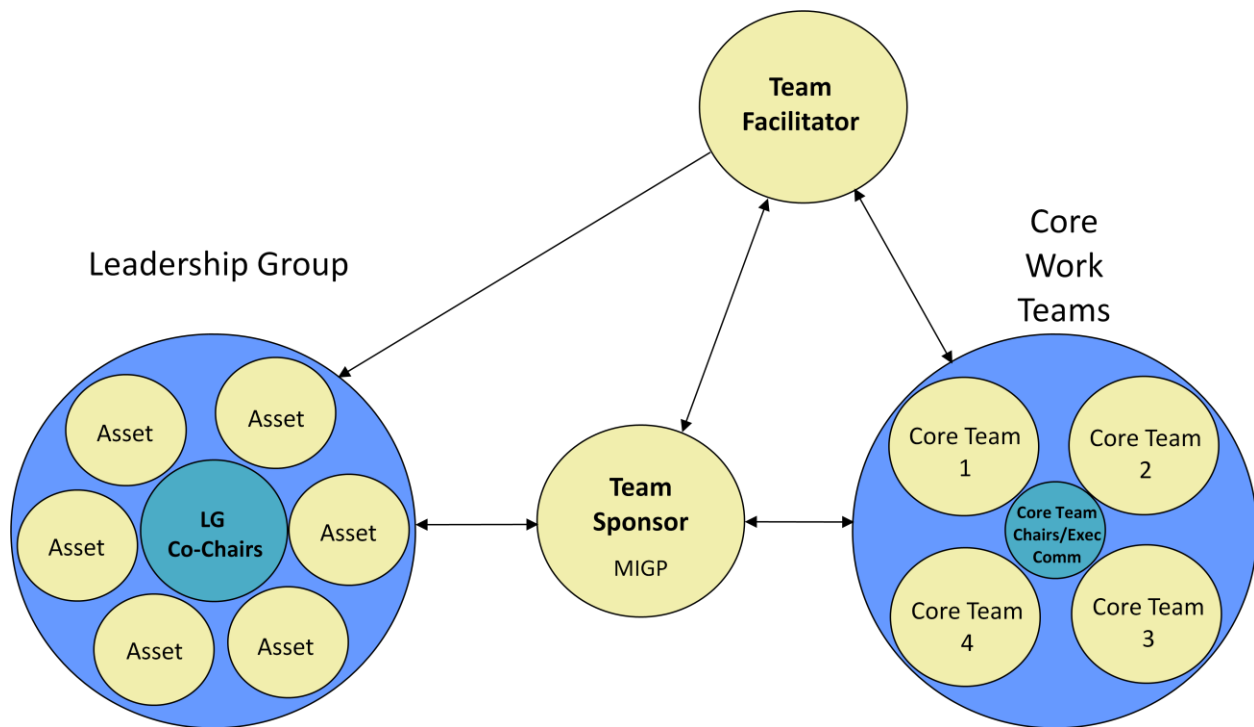
The Task Force, which became the RIG Partnership when the grant was awarded for an 18-month period beginning January 1, 2010, through June 30, 2011, recognized that geopolitical borders are virtually irrelevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century global economy. No longer can individual towns, cities, or counties compete successfully in attracting investment and talent, qualifying for and winning grants and other funding opportunities, and growing diverse economic bases. In the current economic context, a deeper and more diverse array of assets must be harnessed to create economic competitiveness and prosperity. Competitive leaders in regional economic areas come together to craft a shared vision for their future, and to align their assets and resources in support of strategies that will attain that vision.

While there certainly was a sample of multi-county and cross-jurisdictional activities already underway in the 9-county Mid Iowa region, the RIG represented an unprecedented effort to engage regional leaders across a wide spectrum of disciplines – from the economic development, education, workforce development, employer, elected leadership, non-profit, and philanthropic sectors – to chart a new course for this region of Iowa. Through its

efforts, the RIG planning process seeks to leverage and reinforce – not usurp – initiatives already underway throughout the region. In return, the RIG planning process extends the reach of current efforts by lending them additional connectivity, support, access, and leverage.

## 2. Timeline

Following award of the RIG grant and establishment of the MIGP Board as the entity to manage the planning project, an RFP was issued and the project subsequently awarded to the consulting team organized by the Iowa Innovation Gateway (IIG) in its partnership with the Iowa Association of Business and Industry (ABI). Consulting partners joining with IIG/ABI included the consulting firm of Maher and Maher, Economic Modeling Specialists (EMSI), and Innovative Leadership Australia/USA. Organization of the project was established as shown below, with the consulting team acting as guide and facilitator of the collaborative regional planning process.



Immediately upon project commencement, EMSI began to develop an Asset Map for the region. Development of the Asset Map was a necessary step in providing a starting point for discussion of what defines and connects the region in terms of data, and to present a framework within which technical and actual economic conditions can be discussed dispassionately and objectively. The Asset Map was designed to identify the areas that constitute the functional regional economy; explore critical regional workforce, education, economic, and population trends; and offer an analysis of the region’s key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (please see Appendix C for the full Asset Map).

Throughout the spring of 2010, MIGP Board members and other partners actively recruited regional leaders and stakeholders to serve as part of the RIG Leadership Group (LG). MIGP members and the consulting team worked in partnership to design the first meeting of the LG, which convened for a full day on July 8, followed by subsequent day-long meetings in September and November 2010 (the Leadership Group roster is included as Appendix A). Attendance at each Leadership Group meeting varied, but a core group of approximately 60 regional stakeholders remained engaged throughout the entire process. Three Regional Engagement sessions were also held between the first and second RIG Leadership Group meetings. The three sessions took place in Humboldt, Palo Alto, and Hardin Counties in August 2010 in order to engage additional stakeholders from the entire MIGP region.

During the first LG meeting, attendees participated in a Regional Scenario Planning exercise, facilitated by consulting partner Innovative Leadership Australia/U.S.A., and designed to

- Explore the process and impacts of regional decision-making for long-term economic, environmental, and community well-being; and
- Formulate four plausible “future scenarios” for the region in order to identify a preferred future scenario and develop a shared regional vision based upon that scenario (the full Scenario Planning report is included as Appendix B).

The result of those exercises was promulgation of the overall shared vision for the future economic well-being of the region, as displayed in the beginning of this plan document.

The majority of the September and November meetings were devoted to the actual development of the Regional Implementation Plan, which was largely accomplished by four content-based Core Teams through a Core Team process. Core Teams’ areas of focus were determined based upon regional Asset Map and Scenario Planning output.

In addition to working at the Leadership Group meetings, the Core Teams came together through numerous webinars to complete their analysis and work, which is discussed in Part III, “Core Team Plans.”

### Mid Iowa Core Teams

- ⌘ Talent Development;
- ⌘ Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Commercialization;
- ⌘ Technology & Infrastructure; and
- ⌘ Sustainability.

## B. Themes and Goals

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Various overarching themes developed throughout the Core Team process. These were important in the planning process, but they become essential in the implementation of the RIG plan.

- **Connecting** – Especially within the Talent Development and Entrepreneurism core teams, there was a distinct recognition of the value of various programs and initiatives, but also a realization that those activities did not operate systematically to support economic growth in the region’s key industries. Teams therefore worked collaboratively to forge connections in the following areas:
  - People and institutions;
  - State and Federal programs and funding sources;
  - Connecting the dots in the Plan; and
  - Physical connections.
- **Aligning** – The Leadership Group and its constituent Core Teams have been populated by private sector and various agency and institution representatives who have budgets to be applied in certain areas. In order to operate regionally, those representatives must be willing, to the maximum extent feasible, to align those budgets to help develop regionally-identified target industries, around infrastructure and entrepreneurial activities, and around the need to create a pipeline of skilled workers for those industries.
- **Innovating** – This includes supporting regional business growth and employment opportunities through a focus on new research and development and entrepreneurial investment and related supports.
- **Sustaining** – Going forward, the key challenge is sustainability – the process of implementing the Plan and regularly revisiting it in light of changing conditions and the success or failure of planned initiatives. The future depends largely upon two elements:
  - Expanding and enhancing the social network embodied in the Leadership Group so that existing institutions, programs, initiatives, and funding sources can be fully and mutually leveraged; and,
  - Establishing an appropriate structure to create a central coordination point for implementation efforts, and to organize the ongoing effort to obtain funding and additional resource support for management and implementation of the plan’s strategic initiatives.

Each of the core teams developed a series of goals designed to enhance achievement of the regional vision. Each of those teams’ multiple goals can be synthesized into the following statements:

- **Talent Development** – Create a flexible, fully-accessible, region-wide Talent Development system that is totally driven to meet the complementary needs of the system’s dual customer – individuals and employers – by employing a sector strategy approach developed by, and aligned with, the needs of all public and business partners.
- **Entrepreneurism, Innovation and Commercialization** – Through education, leadership development and business support, work collaboratively and strategically to bring existing, successful EI&C programs within the region to a region-wide scale.
- **Technology & Infrastructure** – Fully document current infrastructure assets, and develop a clear, comprehensive understanding of business’ needs related to utilities, telecom, and transportation, now and for the future.
- **Sustainability** – Create structures and processes for coordination, communication and financing to ensure optimum implementation of the Leadership Group’s current goals, and broaden and deepen the regional leadership network over time to ensure long-term sustainability of the regional effort.

### C. Strengths and Opportunities

The regional Asset Map identified a number of regional strengths as well as challenges facing the region. It is clear from the SWOT analysis included in the Asset Map that, while Mid Iowa faces critical challenges, such as population out-migration and a stagnant job market, the region also has significant strengths that can support new opportunities, including a diverse array of postsecondary institutions and many of the right conditions for fostering cluster growth in key industry sectors. For a more extensive discussion of the strengths and challenges identified in the Asset Map SWOT analysis, please see Part II, Step 3.

Likewise, the regional planning process itself revealed important strengths and opportunities that will be essential considerations in the RIG Plan implementation process. As Mid Iowa begins the implementation phase, it will be important for regional leaders to harness and capitalize on regional strengths, and to leverage regional strengths to mitigate identified challenges and take advantage of key opportunities. A sampling of those follows:

MID IOWA STRENGTHS	MID IOWA OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The region has a diverse set of manufacturing industries, including food, ethanol, farm machinery, household appliances, engine parts, and other miscellaneous products.</li> <li>➤ Residents of the region are within driving distance of a multitude of high quality educational institutions that offer degrees at all educational levels.</li> <li>➤ Considering multiple statistics, the Mid Iowa region is generally a desirable place to live.</li> <li>➤ It is clear from the number of small businesses in the region that the region highly values entrepreneurship.</li> <li>➤ The MIGP region is well positioned as a transportation and distribution hub.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Iowa is among the worldwide leaders in production of renewable energies such as ethanol and wind-energy, with much of the production occurring within the MIGP region. As the federal government has shown intense interest in investing in renewable energy development, Iowa businesses involved in green industries could see rapid and sustained growth in coming years.</li> <li>➤ Exceptionally strong high school graduation rates and the availability of numerous colleges and universities mean that there are a high number of intelligent and capable young people in the area.</li> <li>➤ A low cost of living, an adequately high average education level, and relatively high wages for a rural region make the Mid Iowa region attractive for businesses.</li> <li>➤ The availability of experienced production workers could be a valuable asset in inviting new businesses to the area.</li> </ul>

## D. Sustainability

The success of any regional economic and workforce development initiative fully depends upon ensuring that efforts and activities are supported and sustainable over the long-term. Sustainability encompasses a wide array of interconnected elements, including the following:

- Ongoing diversification and expansion of the social network leading and championing the initiative;
- A coordinating structure that ensures continued collaboration and alignment of plan activities and progress;
- Implementation of communications efforts designed to build stakeholders' knowledge of and engagement with the initiative; and
- Identification and leveraging of various resources, financial and otherwise, to support both operational and strategic activities.

Absent these and other critical components of sustainability, regional development initiatives run the very real and far too common risk of being short-lived ventures that make little or no meaningful long-term impact.

In effective regional economic and workforce development initiatives, sustainability planning begins at the outset and is given consistent and serious attention over time. Recognizing this, a Social Network Mapping Report was developed (see Appendix F), and one of the Core Teams focused exclusively on developing goals and strategies to ensure the sustainability of the initiative itself, and, by extension, the growth and sustainability of the Mid Iowa region. These goals and strategies are discussed extensively in Part IV: Sustainability and the Transition from Planning to Implementation.

## E. Plan Organization

This Plan and Report is organized as follows:

- **Part I** provides an introduction to the regional planning process in Mid Iowa and a summary of the initiative's themes and goals;
- **Part II** describes the process and content of the six-step planning framework.
- **Part III** details the facilitated work and output of the four Core Teams;
- **Part IV** discusses the issue of sustainability in detail, and describes key goals and strategies developed by the MIGP Sustainability Core Team; and
- The **Appendices** present reports, resources, data, and other documents that were developed and used throughout the planning process.

## Part II: Six-Step Regional Planning Process

This Part reviews how the Six-Step Regional Planning Process was carried out in Mid Iowa, and includes a discussion of themes arising from the core team planning process.

### A. The Six-Step Regional Planning Process

Over the course of the last decade, there have been increasing levels of recognition and understanding that economies function on a regional basis, without respect to the geopolitical borders that enclose towns, cities, counties, or even states. Areas that have been successful in positioning themselves to compete effectively in the rapidly-evolving global economic context are those that have come together as functional economic regions and organized their assets and resources accordingly. This is, to be sure, no small task. Assets that need to be brought together on a regional basis typically “reside” in structures and organizations that are decidedly “non-regional” in nature:

- Governance (and related resources) is town-, city-, and county-based;
- Economic development organizations, and Workforce Investment Areas designated under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), often overlap county boundaries, but are not always organized to cover the same shared areas;
- Community colleges have blurry catchment areas, as different colleges offer different specialized programs and cater to different clientele; and
- School districts are inherently local and often strongly politically-influenced.

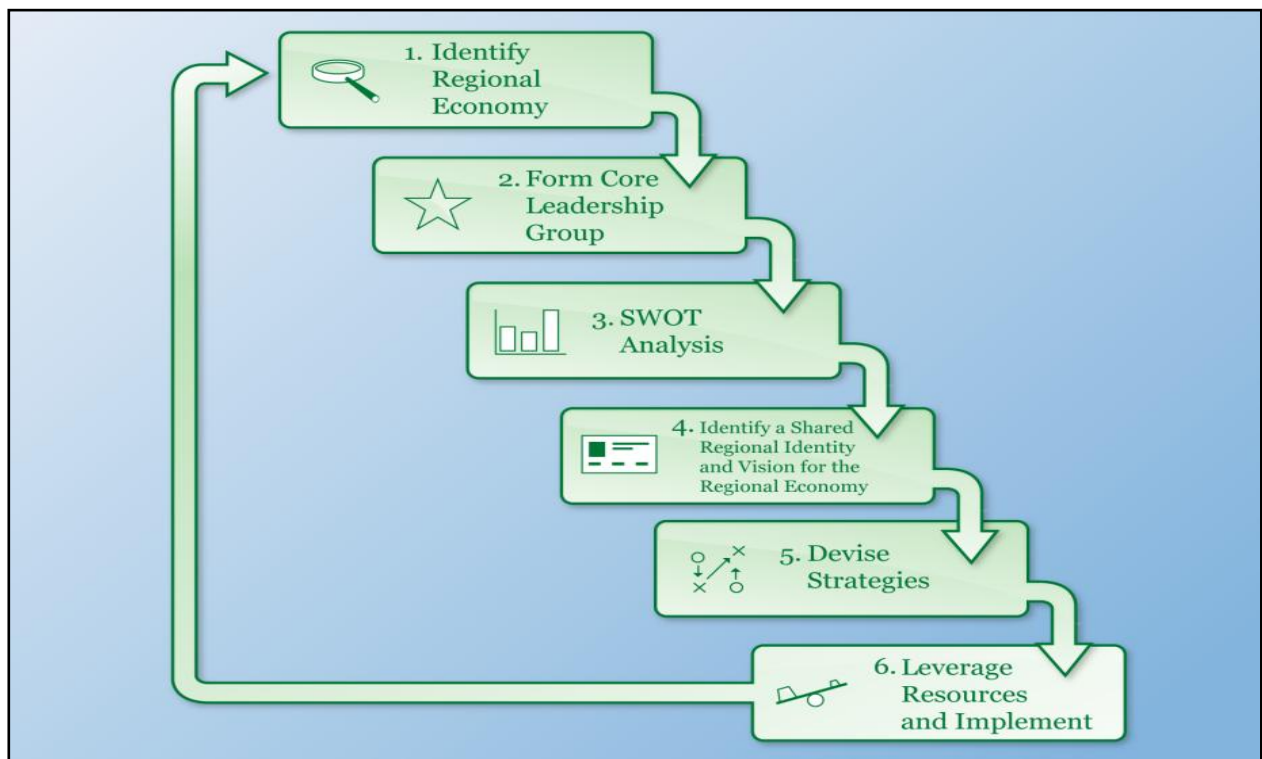
Added to this mix is the reality that stakeholders in a potential regional effort each have their own budgets, strategic and operational plans, and performance targets and metrics. As a result, organizing leaders and entities across these various “silos” in order to operate regionally can be a massive and complex effort.

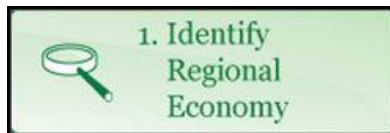
Like other regions in the country, Mid Iowa faced – and will continue to face – these common challenges as it began its regional planning effort. To help address and mitigate these challenges, a six-step regional planning framework was employed to organize RIG Plan development. This process, which begins with data-driven identification of the functional regional economy and leads ultimately to actual Plan implementation, has been used successfully in a number of other regional development initiatives across the U.S. The six-step planning process is premised upon the need for regions to address a number of related conditions and realities:

- A rapidly-changing global economy;
- The need to keep and create new high-quality jobs;
- The reality that economies operate regionally; and

- The need to align education and workforce development to create a pipeline of skilled workers for regionally-targeted industries to support an innovation economy and the general welfare of the population.

The graphic below depicts the key stages in the regional planning process employed in Mid Iowa. It is important to note that the process is not linear in nature, though each step certainly feeds into the next. Throughout the planning process (as well as the implementation process), steps are frequently revisited in light of changing conditions and newly-emerging needs and information.





### **Step 1: Identify the Regional Economy – Asset Map development and identification of focus industries.**

As discussed in the Executive Summary, the MIGP Board had been working together on common economic development issues since 2005 and had collaborated with additional partners on the RIG application. The Board thereby constituted a core group of leaders that allowed the first three steps in the regional planning process to be completed “in the background”, that is, prior to convening the full Leadership Group (LG). The geographic boundaries of the region had been “drawn” by the RIG application; however, fully “Identifying the Regional Economy” means exploring the assets (and deficits) in the region. These tasks fell to the consulting team’s data partner, Economic Modeling Specialists, Inc. (EMSI).

Development of the Asset Map was a necessary step in providing a starting point for discussion of what defines and connects the Mid Iowa region in terms of data, and to present a framework within which technical and actual economic conditions could be discussed dispassionately and objectively. The Asset Map was designed to identify the areas that constitute the functional regional economy; explore critical regional workforce, education, economic, and population trends; and offer an analysis of the region’s key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (please see Appendix D for the full Asset Map report).

The Asset Map is one of the resources that would help the LG better understand the region’s interconnectedness and thereby aid in developing a shared regional vision. It revealed that the region has multiple economic ties – a common labor pool, similar economic drivers, common transportation lines, mutual educational institutions, among others. By so doing, the Asset Map provides the underlying, data-based rationale for adopting a regional approach. Each city and county, working on its own, does not possess sufficient assets to significantly affect broad economic and workforce change, but, by working in tandem with the others in the surrounding area, a stronger economic force can be forged.

Perhaps the most important part of the Map is a summary of the region’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, which provides a data-based SWOT Analysis, and is shown on following page. The SWOT Analysis is shown as step 3 in the planning process because the tacit, on-the-ground knowledge of regional leaders is added to the equation in order to produce a full picture of the region’s SWOTs. In addition, each Core Team completed its own oral SWOT Analysis of the particular content area within its purview. Each Core Team’s SWOT analysis can be found in Appendix E.

## STRENGTHS

- The region has a diverse set of manufacturing industries, including food, ethanol, farm machinery, household appliances, engine parts, and other miscellaneous products. The manufacturing sector is responsible for 19,200 jobs and over \$828 million in earnings (or 22% of the jobs and 26% of the earnings in the region, respectively).
- Residents of the region are within driving distance of a multitude of educational institutions that offer degrees at all educational levels.
- Considering multiple statistics, the Mid Iowa region is generally a desirable place to live. Residents enjoy a shorter-than-average travel-to-work time, superb high school graduation rates, various recreational and entertainment options, affordable housing, and a reasonable cost of living.
- It is clear the number of small businesses in the region that the region highly values entrepreneurship. New business development will be critical in helping workers who have been let go by traditional large employers.
- The MIGP region is well positioned as a transportation and distribution hub, with quick access to the I-35 corridor and multiple east-west highways, and a railway system that runs through the major cities within the region.

## OPPORTUNITIES

- Iowa is among the worldwide leaders in production of renewable energies such as ethanol and wind energy. Much of the production of these resources occurs within the MIGP region. As the federal government has shown intense interest in investing in renewable energy development, Iowa businesses involved in green industries could see rapid and sustained growth in coming years.
- Exceptionally strong high school graduation rates and the availability of numerous colleges and universities mean that there are a high number of intelligent and capable young people in the area. If the jobs that they are interested in exist in the region, then much of this talent could be retained.
- A low cost of living, an adequately high average education level, and relatively high wages for a rural region make the Mid Iowa region attractive for businesses that are looking to expand or relocate.
- The large proportion of individuals above 65 years of age, which will continue to grow in coming years, could be a strong benefit to the health care industry in the region.
- The availability of experienced production workers could be a valuable asset in inviting new businesses to the area. This has already begun to attract new businesses such as the AMS Inc. electric car manufacturing plant, which is set to employ up to 300 workers by mid-2011.<sup>1</sup>

## WEAKNESSES

- Employment in knowledge-based industries such as professional and technical services, information, and finance and insurance is relatively low in the MIGP region. And most of the jobs that do exist in these sectors are not distributed throughout the region but are mostly located in Webster County.
- Every county in the region is experiencing population attrition, both due to out-migration and a lower birth rate than death rate. Between 2004 and 2008, there was a net decrease of 3,459 migrants, which equates to a loss of 0.5% of the region's population each year.
- The region, and the state of Iowa as a whole, struggles to retain individuals in the 15-24 year old age category. This group is projected to decline by over 2,400 or 13% over the next five years. Combined with the high number of workers who will be retiring over this period of time, the region could struggle to replace the workforce requisite for maintaining its economy.
- A high number of the unemployed workers in the region are former manufacturing workers, who earn higher-than-average wages and help drive the economy in sectors such as transportation, retail, and health care.

## THREATS

- Though there is still a strong future for manufacturing in the United States, businesses in high-tech fields such as computers and electronics, nanotechnology, and biotechnology have a more stable future due to the difficulty for overseas firms to replicate the production of these products. Currently, the bulk of manufacturing occurring in the MIGP region is in durable goods that put the businesses at risk of off-shoring or foreign counterfeiting.
- Most of the region is not within commuting distance from any significant metropolitan area. This could result in higher-than-average out-migration during plant layoffs and closures.
- Although employment projections for this region indicate positive growth in the future, due in large part to the recession, the region has seen only 1% net positive job growth over the past four years. In many industries, the effects of the recession are still very strong, and it could yet take a year or more for a full rebound to occur.

<sup>1</sup> Anne Blakenship, "Electric car plant coming to WC," *The Daily Freeman-Journal* July 26, 2010

In further identifying the region, EMSI produced a Focus Industries Report. Similar to the Asset Map, the Industries report is strictly data-based. The industries that regional leaders gave consideration to as possible catalysts for regional growth were identified in this report as well as the Scenario Planning exercises described in step 3. The final determination of the following focus industry groups for the Mid Iowa Growth Partnership Region was based on a combination of factors, including information in the asset map, focused analysis of economic measurements such as job multipliers, overall growth potential and value-adding supply chains<sup>2</sup>, and other qualitative and quantitative information uncovered at the MIGP leadership group meetings:

- Agriculture & Food Processing;
- Transportation, Distribution & Logistics;
- Energy & Natural Resources;
- Business & Professional Services;
- Biotechnology; and
- Metals & Advanced Machinery Manufacturing.



## Step 2: Form the Core Leadership Group – *Social Network Map Report.*

The next step was to form the Leadership Group, a collection of individuals at least theoretically representing all regional assets, to help create a truly regional approach to economic and workforce development through a commitment to the regional planning process. The role of the Leadership Group was to:

- Provide leadership that transcends “turf,” finding a common, unifying theme and focus; and
- Through its constituent core teams, identify innovative solutions that leverage regional strengths, mitigate regional weaknesses/limitations, and provide the foundation for investment in Plan implementation.

<sup>2</sup> The **Overall Growth Potential** category is a consideration of all regional, national, and international economic factors, and other hard-to-quantify effects such as potential changes in federal policies, public support and interest, global economic conditions, and so on.

The **Regional Integration** (or Value-Added Supply Line Integration) figure measures how well integrated or “clustered” that group of industries is within the region.

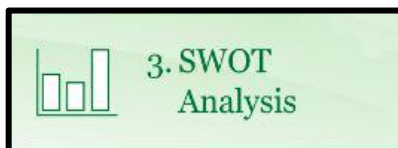
The **Average Job Multiplier** is the number of additional jobs outside of the industry group that would result from an increase of one job in that specific group of industries.

Ideally, regional Leadership Group members include private sector leaders, elected officials, economic and workforce development officials, K-12 and higher education, philanthropy, investors and entrepreneurs, planning entities, and others, from all counties in the region. The consulting team provided a matrix indicating the disciplines and counties that should be represented, and the Board proceeded to populate the matrix with specific names to invite to join the Leadership Group. Mid Iowa was able to engage and retain a good portion, though not all, of these stakeholders throughout the planning process. For a further discussion of Leadership Group composition and gaps, please see Part IV, “Sustainability and the Transition from Planning to Implementation”, as well as the Social Network Map Report in Appendix F. The Social Network Map Report was produced beyond the midway point of the project and will continue to assist the LG in filling its deficits as the group moves from planning to implementation of the plan.

The MIGP Board recruited individuals identified as potential regional leaders, and nearly 100 individuals attended the first Leadership Group meeting. Throughout the planning process, some members left and others were brought in, resulting in a consistent level of about 60 leaders actively engaged in the process.

The Leadership Group was subsequently divided into four content-based Core Teams based primarily on issues identified during the Scenario Planning exercise described in Step 4, below:

- Talent Development;
- Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Commercialization;
- Technology & Infrastructure; and
- Sustainability.

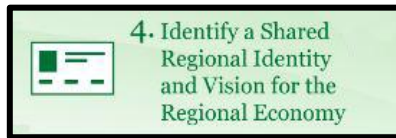


**Step 3: Conduct a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) Analysis –Core Teams’ SWOT Analyses.**

The Mid Iowa Core Teams’ thematic areas of focus were determined by a number of interrelated “inputs,” including Asset Map findings, regional stakeholders’ input and the visioning exercise, among others. Given the region’s assets, as identified by data analysis and input from the Leadership members, the SWOT analyses conducted by the Core Teams identified the chief opportunities for industrial diversification, workforce enhancement, infrastructure improvement, and sustainability planning, aligned with their areas of focus.

The SWOT Analysis occurred in two ways. First, the Asset Map report discussed above pointed out the region’s overall strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (see the Asset Map in Appendix C). Second, each Core Team conducted a SWOT analysis to catalyze discussion in its particular issue area (Core Team’s SWOT Analyses are catalogued in

Appendix E). Core Team’s SWOT analyses served to inform their development of Plan goals, strategies, and activities responsive to the regional vision.



#### **Step 4: Identify a Shared Regional Identity and Vision – Scenario Planning and Regional Vision Development.**

Forming the Leadership Group is a relatively easy endeavor compared to the lengthier and more involved process of creating a shared regional identity (and corresponding regional engagement), which occurs over time and requires ongoing investment. In a true region, partners:

- Identify with the region as a whole;
- Accept their economic interdependence across sectors and jurisdictions within the region;
- Recognize that all workforce and education entities within the region should invest in activities that align to the regional focus industries; and
- Commit to collaborating – and to leveraging their resources – to ensure regional economic competitiveness.

At the first Leadership Group meeting, held on July 8, stakeholders participated in a Regional Scenario Planning exercise, facilitated by consulting partners Innovative Leadership Australia/U.S.A., designed to:

- Deepen an understanding of how global events and conditions shape local decision-making;
- Identify and understand the key influences, trends and dynamics that will shape the MIGP region over the next 20 years;
- Create and describe four plausible long term scenarios for the region; and
- Develop alignment around a shared regional vision.

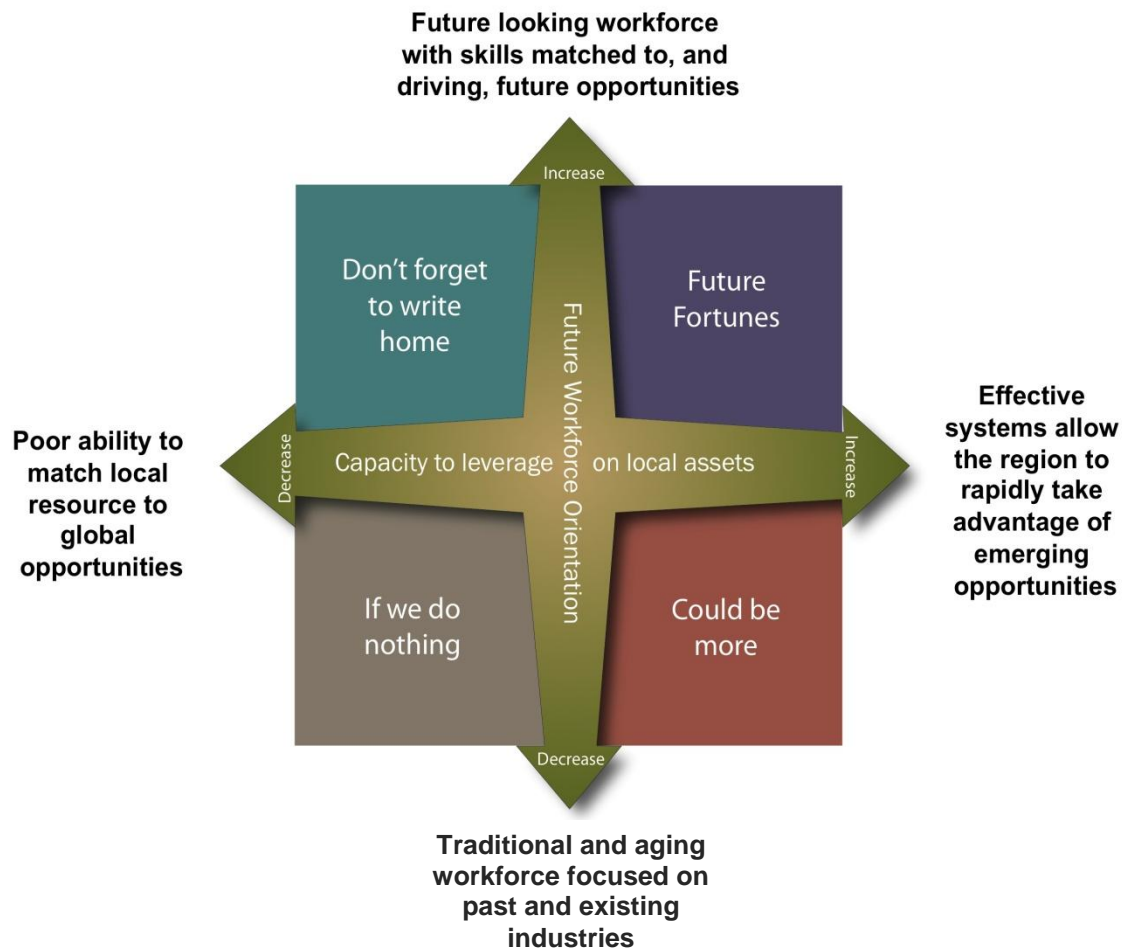
Scenario planning is a method that is used to develop plausible scenarios for the future. Scenarios are not predictions, but are a way of exploring plausible futures and of learning from them. The method allows for the concurrent exploration of many factors, or drivers of the future. It does so by using local knowledge and leaders’ expectations about the drivers to produce a framework that defines and explores a range of plausible futures. In this manner the approach enables people to explore the impacts and consequences of a range of different future pathways. In the end, the scenario most desired by the Leadership Group becomes the basis for developing the region’s future vision statement. (The full Scenario Planning Report may be reviewed in Appendix B.)

The participants examined the current context of the MIGP region utilizing research on the “Ten Attributes of Successful Communities.” Participants considered the attributes in which they thought the MIGP region is currently strong and those in which it is currently weak, and a weighted value survey was conducted to tally the leaders’ perceptions. Some of the observations and implications from this exercise include:

- There was a strong orientation toward traditional values and beliefs – for example “Strong belief in and support for education;” “Strong presence of traditional institutions” and “Communities are self reliant;” were all rated as strong attributes in the region. These could be considered traditional rural community strengths and values.
- There was a noticeable weakness around the attributes that are more oriented toward the future, such as: “Invest in the future;” “Participatory approach to community decision making;” “Creatively building new economic opportunities;” and “Deliberate transition of power to new leaders.” These attributes are more oriented towards building a future.
- There was an assessed weakness in the attribute about “Evidence of a strong inclusive culture.” This is a critical issue for the region given the need for rural communities to adapt to changing demographics and ethnic make-up.
- There was an identified weakness in the two major economic attributes of “Creatively building new economic opportunities” and “Support Local Business.”

Taken together, this exercise indicated that, while it may be a straightforward process to develop a regional vision *statement*, actually gaining buy-in from leaders that the vision is achievable and therefore worth pursuing in a highly strategic manner would be challenging. Fortunately, the Core Team process discussed in Step 5 is designed to accomplish just that.

Regional leaders then identified a set of twenty key drivers shaping the future of the MIGP region, and ranked those drivers in terms of each one’s importance and uncertainty. Innovative Leadership Australia (ILA) then employed specially-designed software to create the following graphic that depicts the four *plausible* scenarios for the region’s future.



Leaders then engaged in four sub-groups to discuss the characteristics of each scenario, and finally decided to pursue the “Future Fortunes” scenario as opposed to one of the other three futures.

The region also hosted three Regional Engagement sessions, in Palo Alto, Humboldt, and Hardin Counties, in August 2010, to facilitate further input to the process of developing the shared regional vision and the understanding of its role in the future success of the region. For a full report of the Regional Engagement sessions see Appendix H.

The result of the scenario planning process and the regional engagement sessions was the promulgation of an overall shared vision for the future economic well-being of the region:

The “Future Fortunes” vision sees the MIGP region as a cutting-edge and vibrant region that has mastered the art of creating its own future. It has the ability to leverage its own local assets and has created a local workforce that drives innovation. The region is renowned in its ability to be first to market with high value food and bio-products that are at the cutting edge of design and technology. The region is at the forefront of the rural renaissance as the creative manufacturing sector creates high value jobs and career paths in leading global industries.

The MIGP region is reaping the benefits of decades of investment in a sophisticated and specialized education and workforce development system. It is globally connected and draws educational expertise from around the world to its centers of excellence, which in turn drive the talent development in the region. There is a strong regional community, with a focus on community engagement and youth participation. The environment is regarded as a precious resource, both for its recreation and aesthetic values, as well as its important productive potential.

It should be noted that scenarios are non-judgmental regarding the appropriateness or validity of decisions and approaches. Just like the scenarios, the actual future will develop from a combination of action and inaction by the players involved as well as external forces and players. There is no attempt to apportion fault or blame in the case of undesirable outcomes, but merely to have some preparedness or contingencies for them.

The Core Team process, data findings and ongoing analysis, and social network mapping, all of which are discussed throughout this Plan, contributed a great deal to establishing the sought-after identity, as will the ongoing emphasis on enhancing and expanding the social network within the region.

For further discussion of the process of developing the regional identity and vision, please see Appendix B.

The lion’s share of the work in defining Plan goals and strategies in support of the regional vision (Step 5 in the regional planning process) fell to the four MIGP Core Teams, and is discussed below.



### Step 5: Devise Strategies – Core Teams’ development of plan matrix and Regional Implementation Plan content.

The shared regional vision discussed above indicated four major issue areas that would require focused planning in order to provide a roadmap to achieve the shared vision. Each Leadership Group member then chose to participate on one of four Core Teams that represent those issues:

- Talent Development;
- Entrepreneurism, Innovation and Commercialization;
- Technology & Infrastructure; and
- Sustainability.

The four Core Teams worked extensively, in-person during Leadership Group meetings on September 9 and November 16, and virtually between meetings, to develop their individual plans, which are discussed in Part III of this report. Each of these plans contains multiple goals, but analyzing those goals revealed that they could be synthesized into four summary goal statements, one for each team, as follows:

- **Talent Development** – Create a flexible, fully-accessible, region-wide Talent Development system that is totally driven to meet the complementary needs of the system’s dual customer – individuals and employers – by employing a sector strategy approach developed by, and aligned with, the needs of all public and business partners.
- **Entrepreneurism, Innovation and Commercialization** – Through education, leadership development and business support, work collaboratively and strategically to bring existing, successful EI&C programs within the region to a region-wide scale.
- **Technology & Infrastructure** – Fully document current infrastructure assets, and develop a clear, comprehensive understanding of business’ needs related to utilities, telecom, and transportation, now and for the future.
- **Sustainability** – Create structures and processes for coordination, communication and financing to ensure optimum implementation of the Leadership Group’s current goals, and broaden and deepen the regional leadership network over time to ensure long-term sustainability of the regional effort.

The Core Team’ development of goals, strategies, activities, and related elements (such as responsible parties, needed resources, and milestones/timelines) serves as the “backbone” of the Plan for the region moving forward to implementation. Proceedings and plans of each of those teams are discussed in Section B, below.



## Step 6: Leverage Resources and Implement.

The Mid Iowa region now has a plan to guide its efforts moving forward and to achieve its vision. Successful implementation of the Plan presented below depends upon the willingness of regional stakeholders to think and act in new ways, and to overcome the challenges of traditional geopolitical boundaries and “silos” to align resources in innovative ways. There is a challenge and some degree of risk in overcoming strictly local interests, and in collaborating across public, non-profit, education, and for-profit sectors. But the potential rewards are great and significant. Engaging in the initiative going forward offers regional leaders an unprecedented opportunity to participate in creating a new economic future for the region for the long term. In the end, plan implementation and vision achievement will depend on resolution of the issues discussed in Part IV, as well as continuous re-visiting and refinement of the plan by regional leaders as conditions both internal and external to the region change.

### B. Themes Arising From the Core Team Planning Process

Throughout the Core Team process, indeed throughout the entire planning process, various overarching themes emerged from many quarters. These were important in the planning process, but they become essential in the implementation phase.

- **Connecting** – Especially within the Talent Development and Entrepreneurism core teams, there was a distinct recognition of the value of various programs and initiatives, but also a realization that those activities did not operate systematically to support economic growth in the region’s key industries. Teams therefore worked collaboratively to forge connections in the following areas:
  - People and institutions, across disciplines/sectors and county lines – This includes overcoming geopolitical, jurisdictional, and demographic boundaries and “silos” to align strategies and investments collaboratively in support of shared targets to enhance regional prosperity and competitiveness. In a word, the group progressed on planning and acting regionally.
  - State and Federal programs and funding sources – In order to fund some the core teams’ strategies and initiatives, funding will have to be solicited from various funding sources, including Federal and state grant programs, foundations and the private sector. As an organized region with a coherent plan, the region should be well-positioned as a recipient of these funds. But it will take dedicated work to do so.
  - Physical connections – This was expressed most clearly in the Infrastructure team’s goal around mapping broadband access, which is especially important in a region that is so large geographically.

- Connecting the dots in the Plan – Moving forward, the implementation activities of each core team will have to be coordinated so that work of one team may be leveraged by others.
- **Aligning** – The Leadership Group and core teams have been populated by private sector and various agency and institution representatives who have budgets to be applied in certain areas. In order to operate regionally, those representatives must be willing, to the maximum extent feasible, to align those budgets to help develop regionally-identified target industries, around infrastructure and entrepreneurial activities, and around the need to create a pipeline of skilled workers for those industries.
- **Innovating** – This includes supporting regional business growth and employment opportunities through a focus on new research and development and entrepreneurial investment and related supports.
- **Sustaining** – Going forward, the key challenge is sustainability – the process of implementing the Plan and regularly revisiting and revising it in light of changing conditions and the success or failure of planned initiatives. Because the grant that funded the regional planning effort does not include funds for implementing identified initiatives or even funds for staff to catalyze and coordinate the implementation effort going forward, the future depends largely upon two elements:
  - Expanding and enhancing the social network embodied in the Leadership Group so that existing institutions, programs, initiatives, and funding sources can be fully and mutually leveraged; and
  - Establishing an appropriate coordinating structure to create a central point for implementation efforts, and to organize the ongoing effort to obtain funding and additional resource support for management and implementation of strategic initiatives.

Success in these areas requires a number of sustained critical commitments and related actions:

### *Critical Success Factors*

*First, the region must commit to continually “building the network” of regional leaders that are substantially involved in and advancing MIGP’s efforts.*

*Second, regional stakeholders must commit to aligning their resources – both financial and otherwise – to support action and innovation around the shared regional vision that has been developed.*

*Third, and perhaps most important, the region as a whole must commit to supporting the sustainability of the goals, strategies, and activities that have been proposed as part of this process.*

## Part III: Core Team Plans

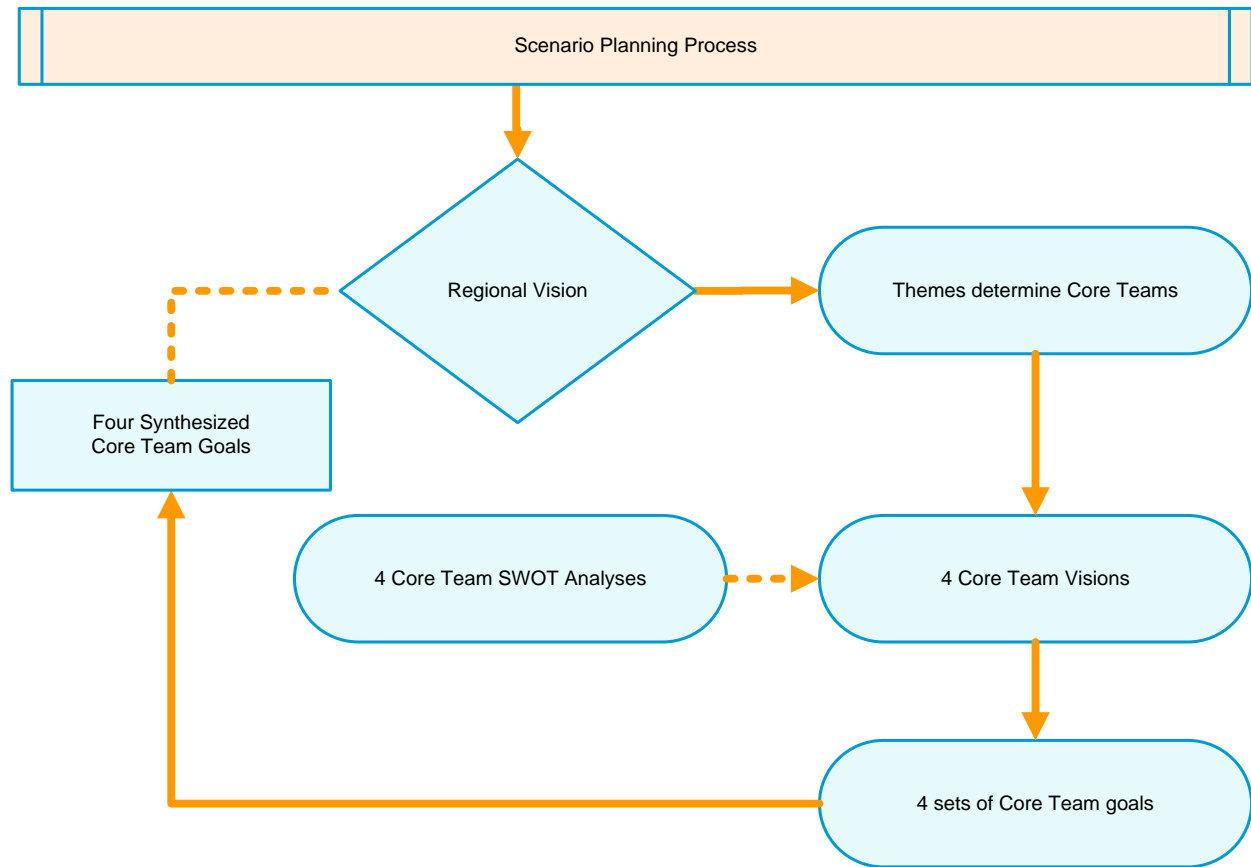
### A. Core Team Goal and Strategy Development

As discussed in Part II, Step 5 of this report, representatives from the Leadership Group assembled in four Core Teams to focus on primary drivers of economic and workforce development for the Mid Iowa region. Their content areas were determined by analyzing the output of the Asset Map and the Scenario Planning exercise, and by validating with the whole Leadership Group the major issue areas that needed to be dealt with in the final RIG Plan.

The task of each Core Team was the development of goals and strategies within its issue area that would support achievement of the shared regional vision and to guide regional collaborative efforts.

Core Teams worked from the Scenario Planning visioning exercise, which provided clarity and purpose for their efforts. Each Team was also tasked with developing an individual Team vision that would guide the creation of strategic goals, strategies, and activities. Teams also worked through a SWOT analysis process to determine the strength of resources available and the barriers that might impact achievement of the overall regional vision. Based on the Team vision and the results of the SWOT analyses, teams were then tasked with developing responsive goals and strategies that would support making the regional vision a reality and comprise the RIG plan.

Teams worked collaboratively, in-person during Leadership Group meetings and virtually between meetings, to develop matrices of goals, strategies, activities, and related elements designed to further progress toward their discrete Team visions and toward the regional vision as a whole. Each team's goals were then synthesized into one broad statement that encompassed the work of the team so that the goals could be validated back relative to the regional vision. This process is presented graphically below.



A discussion of each core team’s proceedings follows; after each team discussion is the plan matrix thereby produced. Only the *content-based teams’* plans are included here. The Sustainability Team’s discussion and Plan is included in Part IV: Sustainability and the Transition from Planning to Implementation.

## B. Technology & Infrastructure Team Plan

### 1. Discussion

The Technology & Infrastructure (TI) Core Team came together at the second Leadership Group (LG) meeting of the Mid Iowa Growth Partnership Regional Innovation Grant on September 9<sup>th</sup>. Eleven people participated in this initial meeting of the Core Team, with one person joining the group later. Participants included representatives from municipalities, counties, the Iowa Department of Education and the United States Department of Agriculture, power cooperatives, a food manufacturer, an economic development cooperative and the telecommunications industry.

Although subsequent meetings of the TI Team were not large (averaging around five participants per session), participants were actively engaged and the meetings were generally lively. The Team came to the conclusion that it may be easier to gain participation and obtain buy-in from stakeholders that have not previously been involved in the RIG process once a completed plan was available to (a) demonstrate the organizational strength of the initiative, and (b) to inform people about the goals the group hopes to accomplish. Cheryl O’Hearn, local manager of Frontier Communications, and Brian Weuve, the City Manager of Iowa Falls, stepped forward to serve as co-chairs of the team.

It was clear from the beginning of the discussions that participants were dedicated to doing their part to create a solid strategic plan for Technology & Infrastructure in the MIGP region. Members of the Team recognized from the outset that working in a regional manner will greatly enhance the region’s ability to retain and attract businesses that would in turn create attractive jobs for the region’s workforce.

During the first face-to-face meeting, the Team started off by brainstorming about what exactly needed to be accomplished for the MIGP region related to Technology & Infrastructure, which fed the creation of a vision statement for the Team as well as a SWOT analysis.

Although the vision statement for the Leadership Group did not specifically reference needs for technology or infrastructure, the TI Core Team was very cognizant of the importance of a strong foundation of Technology & Infrastructure in order to support the “Future Fortunes” of the region, including “the ability to leverage its own assets.” If “The region is [to be]at the forefront of the rural renaissance as the creative manufacturing sector creates high value jobs and career paths in leading global industries,” then it is imperative that the region be positioned to take advantage of new technology as it becomes available and to ensure that infrastructure is up to date and competitive.

Following is the Vision Statement for the TI Team:

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***In the year 2030, the Mid Iowa Growth Partnership (MIGP) Region will be well positioned to meet the needs of current and prospective businesses in the area of Technology & Infrastructure, by working to advance the region in a collaborative manner. The region is well-equipped to take advantage of new technology as it becomes available, ensuring that it is competitive in the retention, expansion, creation and recruitment of businesses. Capital resources are plentiful and diversified. MIGP has achieved a balance by anticipating the infrastructure needs of Business & Industry, but not committing to building capacity that may never be used.***

***MIGP maintains this status by regularly updating documentation of both the Technology & Infrastructure resources currently available to the region, and the areas in need of improvement. Using tools like an enhanced Synchronist Survey, MIGP is able to simultaneously gather information on TI current and future needs and build relationships with Business & Industry. The network of stakeholders that has been established keeps this “understanding” current and allows MIGP to effectively share this information throughout the region, enabling the region to maintain a competitive business climate.***

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As early as the initial brainstorming for the vision statement, the Team noted that in order to achieve this vision, one of the first steps should be to inventory the region’s technology and infrastructure assets so that stakeholders have a comprehensive understanding of the assets that are available and any deficits that need to be addressed.

During that initial brainstorming, the Team also concluded that there seemed to be three basic areas of Technology & Infrastructure that needed to be addressed by the SWOT analysis: utilities, telecom and transportation. The Team examined each of these areas individually. Two major themes emerged from the SWOT Analysis:

- Infrastructure is inconsistent across the region in all three content areas; and
- Additional information about the existing Technology & Infrastructure in the MIGP region is needed in order to make sound decisions.

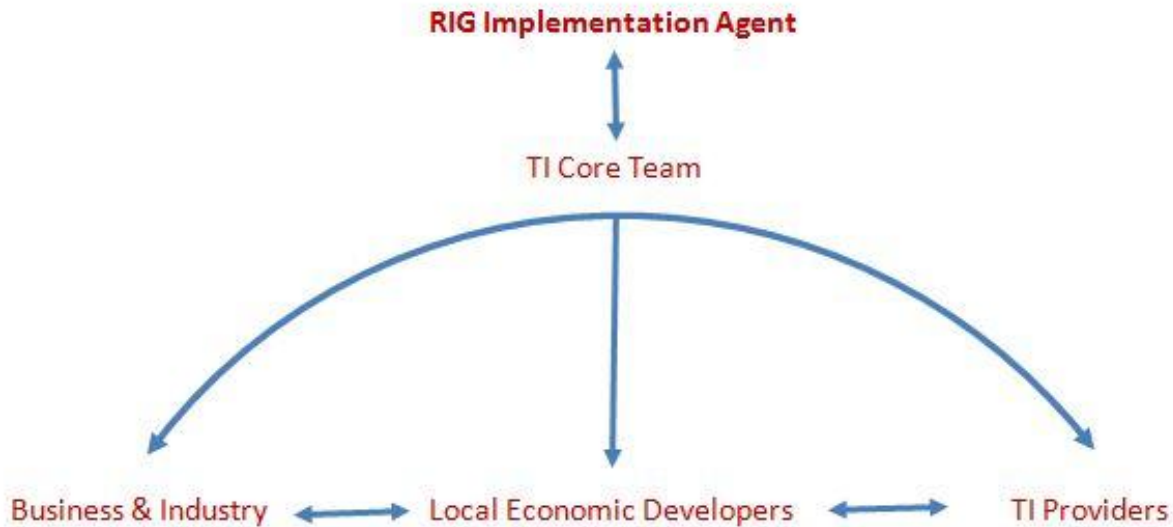
Additionally, during the course of the discussions, the TI Core Team talked about how to turn perceived weaknesses into strengths. For example, server farms find the Midwest attractive because of a lack of seismic activity. Generally in economic development, a lack of access to rail lines or major airports is seen as a negative. However, server farms cannot be located near rail lines or airports, turning what would be considered a deficit by many industries into a strength when recruiting others. “Remoteness” is actually ideal for the data storage industry.

The Core Team determined that in order to sell the region's existing infrastructure as an asset for expanding current businesses and attracting new ones, an asset map of the available technology and infrastructure should be compiled for the entire region. This will provide the starting point for any of the other work that they hope to accomplish. The Team also decided to propose to the State that the Mid Iowa Growth Partnership serve as a pilot project for developing a process to map the technology and infrastructure in the region in a manner that would be useful as companies attempt to make site determinations. Additionally, the group felt it important to document the future needs of current business and industry in the region. Therefore, the overarching goal for the TI Core Team is to have the technology and infrastructure assets of the region converge with the needs of current and future business and industry, ensuring that businesses currently in the region and those being recruited into the region have access to needed services that will allow them to do business in the region, providing the opportunity for job retention and creation.

Hence, the adoption of two goals for the Core Team:

- Goal 1:** Fully document the region's utilities, telecom, and transportation assets, as well as a list of potential weaknesses for the entire region.
- Goal 2:** Develop a clear understanding of both short-term and long-term needs of business and industry in regards to utilities, telecom and transportation.

The Team felt very strongly that compiling and updating this information on both the demand and supply sides will provide the region with the data needed for effective future planning. The TI Core Team envisioned the overall RIG Implementation structure as the overall driver of this process, with the Team responsible for completing many of the tasks outlined in the Goals Matrix. The local economic development professionals will be invited to work closely with the Core Team, as it will be to their benefit to ensure that the areas they serve are well represented in any sort of a database or mapping system that is created by this process. The local economic developers will be asked to serve as the intermediaries between businesses & industry and the technology & infrastructure vendors, to ensure that the lines of communications remain open, enabling the region to strike a balance between demand and supply for technology & infrastructure.



The Core Team developed several key strategies to facilitate achievement of the goals. They include:

- Creating a searchable, region wide database that includes GIS maps that can be layered will give stakeholders a clear picture of what assets are available and where there may be deficits that need to be addressed. Additionally, this database could be used to easily pinpoint the different locations in the region that meet the specs of any given business or industry as they search for places to locate new facilities.
- Recognizing that such a tool is only as valuable as the data that is in it, the Team will ask the local economic development professionals to work to keep the data fresh so that it is actionable.
- On the demand side of the supply and demand equation, the Core Team saw the need to determine a process for collecting data from the industries regarding future needs for Technology & Infrastructure. Documenting these needs will enable the Team to facilitate communication between Business & Industry and Technology & Infrastructure vendors, to ensure that Business & Industry's demand can be met by the Technology & Infrastructure vendors.
- The Team also wanted to formally recognize that sometimes an apparent deficit is actually an asset. Therefore, turning any shortage of infrastructure into entrepreneurial opportunities was listed.

- The Team recognizes that undertaking this project as envisioned will be no small task. Therefore one of the strategies is to work with the Iowa Department of Economic Development and other state agencies, as appropriate, to create a process for an asset mapping technology and infrastructure pilot project that could then be replicated throughout the state. The Team felt that all of Iowa would benefit from a comprehensive TI asset map with GIS capabilities and that obtaining buy-in from the State at the beginning of the project might provide the region with access to resources for a pilot project that could then be replicated in other regions.

Much of this work could be quite expensive and will likely require the help of outside professionals, particularly the development of a region-wide searchable database with GIS maps. However, there are strategies that will require the commitment and time of the stakeholders more than actual funding. For example, many of the activities and steps to achieve Goal 2 can be completed without a substantial monetary investment. Determining how to get information from Business & Industry on their future needs for Technology & Infrastructure is more a matter of deciding how to adapt current surveys to ask the questions appropriately rather than developing a new tool. The Team felt that much of this information could be obtained either during current Synchronist visits with Business & Industry, with separate visits by the local economic development professionals or by an internet survey such as Survey Monkey.

## 2. Technology & Infrastructure Team Matrix

Goal I: Fully document the region’s utilities, telecom, and transportation assets, as well as a list of potential weaknesses for the entire region.					
Key Strategies	Activities/Steps	Responsible Party(ies)	Timeframes/ Milestones	Resources Needed	Desired Outcomes
Develop an in depth understanding of what utility, telecom and transportation assets are available	Develop resource maps for Utilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural gas</li> <li>• Water</li> <li>• Sewer and water treatment</li> <li>• Electricity</li> </ul> Telecom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broadband access</li> <li>• Cell phone towers</li> </ul> Transportation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Airports in and around region</li> <li>• Rail lines</li> </ul> Other information that would be helpful <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zoning</li> <li>• Incentives                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ New Market Tax Credit</li> <li>○ Enterprise Zones</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Capital</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• T&amp;I committee of MIGP</li> <li>• Hired consultants</li> </ul>		<u>Financial</u> Will need money and person power to do this study. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervisors</li> <li>• USDA</li> <li>• EDA</li> <li>• Other federal resources</li> <li>• Municipalities</li> <li>• Grants</li> <li>• IDED</li> <li>• Other state agencies</li> <li>• Community and other foundations</li> </ul>	MIGP will be able to market the utilities, telecom and transportation aspects of the region to companies currently in the region and interested in expanding as well as to prospects that are/should consider locating in the MIGP region
Work with IDED (and other state agencies as appropriate) to create a process for asset mapping of technology and infrastructure pilot project that could then be replicated for the entire state	Garner buy-in from appropriate state agencies/departments  Develop a plan for mapping  Develop a process for mapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MIGP</li> <li>• TI Core Team</li> <li>• IDED</li> <li>• Consultants</li> </ul>		Funding  Mapping Tools	Entire region, and eventually state, will be better positioned to provide information to current and prospective businesses

Goal I: Fully document the region’s utilities, telecom, and transportation assets, as well as a list of potential weaknesses for the entire region.					
Key Strategies	Activities/Steps	Responsible Party(ies)	Timeframes/ Milestones	Resources Needed	Desired Outcomes
Develop an in depth understanding of what is not available (and know when this might be a strength, i.e., population loss, lack of access to rail road.)	Analyze collected data to determine gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TI Core Team</li> <li>Consultants</li> </ul>		Asset Map, including perceived deficits	MIGP will have a better understanding of what needs to be developed to make the region competitive
Create a searchable, region wide database that includes GIS maps that can be layered	Use a data collection system or revamp a current system that can combine all of the region-wide assets in one place <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Synchronist</li> <li>Sharepoint</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MIGP</li> </ul>		Funding to create or purchase an appropriate data collection system	Prospects will be able to seriously consider MIGP for site location
Ensure that vendors are comfortable sharing data	Figure out how to create and hold the maps in such a manner that they are not considered security risks and vendors are comfortable providing the information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MIGP</li> <li>Hired consultants</li> </ul>		Time and access to consult with people who understand Homeland Security needs	Maps or lists of assets are useful, but also secure
Match key industrial prospects with regional assets	Point businesses to communities that, due to population loss, may have excess capacity with their technology & infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Economic Developers</li> <li>Central contact at MIGP</li> </ul>		Appropriate software that is user friendly	More efficient and effective economic development prospecting
Keep data fresh so that it is useful	Create a mechanism/process that allows the asset map to be updated annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Economic Developers</li> <li>TI vendor reps</li> </ul>		Buy in of local economic developers Time to refresh data in appropriate data bases	Data in a searchable, web-based system is current and relevant, and therefore, useful

Goal 2: Develop a clear understanding of both short-term and long-term needs of business and industry in regards to utilities, telecom and transportation.					
Key Strategies	Activities/Steps	Responsible Party(ies)	Timeframes/ Milestones	Resources Needed	Desired Outcomes
Determine the best way to document future demand for infrastructure, so vendors are willing to increase supply	Adapt Synchronist Survey to capture this information And/or Use time of Synchronist interviews to collect supplemental data that is then processed at the local and regional level And/or Set up different appointments to collect this data And/or Do a Survey Monkey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local economic development professionals and others who go on Synchronist visits</li> </ul>	Questions are ready by June 2011	This project is more labor intensive than cost intensive	Utilities, telecom and infrastructure in the region will serve current and future industrial needs
Determine process for collecting data from the industries regarding future needs	Examine current questions on Synchronist survey (or develop another survey) and determine what additional data needs to be asked  Ask questions that are more open ended and ask for more detail  Make questions more forward looking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TI Core Team</li> <li>TI Vendors</li> <li>Economic Development Professionals</li> </ul>	Early 2011	Time for meeting	Questions asked of current businesses and industries collect information needed to determine future TI needs
Determine a process for sharing data on future needs with TI vendors	Share results of surveys with TI vendors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TI Core Team</li> <li>Representatives of B&amp;I</li> <li>TI vendors</li> </ul>		Time for discussion	TI vendors have a better sense of the future regional needs
Forecasting needs of B&I being recruited by using data gathered from current B&I in region	Determine what data is needed for each of the targeted industries and build asset mapping project around collecting that data  If possible, use data gathered from businesses interviewed with Synchronist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TI Core Team</li> <li>Representatives of B&amp;I</li> <li>Local economic developers</li> </ul>		Data  Resources to facilitate discussion	MIGP is in a better position to meet the needs of B&I being recruited because of information gathered from

Goal 2: Develop a clear understanding of both short-term and long-term needs of business and industry in regards to utilities, telecom and transportation.					
Key Strategies	Activities/Steps	Responsible Party(ies)	Timeframes/ Milestones	Resources Needed	Desired Outcomes
	<p>or other means to predict needs of new businesses in targeted industries</p> <p>Compare findings of survey to capture information needed for targeted industries. e.g. server farms, wind farms</p>				current, similar B&I in region
Turn shortage of infrastructure into entrepreneurial opportunities	<p>Encourage and help industries to develop processes that use alternative infrastructure resources</p> <p>Research and recruit businesses that are avoiding the types of infrastructure that MIGP has a shortage of (e.g. server farms)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TI Core Team</li> <li>• TI Vendors</li> <li>• Local economic developers</li> </ul>		<p>Data</p> <p>Searchable database</p> <p>Resources to facilitate discussion</p>	MIGP is able to reframe some of the perceived weaknesses as strengths and markets them appropriately

## C. Talent Development Team Plan

### 1. Discussion

Over the past decade or so, the Mid Iowa region, the State of Iowa and indeed the country has witnessed a transformation in both of its backbone industries – manufacturing and agriculture. By and large, family sustaining jobs are no longer available for factory workers who do not possess state-of-the-art technical, often computer-based skills, as well as the aptitude to work in teams and other soft skills valued in the modern manufacturing organization. Concurrently, agriculture has evolved from the family farms that are so much a part of the area’s history and culture (not to mention its economy) into far less labor intensive mega-operations that employ far fewer workers, and those workers must possess a higher skill set than in earlier days.

As a result, the focus industries selected by the Leadership Group are largely high-tech variations on those backbone industries, such as Agriculture & Food Processing; Energy & Natural Resources; Biotechnology; and Metals & Advanced Machinery Manufacturing. While these potentially high growth industries hold the promise of relatively high wage jobs, unless the necessary connections are made between these industries and the education and workforce systems, the requisite workforce will not be present to staff those kinds of positions and the companies are likely to locate or expand elsewhere.

It is in this context that the Talent Development Team set about exploring the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the region’s workforce, now and in the foreseeable future. A number of themes were revealed by the Team’s SWOT analysis:

- While there are any number of successful education and training programs available in the region, there is no *identifiable system* that (a) connects industry and its core and specific requirements to those programs; or (b) connects agencies, schools and workforce programs well enough that youth or adults can follow a defined path to careers in high growth industries.
- Accessibility of information and services is a challenge, as silos of information reflect silos of educational institutions and workforce programs:
- Individual workforce system customers do not know where to start when looking for general career development services or specific training services.
- Business does not know what is available from the workforce and community college systems, due to a lack of communication and marketing.
- While there exists in general a highly competent K-12 system (with very positive graduation rates) and abundant opportunities for post-secondary education, career pathways are not clear for youth who are not planning to attend a four-year postsecondary institution. The Team felt that the root cause of this is the general feeling among parents that their children should focus on attending four-

year colleges; hence the K-12 system provides more programming for those students. There is therefore a lack of:

- Information about and accessibility to technical careers and educational opportunities, especially throughout the K-12 system;
- Emphasis on job skills in K-12 and two-year colleges;
- Opportunity for students to have skills assessed beyond their ability to go to college; and
- Information available to students and adult jobseekers as to the careers that are available within this 9-county region.

However, the team also recognized an opportunity to capitalize on the workforce system's current initiatives related to integration, and a promising pilot project under development that would utilize a sector strategy approach to Rapid Response, early warning and layoff aversion. This sector strategy approach was ultimately adopted by the team as the best way to remedy the overarching conditions discussed above. The Team established its vision:

*We envision a flexible Talent Development system that is totally driven to meet the complementary needs of the system's dual customer – individuals and employers – in order to fuel the region's competitiveness in the global economy.*

This vision relates to the overall Future Fortunes in that it would create “a local workforce that drives innovation,” and a region that is “reaping the benefits of decades of investment in a sophisticated and specialized education and workforce development system.” The Team's vision was further defined by the following elements:

- **A common language will be created** based on skills, competencies and shared, realistic expectations, thereby **reducing barriers** between business, individuals and the Talent Development system, and reducing silos within the system.
- From early school days through retirement, individuals will be presented with industry certified **career pathways guidance, credentials and opportunities** based on academic achievement, workplace performance and life experience.
- Specific connections will be made between the academic and technical aspects of education so that **preparation to compete in the workforce mimics the workplace.**
- **Business will participate in building the system** by providing accurate and specific job descriptions and skill/competency requirements for each level of each career pathway, and will provide additional supports through internships and other incentive-based opportunities.

- Education and workforce development activities will be aligned to meeting those requirements for basic skills, soft skills, academic skills and technical skills.

In order to achieve the vision, the following goals were established. These may actually be viewed as a progression of strategies, from creating an approach to incorporating the approach throughout the education and workforce systems; to expanding utilization of the opportunities presented by the system; and on to publicizing and marketing the system changes:

As stated above, the core of the envisioned system is a sector-based approach that connects industry with the system in ways that will create knowable, accessible career pathways so

**Goal #1:** Create a collaborative approach and process for developing a sector-based talent development strategy based on a system of career pathways.

**Goal #2:** Incorporate the career pathways system/sector strategy throughout the K-12, two-year college and workforce systems.

**Goal #3:** Expand student/worker utilization of technical education and career opportunities based on this talent development approach.

**Goal #4:** Ensure that information on all services of the Talent Development System is accessible by creating a customer-centered virtual communication pipeline aligning the needs of industry sectors with education and training services and benefits that can be provided through education, government and non-profits.

**Goal #5:** To improve the (short-term) matching of job applicants to openings, identify and utilize the appropriate groups to encourage and train employers to develop clear, concise, skills-based job descriptions (IWD, ABI, industry organizations, Employers Council).

that students and workers will be prepared to take advantage of emerging opportunities, and business and industry will see in the region a workforce that will support innovation. A key strategy is that each of the community colleges would either create or expand its niche in one of the region's focus industries, rather than duplicate efforts in each of the colleges.

From the beginning, the Talent Development Core Team was well-populated with representatives from Iowa Workforce Development and the three community colleges in the region, but operated under the handicap of having only one business and one K-12 representative. While the contributions of Eric Rygaard (co-chair) and Dr. Mike Sherwood, Superintendent of Webster City Schools, were many and had great value for the group, these deficits must be corrected if the Team is to pursue its goals in the most effective manner.



Goal 1: Create a collaborative approach and process for developing a sector-based talent development strategy based on a system of career pathways.					
Key Strategies	Activities/Steps	Responsible Party(ies)	Timeframes/ Milestones	Resources Needed	Desired Outcomes
	sectors between three CCs. Possibility to leverage existing industry sector boards in the region or statewide				disciplines  Three focus industries chosen and each CC commits to concentrating on one – Local workforce areas align with CC
<p>Develop career pathways scheme for three of the region’s designated focus industries, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career assessments to match students to careers</li> <li>• Soft skills</li> </ul>	<p>Determine what competencies have already been developed by Iowa industries/businesses</p> <p>Begin by checking ETA’s Competency Model Clearinghouse, at <a href="http://www.careeronestop.org/CompetencyModel/">http://www.careeronestop.org/CompetencyModel/</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National standards – High level, industry-validated standards are THE standards for Perkins, but only exist in certain industries</li> </ul> <p>Catalog all sector-focused approaches and Career Pathway models throughout the region and State</p> <p>Examine approaches being taken to sector strategies and pathways by DMAAC and Kirkwood Colleges</p> <p>Focus on aggregating demand/supply and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Coalition</b> of all disciplines, including business, coordinated by the three CCs, though workforce and economic development people should have major roles</li> </ul>	3 <sup>rd</sup> qtr. 2011	<p>Leverage CRC process (based on Work Keys) and certifications, as exemplified by Kirkwood</p> <p>Leverage systems in A, above</p>	Industry-validated certification protocols in three industries

Goal 1: Create a collaborative approach and process for developing a sector-based talent development strategy based on a system of career pathways.					
Key Strategies	Activities/Steps	Responsible Party(ies)	Timeframes/ Milestones	Resources Needed	Desired Outcomes
	on linkages and leveraging  Begin exposure at elementary levels  Occupational visit opportunities for student (virtual and real-time)  Employer buy-in may still be problematic after Strategy A – Reassess. Engage employers in pushing cross-training				
Develop current and future workforce needs gap analyses by focus industry	EMSI Career Audit report is the starting point  Access Synchronist data - IDED “owns” it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IWD Labor Market Information shop</li> </ul>	Begin 2012	IWD LMI, but more up-to-date  Synchronist data from IDED or local Eco Dev directors	

Goal 2: Incorporate the career pathways system/sector strategy throughout the K-12, two-year college and workforce systems.					
Key Strategies	Activities/Steps	Responsible Party(ies)	Timeframes/ Milestones	Resources Needed	Desired Outcomes
<p>Host (semi-annual) careers forum at a community or four-year college around focus industries, targeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High school counselors</li> <li>• School to work coordinators</li> <li>• Technical instructors</li> <li>• Industry leaders</li> </ul>	<p>Inventory existing career/industry information sources utilized in K-12 and technical schools</p> <p>Make the business case to educators</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CC, target industry and workforce system representatives; ABI</li> </ul>	4 <sup>th</sup> qtr. 2011	Partner contributions; in-kind venue	All levels of education system begin to understand opportunities for those with less than 4-year degree
<p>Ensure that <b>Education curricula</b> will be aligned to meeting the designated requirements for basic skills, soft skills, academic skills and technical skills in the three targeted industries</p>	<p>Assess whether current K-12 curriculum results in the core competencies sought by focus industry employers</p> <p>Assess whether current K-12/Tech. schools and CC curricula are aligned to achieve designated occupational competencies in the targeted industries</p> <p>Determine what needs to happen at State and local district levels, and within the CC system, to make this happen</p> <p>If necessary, approach the Legislature regarding core curriculum changes needed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• K-12 representatives</li> <li>• K-12/Tech. schools and CC representatives</li> <li>• K-12, CCs, State D/Education</li> <li>• Elected leaders, ABI and others</li> </ul>	Begin 2 <sup>nd</sup> qtr. 2011	EMSI Career audit	Gap analysis required competencies to actual



Goal 2: Incorporate the career pathways system/sector strategy throughout the K-12, two-year college and workforce systems.					
Key Strategies	Activities/Steps	Responsible Party(ies)	Timeframes/ Milestones	Resources Needed	Desired Outcomes
Ensure that <b>workforce development activities</b> will be aligned to meeting the designated requirements for basic skills, soft skills, academic skills and technical skills in the three targeted industries	<p>Assess whether current workforce system activities results in the core competencies sought by focus industry employers.</p> <p>Assess whether current workforce system offerings and curricula are aligned to achieve designated occupational competencies in the targeted industries</p> <p>Work with WIBs to fill gaps in workforce system offerings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 workforce system area representatives</li> </ul>	Begin 2 <sup>nd</sup> qtr. 2011	EMSI Career audit	Gap analysis required competencies to actual

Goal 3: Expand student/worker utilization of technical education and career opportunities based on this talent development approach.					
Key Strategies	Activities/Steps	Responsible Party(ies)	Timeframes/ Milestones	Resources Needed	Desired Outcomes
Ensure that, from early school days through retirement, individuals will be presented with industry certified <b>career pathways guidance, credentials and opportunities</b> based on academic achievement, workplace performance and life experience	<p>System in place for K-12 – Iowa Plan (“I Have a Plan”). Reassess every year. Needs to be more realistic and efficient</p> <p>Roundtable discussion with business and education to develop a methodology to put meat behind the I Have a Plan – Iowa. Common in-service dates for school districts, or using virtual tools</p> <p>Soft skill approach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>K-12, business and industry leaders</li> </ul>		<p>IWD maintains a database of job shadowing and related opportunities – just for college students</p> <p>ABI support through job shadowing, internship, etc.</p>	
Mobilize key industry leaders to educate and engage the broad community about the key industries and opportunities available in Mid-Iowa, especially non-4 year degree occupations					

**Goal #4: Ensure that information on all services of the Talent Development System is accessible by creating a customer-centered virtual communication pipeline aligning the needs of industry sectors with education and training services and benefits that can be provided through education, government and non-profits**

Key Strategies	Activities/Steps	Responsible Party(ies)	Timeframes/ Milestones	Resources Needed	Desired Outcomes
<p>Develop a regional website that illustrates partnership opportunities and services and provides a customer-centered approach to achieving sustainable careers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need to catalog sites that are available that are meant to serve the region, not just those that are regional-could be Federal sites, etc. Determine information gaps.</li> </ul> <p>Review IWD – Job Bank Program</p>	<p>Should be directly responsive to the questions people typically have</p> <p>Should have a section for each targeted industry</p> <p>This site should be linked to every MIGP web-site. Each K-12. Each Business. Each Community College and Private and Public Colleges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regions 3, 4, 5 &amp; 6.</li> <li>MIGP</li> <li>Economic Development</li> <li>K-12 Sups.</li> <li>IVCC, ILCC, ICCC</li> <li>ABI</li> <li>Business in MIGP Region</li> <li>Bowman to contact ABI – Mike Ralston through Kim Didier</li> </ul>	<p>3 month connect links</p> <p>1 year – all links, including to Career Pathways program, made and being used</p>	<p>Link through MIGP website</p> <p>Funding source? Grant Requests, possibly USDA-RD or IDED; MIGP</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Universal contact data source. Link through MIGP website</li> <li>Career awareness in each K-12 school. IWD Staff assist schools</li> <li>Develop Careers Pathway available in this Region</li> </ol> <p>Better match of skills &amp; jobs available</p>
<p>Link <a href="http://www.myskillsmyfuture.org">www.myskillsmyfuture.org</a> to regional website as a tool for businesses to share information about career opportunities and the skills needed for career progression</p>	<p>We feel this link is now available but needs only to be promoted.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do Not Spend Time &amp; Effort To Change, Only Promote</li> </ul>			

Goal #5: To improve the matching of job applicants to openings, identify and utilize the appropriate groups to encourage and train employers to develop clear, concise, skills-based job descriptions (IWD, ABI, industry organizations, Employers Council)					
Key Strategies	Activities/Steps	Responsible Party(ies)	Timeframes/ Milestones	Resources	Desired Outcomes
See what IWD and ABI have and what they are willing to do	Contact IWD and ABI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dennis Bowman to contact Kim Didier to contact ABI for help</li> </ul>	Jan 2011		Knowledge of any course that exists
Develop both in-person and web-based short course for employers on developing job descriptions and listings	<p>Step 1: Webinar for all businesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilize common language based on skills, competencies and shared, realistic expectations (O*NET)</li> <li>IWD can help to build on what they are already doing.</li> </ul> <p>Step 2: Lunch &amp; Learn – 3 sub-regional meetings – NW – Central – East Involve and get support from ABI</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IWD – staff</li> <li>Economic Dev. – set up meetings – staff</li> </ul>	<p>6 months to get webinar set</p> <p>year – IWD to do sub- region training</p>	ABI Membership Community College Locations	<p>Develop better job descriptions and therefore, better employee interest</p> <p>Develop realistic expectations by applicants based on skills &amp; experience</p>
Enlist groups that business trusts to market and host the instructor-led and online service		MIGP, ABI			

## D. Entrepreneurism, Innovation and Commercialization Team Plan

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### 1. Discussion

As each of the core groups were populated at the second Leadership Group meeting in September, the Entrepreneurism, Innovation and Commercialization (EIC) Core Team was quickly established as the largest core team. The EIC Core Team members believed that entrepreneurship and innovation was an important path for the region to create the future that they envisioned in the scenario planning exercise. The EIC Core Team vision was established as:

*Mid Iowa Growth Partnership is a vibrant region focused on the responsibility for promoting and nurturing a successful business culture through education, mentoring, and resources.*

As the dialogue about strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats emerged, it became apparent that the region had already embraced entrepreneurial activities in a robust way in various individual locations, but not consistently across the region. Examples of successful programs were identified in the EIC Core team discussions and included the following:

- Entrepreneur NX courses that help to support budding entrepreneurs;
- E4 program in Belmond that engaged 4<sup>th</sup> grades to think about being entrepreneurs;
- Fort Dodge school to career programs were indicated as exemplary;
- Kossuth County Economic Development internship program was emerging as a model;
- SCORE programs were thought of as having a key role; and
- ABI Leadership Iowa has an exemplary curriculum for developing leaders.

The EIC Core Team contemplated this important question: How would the support systems of the region react when a resident of the region states, “I have a great idea for a new business, what do you think”? The answer led EIC Team members to believe that a culture shift of the region toward entrepreneurship, innovation and commercialization was the key to attaining the reality of the shared regional vision. In other words, to be able to capitalize on the various programs that existed and should become regional, a culture of support for new businesses, ideas and innovation needs to be embraced in the education system and by leadership throughout the region.

With this in mind the EIC Team set out to create a plan that would promote systems within education, leadership, and economic development supporting entities to nurture an entrepreneurial culture. With such a culture in place, innovative programming and support for entrepreneurs will be successful. The EIC Core Team developed the following four goals:

**Goal 1:** Develop a system of support for budding entrepreneurs.

**Goal 2:** Develop integrating programs that support business development and sustainability

**Goal 3:** Create two-way Knowledge Transfer Model to enhance new and existing leaders (Leadership Development)

**Goal 4:** Develop initiatives within the education system to support and develop entrepreneurs

## 2. Entrepreneurism, Innovation and Commercialization Team Matrix

**Vision Statement:** Mid Iowa Growth Partnership is a vibrant region focused on the responsibility for promoting and nurturing a successful business culture through education, mentoring, and resources.

Goal 1: To develop a system of support for budding entrepreneurs					
Key Strategies	Activities/Steps	Responsible Party(ies)	Timeframes/ Milestones	Resources Needed	Desired Outcomes
Create a multi-stakeholder system of influence for local business creation	<p>A collaboration with business/industry/education to create a pilot project that provides focus on building awareness with business/industry to provide career opportunities and competitive wages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career pathways that offer regional opportunities that:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Examines the community model in Laurens, Iowa</li> <li>○ Builds on ideas that create future business ventures</li> <li>○ Creates components of the Kossuth County and other-related regional economic development models</li> <li>○ Builds on business/industry focus that promotes internship opportunities</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business representation</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Economic Development Partners</li> </ul>	Steering Committee formed 2011	State and federal grants, private and public funding	<p>Regional project that represents collaboration with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business</li> <li>• Industry</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Economic development</li> </ul>

Goal 2: To develop integrating programs that support business development and sustainability					
Key Strategies	Activities/Steps	Responsible Party(ies)	Timeframes/ Milestones	Resources Needed	Desired Outcomes
Get data on industries in region to give a base to identify challenges and opportunities: Synchronist (CRTS & Prime)	Prime: Identify all major and minor industries - survey and collect information – into Synchronist  CRTS: Identify all the commercial, retail, tourism and service – interview and collect data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ED groups</li> <li>MIGP – as lead</li> <li>Partners: MidAmerica &amp; Alliant (and other utilities), IDED</li> </ul>	Every two years  Begin - Prime: 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2011 CRTS: 3 <sup>rd</sup> Q 2011	Need Human resources: 2 interns Director/trainer  ED boards	100% of more Prime done & 50% of smaller industries  CRTS 30%
Identify growth opportunities	Identification of buyer supplier list  Educate existing business on export to help identify growth opportunities – Fieldtrips to China and India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MIGP w/input from IDM – University of Northern Iowa</li> <li>Webster City Development and North Iowa Region</li> </ul>	Begin - 2011 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter	Same as above And IDM (need fee charges)  IDED export, SBA, Federal funds, State SBDC office	Connecting existing businesses to growth opportunities
Develop a focus on business succession	Four workshops a year to education on succession planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SBDC</li> </ul>	Begin in 2011	\$35,000/year	Keeping existing businesses here
Ongoing education for business sustainability	Traveling roadshow – around the region on a variety of topical business issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SBDC, SCORE</li> </ul>	2 to 4 topics per year. Begin in 2011	Need human resources – staff for main office, trainers, presenters	Educate business owners to be sustainable
Encourage and develop additional business support	Utilize existing support systems and develop for needs (SCORE, Venture Capitalists, incubator, Renew Rural)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RIG participants/MIGP</li> </ul>		Need a staff of 15 people Centralized Leader	System to support business

Goal 3: Create two-way Knowledge Transfer Model to enhance new and existing leaders (Leadership Development)					
Key Strategies	Activities/Steps	Responsible Party(ies)	Timeframes/ Milestones	Resources Needed	Desired Outcomes
Existing leader training for mentoring (phase1)	1. Create curriculum for web-based training. Research existing resources 2. Provide training on co-operative mentoring (from young (tech savvy) to mature (different skills)) 2-way mentoring process Knowledge/experience (older) Exchange Technology (younger)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City/County</li> <li>• Young Professionals</li> <li>• ED groups</li> <li>• Extension</li> <li>• SBDC</li> <li>• SCORE</li> </ul>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2011 Curriculum selected RIG volunteers test curriculum by 3 <sup>rd</sup> quarter 2011	\$15,000 software and equipment distribution upgrades	Improve leadership abilities of both new and existing leaders
Mentorship for new leaders (phase 2)	Promote increased participation in leadership & community leadership programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ABI</li> <li>• MIGP</li> <li>• Community Colleges</li> </ul>	2011	Funding & partnerships	10% of MIGP board attend ABI program Increase attendance in leadership programs from our programs by 10%

Goal 4: Develop initiatives within the education system to support and develop entrepreneurs					
Key Strategies	Activities/Steps	Responsible Party(ies)	Timeframes/ Milestones	Resources Needed	Desired Outcomes
Regional programs that are focused on building young entrepreneurs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Inventory of existing models and best practices. Develop a form to collect desired information</li> <li>2. Bring together stakeholders to develop program to offer region- wide programs</li> <li>3. Entrepreneur camp</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School superintendents</li> <li>• Curriculum Coordinators</li> <li>• Community Colleges</li> <li>• Universities</li> <li>• Business leaders</li> <li>• Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>• SBDC Community Colleges</li> <li>• Business &amp; Industries</li> </ul>	April 1 Summer 2011 Summer 2011	Need financial resources, staff time	List of best practices  Program templates collaboration  Camp to create exposure
Establish a support system for youth to engage in business experiences	<p>Create school-to-work opportunities by education /engaging K-12 staff &amp; counselors – over summer. Bring together schools and businesses</p> <p>Develop High School Career academy to give kids skills for entrepreneurship. Kirkwood &amp; DMACC are great examples</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chambers of Commerce</li> <li>• Curriculum Coordinators</li> <li>• Superintendents</li> <li>• Community Colleges</li> <li>• B&amp;I</li> <li>• Department of Education</li> <li>• Community Colleges</li> <li>• Superintendents</li> <li>• Business partners</li> </ul>	2013           2013	\$ for substitutes          \$ for grants	Regional career academy established

Goal 4: Develop initiatives within the education system to support and develop entrepreneurs					
Key Strategies	Activities/Steps	Responsible Party(ies)	Timeframes/ Milestones	Resources Needed	Desired Outcomes
Create programs targeted toward adults that offer training and support for entrepreneurial activities	Create a short course certificate – type education for adults. Business planning focused on entrepreneurship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Colleges</li> <li>SBDC</li> <li>SCORE</li> </ul>	2012	\$	Small business growth. Take to 5 communities
	Incorporate entrepreneurship into technical programs at community colleges. i.e., – La James, welding, building trades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Colleges</li> <li>Economic Developers</li> </ul>	Ongoing	ICCC/CC Support	Students to prepare to use their skill to open business. Institutions have implemented program
Develop career focused internships and career fair	<p>Business succession planning – training for future. Developing capable and responsible employees for today and beyond</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop the model</li> <li>Get buy-in from business</li> </ul> <p>Career Fair focus: Education to career mentors (businesses person mentors i.e., Dodger Hour)</p> <p>Junior Achievement Business Plan Contest</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>David – SnapOn</li> <li>KCEDC</li> <li>Business partners economic developers</li> <li>F.D.H.S – after survey</li> <li>K-12 Educators</li> <li>Community Colleges</li> </ul>	2013	System development funding Grant \$	<p>Internship – students in business</p> <p>Educated students about opportunities</p> <p>80% of schools participating</p>

## Part IV: Sustainability and Transition from Planning to Implementation

While the one required deliverable of a RIG grant is a Regional Implementation Plan, sustainability of the collaborative effort and implementation of the plan is the true measure of success of a regional innovation planning process. There are many variables that must be present to reach this higher measure of success. A strong, well-connected network of regional leaders, a compelling shared vision for the future of the region, and a regional identity that encourages leaders to transcend parochial concerns are all necessary elements.

The Mid Iowa Growth Partnership region is characterized by strong regional connections and a well developed network of leaders. The network maps drawn from the metrics of the social network survey conducted mid-way through the planning process illustrate the strength of the existing regional network. In particular, the total collaboration map of the MIGP region bears a striking similarity to a “Stage 4” or “Smart” Network.” This ideal network stage contains a strong core and a vast periphery of weak ties that are bringing new ideas – and resources – into the network. There are a number of core groups of people who communicate and work together as peers. Obviously, given the MIGP network’s resemblance to a smart network, many of the individuals in the MIGP survey surely had worked together, especially on the MIGP Board, before the start of the RIG project, while some were no doubt brought together for the first time by this project.

The strength of the MIGP network is clearly an asset that increases the region’s likelihood of sustaining the RIG collaboration; however, there are some deficiencies that will need to be addressed in the transition from planning to implementation of the regional innovation plan. For example, while there are a significant number of business people in the network, their metrics are generally not particularly high and they are not well-connected even to each other, which may mean that these representatives are not yet totally sold on the capacity of the network or the regional initiative. Additionally, in spite of dedicated recruitment efforts, the network is clearly deficient in the number of K-12 educators. Their involvement is critical, and little will change in terms of the region’s ability to ensure a bright future through a talented regional workforce without their participation.

The shared vision for the future of the MIGP region does center on a talented workforce that drives innovation. The regional leaders developed this shared understanding of its preferred future through a facilitated scenario planning process at the inaugural RIG leadership meeting. This process allowed regional leaders to produce a deep perspective of the future and to focus in on strategic directions that facilitate the realization of the shared vision:

The “Future Fortunes” vision sees the MIGP region as a cutting-edge and vibrant region that has mastered the art of creating its own future. It has the ability to leverage its own local assets and has created a local workforce that drives innovation. The region is renowned in its ability to be first to market with high value food and bio-products that are at the cutting edge of design and technology. The region is at the forefront of the rural renaissance as the creative manufacturing sector creates high value jobs and career paths in leading global industries.

The MIGP region is reaping the benefits of decades of investment in a sophisticated and specialized education and workforce development system. It is globally connected and draws educational expertise from around the world to its centers of excellence, which in turn drive the talent development in the region. There is a strong regional community, with a focus on community engagement and youth participation. The environment is regarded as a precious resource; both for its recreation and aesthetic values, as well as its important productive potential.

Moreover, participants at the three regional engagement sessions voiced a clear understanding of the need for a shared vision and its role in the region’s future success. When surveyed at the engagement sessions held throughout the region (Iowa Falls, Humboldt, and Emmetsburg) between the first and second RIG Leadership Group meetings, the regional stakeholders indicated that they believe that a shared vision for the MIGP region is very important. They also indicated that a shared vision is essential when making local and regional decisions. Finally, the participants expressed a strong willingness to contribute to making a shared vision a reality for the region. This broad and collective understanding of the important of a shared vision represents another strength of the MIGP region.

As mentioned above, the presence of a strong leadership network and a shared vision are required contextual variables for sustainability of the RIG collaborative; however, they alone do not guarantee success. To ensure successful implementation and sustainability of the RIG plan, the MIGP region needs a set of specific strategies and actions which build on the benefits of the network and the shared vision. The Sustainability Core Team plan found in Part III lays out three sustainability goals and several specific actions steps which, if implemented, will result in successful plan implementation.

## Sustainability Team Goals

- Sustain engagement in the regional innovation process and plan implementation;
- Identify resources for plan implementation; and
- Effectively communicate the region's brand and regional plan progress.

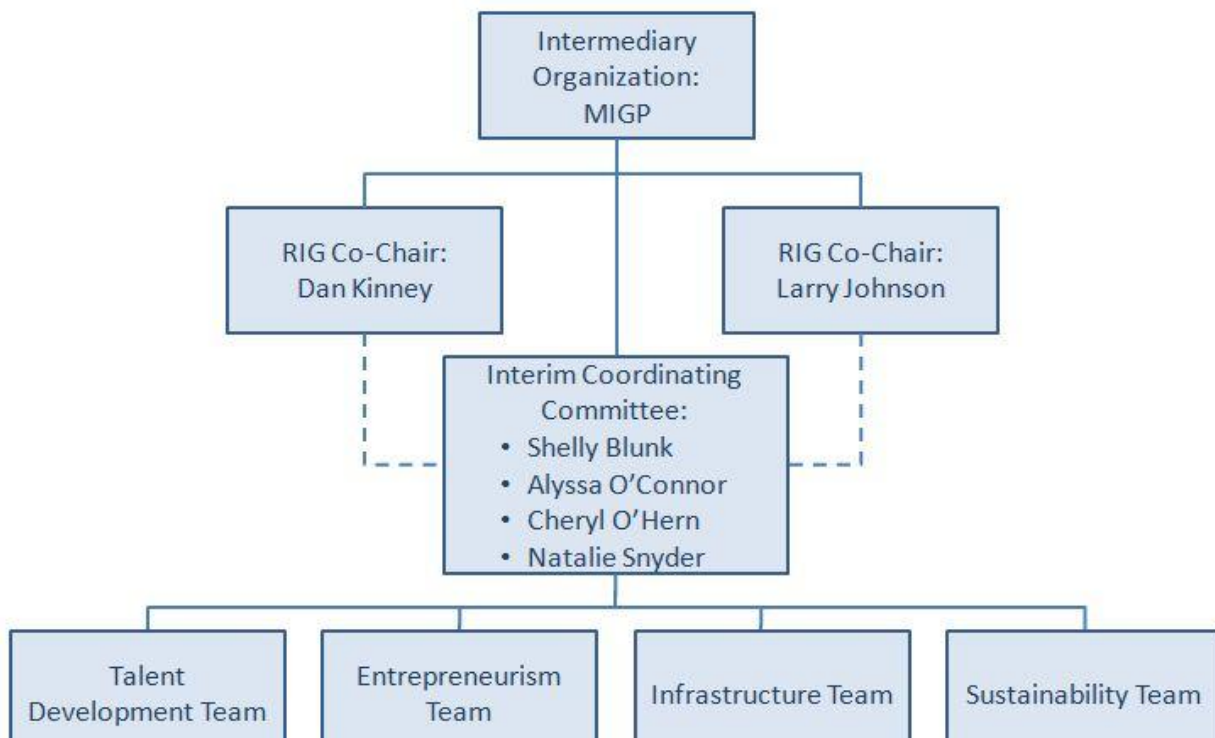
### A. Engagement, Collaboration, and Coordination

#### *Sustain engagement in the regional innovation process and plan implementation*

Bringing leaders together for a specific task within a defined timeframe is not necessarily easy but is usually done with some success. A planning process like the regional innovation planning process used in the MIGP region is an example of such an effort. On the other hand, engaging a dynamic, fluid network of leaders for an indefinite timeframe seeking the realization of a long term vision can be a very daunting task. The implementation of a regional innovation plan is just this kind of task. And, for many other Regional Innovation Grant recipients across the country, transitioning from a defined planning process to collaborative plan implementation has been fraught with challenges.

The Sustainability Core Team plan addresses this particularly challenging transition by proposing a short-term, interim coordination strategy and a longer-term coordination structure. In the interim, the Team proposes that a current MIGP Board member(s) or other members of the Leadership Group be identified as the Interim Coordinating Committee who will focus on the RIG plan, support the core team chairs, and act as the liaison between the Core Teams and the RIG Co-Chairs, the larger RIG Leadership Group and the MIGP Board. To further support the continuation of the collaborative effort in both the short-term and the long-term, the Team plan calls for the establishment of a permanent collaborative workspace much like the CWS used throughout the planning process. To continue to grow the region's network and leadership group, the plan also seeks to expand regional engagement and understanding through social media platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter.

## Mid Iowa RIG Implementation Structure



In the long-term, the Sustainability Plan seeks to create a coordinating structure staffed with an individual who will focus solely on the implementation of the RIG plan and supporting the core teams in collaboration with the RIG Co-Chairs, the larger RIG Leadership Group, and the MIGP Board. To achieve this permanent coordinating structure, the Sustainability Team would host a meeting of key regional and statewide leaders for the purpose of identifying enough collaborative partners or other funding sources to support resource needs of \$118,000 annually for 5 years to hire a coordinating staff person. The Team plan does not specify which organization might be the employer of record for this staff person; many possible organizations might fulfill this role, including the MIGP Board, especially given its regional focus and existing governance structure. Other functions that a permanent coordinating structure and staff person could perform include:

- Coordinating the solicitation of funds through State, Federal, foundation, and private industry grants and other resources. Such funds would finance the position and, hopefully in the longer term, also finance certain collaborative initiatives.
- Bringing collaborative needs (financial and otherwise) to the attention of the leadership group who will in turn bring to the attention of legislators, business people, and public agencies.

- Providing for continued cultivation of a dynamic social network of regional leaders that provides the intellectual energy for continuing innovation within the Region.

## B. Financing

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### *Identify resources for plan implementation*

A Regional Innovation Grant serves as a catalyst to convene diverse, cross-functional partners in a collaborative process. It is the seed money that helps demonstrate the potential expansion of a region's capacity to compete in a global marketplace through collaborative initiatives and the leveraging of existing assets. However, the RIG grants provide no additional resources to support the collaborative through implementation of the plan. Therefore, the second goal of the Team plan is to identify resources for plan implementation.

In order to lead the search for plan implementation resources, a resource task force, composed of representatives from each core team as a start, will be charged with engaging key personnel throughout the region who are well versed in private and public resource availability. In addition, the group will be tasked with developing a systematic approach to identifying potential resources and cataloging the resources in such a way as to support the needs of all the core team plans. To secure any of these resources that might involve grant funding, the task force will be encouraged to access grant writing resources in the region to complete proposals on behalf of the regional Leadership Group.

## C. Communications

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### *Effectively communicate the region's brand and regional plan progress*

The Mid Iowa Growth Partnership came together initially as a nine-county regional marketing collaborative in 2005. The Sustainability Core Team members believe the MIGP organization has been somewhat successful in creating a regional brand. The Core Team identified this work as a particular strength of the region. Nevertheless, given the discussions of the Core Team as it deliberated on key strategies, it was readily apparent that additional work still needed to be done to communicate the region's brand.

Therefore, the Core Team seeks to establish a working partnership with the MIGP marketing committee. Together, the Core Team and MIGP marketing committee will define common target markets for the region's brand and plan progress reports. In addition, by working in partnership with the MIGP marketing committee, regional engagement sessions or town hall meetings throughout the nine counties of the region will be held on a quarterly basis. Reaching out to the counties through the engagement sessions will help to inform everyone throughout the region on the outcomes of the planning process, the needs of plan implementation, and how the individual counties of the MIGP region are interdependent. The Core Team plan identifies other means of reaching this outcome through such vehicles as a speakers' bureau and communications through the educational system as well.

**VISION STATEMENT:** Ensure a strong regional community through effective education, communications, and resource identification; promoting engagement and building momentum of the MIGP Region’s strategic objectives.

Goal 1: To sustain engagement in the regional innovation process and plan implementation					
Key Strategies	Activities/Steps	Responsible Party(ies)	Timeframes/ Milestones	Resources Needed	Desired Outcomes
Develop Coordinating structures to ensure sustainability of other core teams (long term and short term)	Long-term: Set up a meeting with representatives across the state to discuss resources for a person who focuses on supporting the MIGP core teams and their work in plan implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MIGP Board Chair Tom Deimerly and Sustainability Co-Chair Linda Lauver</li> </ul>	Nov. 16-Jan. 14, 2011	\$118,000 annually for 5 years	Create organizational support for core teams and co-leaders in implementing plan
	Short term: Explore and identify new approaches within MIGP organization to provide sustainability in interim such as identify key contact person to coordinate until long term approach in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MIGP Board Chair Tom Deimerly and Sustainability Co-Chair Alissa O’Conner</li> </ul>	December 2010-January 2011		Integrate the core team work into the work of MIGP to sustain energy of RIG core teams and support plan implementation
	Investigate other ways that RIG core teams and MIGP committees can be integrated. Options could include either advisory committee capacity to MIGP committees; committee membership on MIGP committees; or new joint MIGP committees & core teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustainability Co-Chairs—Alissa O’Conner</li> <li>Linda Lavin</li> </ul>	Jan-March, 2011		Integrate the core team work into the work of MIGP to sustain energy of RIG core teams and support plan implementation

Goal 1: To sustain engagement in the regional innovation process and plan implementation					
Key Strategies	Activities/Steps	Responsible Party(ies)	Timeframes/ Milestones	Resources Needed	Desired Outcomes
Establish a collaborative workspace platform	Identify commercial collaborative work platforms or ways of incorporating shared space concept in MIGP website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MIGP Board—Catherine Bergman</li> </ul>	January 2011	\$2,500-\$5,000	Keep core teams and regional leaders engaged through communications and shared information in implementation of plan
	Purchase license for commercial platform or build for current website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See above</li> </ul>	See above	See above	See above
	Identify an administrator and a key collaborator of the platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See above</li> </ul>	See above	See above	See above
	Invite leaders and core teams to join space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See above</li> </ul>	See above	See above	See above
Invite regional engagement through identified social media platforms	Use the current Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter Accounts for MIGP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MIGP Marketing Committee-interim; Regional support person—long term</li> </ul>	Update weekly starting in January to highlight progress on plan implementation	Information needed for updates on the platforms from regional leaders such as the Economic Development Leaders	Increases engagement with various targeted audiences throughout the region based on preferred social platforms
	Create instruction sheets and provide training to help regional leaders understand how to use the social media platforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pam Anderson</li> </ul>	January-June 2011	n/a	Promote engagement through understanding of the social media tools used to connect leaders
	Identify responsible parties for maintaining each platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pam Anderson, Brittany Dickey, and Allissa O'Conner</li> </ul>	January 2011	Individuals willing to take lead in keeping content updated and fresh. Should set up schedule for each county to provide updates on particular months	Maintain interest in platforms through regular and meaningful updates

Goal 2: Effectively communicate the region's brand and regional plan progress					
Key Strategies	Activities/Steps	Responsible Party(ies)	Timeframes/ Milestones	Resources Needed	Desired Outcomes
Establish a working partnership with MIGP marketing Committee	Define common target market(s) (suggested markets include educators, private industry, and non-profits)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustainability Group and Marketing Committee</li> </ul>	Meet during Marketing Committee's regular meetings (1 <sup>st</sup> Tues of Month)	Time of members to attend regular meeting dates	Educate everyone about the outcomes of the regional planning process and implementation needs as well as how the MIGP region and RIG plan are interdependent
	Host engagement sessions throughout the 9 counties of the region quarterly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joint marketing and sustainability groups</li> </ul>	Each quarter of the year	County Economic Developers to support and help host events	See above
	Create a regional speaker's bureau to speak to Civic Clubs, City Councils, and other organizations/large meetings throughout the MIGP Region (e.g. ISU Extension conference Jan. 20 in Fort Dodge)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joint marketing and sustainability groups</li> </ul>	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter 2011	Individuals willing to speak to the groups	See above
	Identify means of communicating value and work of Region through the educational system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joint marketing and sustainability groups</li> </ul>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2011	Buy-in from educators	See above
	Share more broadly the MIGP elevator speech and encourage its use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joint marketing and sustainability groups</li> </ul>	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter 2011	E-mail addresses of all engaged in the RIG process	See above
	Create templates for presentations that can be used in communicating to various audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joint marketing and sustainability groups</li> </ul>	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter 2011	Administrative staff to put together the templates	See above

GOAL 3: Identify resources for plan implementation					
Key Strategies	Activities/Steps	Responsible Party(ies)	Timeframes/ Milestones	Resources Needed	Desired Outcomes
Establish a resource task force	Engage key personnel from community colleges, COG's, USDA, Local gov't and IWD (Todd McGee)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chris Duree</li> </ul>	November-February to organize	Conference call capabilities to conduct regular calls to share information and possible resources	Create a vehicle to have personnel with key knowledge on funding sources to communicate and share opportunities for plan resources
	Develop systematic approach to identifying potential resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resource Task Force</li> </ul>	1 <sup>st</sup> quarter 2011	See above	Comprehensive identification of potential financial resources at local, regional, state, and federal levels
	Develop an inventory list of funding sources and other resources that could be used by other core teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resource Task Force</li> </ul>	Ongoing	See above	See above
Create a collaborative partnership to secure grant resources	Identify grant writing resources in the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resource Task Force</li> </ul>	1 <sup>st</sup> quarter 2011	n/a	Secure financial resources that will help fund plan implementation needs
	Share a grant writer among partners including community college districts, regional hospitals, and county community foundations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resource Task Force</li> </ul>	As needed when appropriate grant identified	Time of the identified grant writer	See above
	Meet with chambers who have legislative committees and share need for resources for plan implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resource Task Force</li> </ul>	1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> quarters 2011; then 4 <sup>th</sup> quarter of each year there after	n/a	Engagement of local chambers in helping to secure resources for the regional plan

**Appendices – (please refer to separate file for Appendices)**