

ALLEN COUNTY OHIO DEFENSE INITIATIVE
STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN
ALLEN COUNTY, OHIO

A Strategic Action Plan prepared as an outcome of regional planning work conducted from February to May, 2015

ALLEN COUNTY DEFENSE INITIATIVE STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

May, 2015.

PREPARED BY:



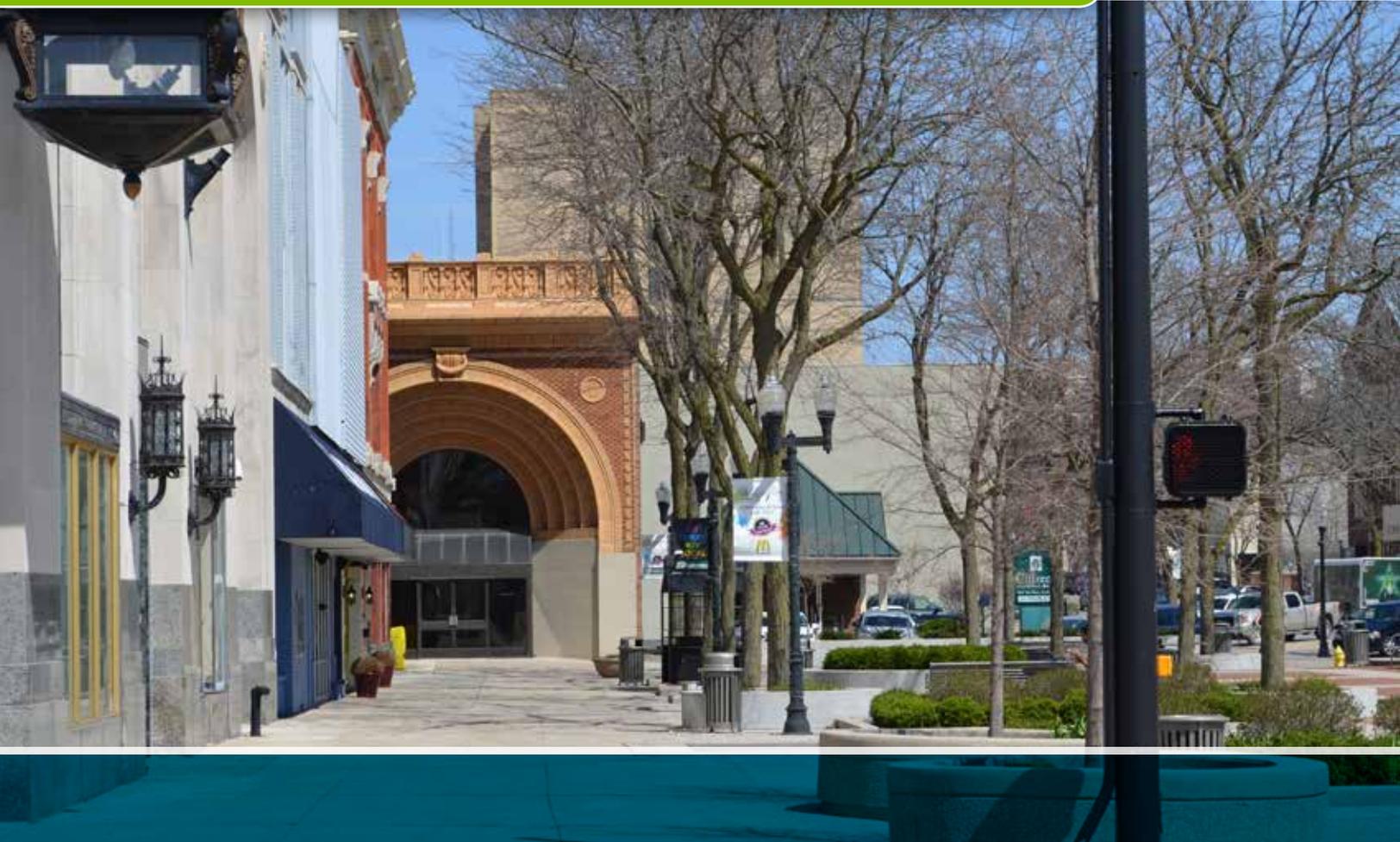
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1.0 SUMMARY

The Action Plan represents the collective knowledge and vision of the regional stakeholders who have been engaged in the three-month Allen County Defense Initiative. This strategic community visioning and action planning process culminated in a two-day Strategic Planning Think Tank hosted in Lima, Ohio on April 15 and 16, 2015. The results of the conversations that occurred are presented in the strategic recommendations that follow.

The Allen County Defense Initiative is funded through a partnership between the United States Department of Defense Office of Economic Adjustment and the Allen County Ohio Board of Commissioners. The defense community readjustment grant was precipitated by concerns regarding the workforce alignment and future of the Joint Forces Manufacturing Center (JSMC) – a unique government-owned, contractor-operated production facility responsible for most of the heavy-armored combat vehicles in the U.S. military's inventory, including the Abrams line of combat tanks and the Stryker heavy-combat vehicle.

The recent history of the JSMC closely mirrors the Allen County regional economy more broadly. The region has experienced a number of significant challenges over the last forty years and has demonstrated a great level of resiliency. Each challenge has been met with a coherent community response and has ultimately led to greater future growth. The recommendations and initiatives proposed in this report build upon that framework in focusing specifically on the region's workforce and industry innovation challenges.

These have been identified as two of the most significant challenges affecting the regional economy, and community leaders are unified in their view that collaborative solutions are needed in order to meet them.

The action plan builds upon a number of other research pieces prepared as part of Future iQ Partners' work in the region. This includes:

- Allen County Asset Inventory and Readiness Analysis
- Allen County Network Mapping Platform and Analysis
- Allen County, Ohio Defense Initiative “Scenarios of the Future” Scenario Planning Report

In addition, Future iQ Partners has extensively surveyed key stakeholders in the region, including an action prioritization survey, the results of which are presented in this action plan. This engagement allowed those involved to solicit the insight of more than 200 regional leaders.

The recommendations presented in this Action Plan are not intended to be viewed as comprehensive, but rather depict strategic actions that need to be taken in the next year to build more collaborative relationships and solutions in the region. The dialogue initiated in this process has already sparked new ideas to build local capacity and to leverage key assets. Each of the recommendations presented may help guide the region towards its preferred future. The success of any action depends heavily on the participation of regional actors.

The recommendations have been organized around four key areas as follows:

- Local and Regional Collaboration and Private Sector Engagement
- Workforce Development Systems Alignment
- Economic Development Systems Alignment
- Industry Innovation and Entrepreneurship

These thematic areas were developed through the course of conversation with regional stakeholders and community leaders during visits to the region in February and March, 2015. They represent areas where a great deal of promise exists for future growth, yet historical barriers have also existed.

The Action Plan recommendations presented represent a total annual funding commitment of \$3.345 million, depending on actual costs. Think Tank participants developed the cost estimates presented in this report, which are based on functional needs and existing organizational capacity. Specific funding requests will be submitted for consideration to the U.S. Department of Defense Office of Economic Adjustment and other potential funders.

2.0 ACTION PLANNING PROCESS

The action plan represents the culmination of a three-month study and dialogue between Future iQ Partners and regional leaders. However, it is also the continuation of the efforts of a number of key actors and organizations that have developed over the course of the last decade to address many of the critical issues facing Allen County and the surrounding region. The most recent engagement was funded under a defense industry readjustment grant administered by the United States Department of Defense Office of Economic Adjustment and was precipitated by staffing pattern and production cycle changes at the Joint Systems Manufacturing Center. (For more information regarding the region and stakeholder involvement in this process, please see the Allen County Regional Asset Inventory and Readiness Analysis and Allen County, Ohio Defense Initiative “Scenarios of the Future” Scenario Planning Report, conducted on April 15 and 16, 2015.)

The Allen County Regional Asset Inventory and Readiness Analysis provide a detailed profile of the region's population, economy, and organizational infrastructure. It also serves as an update to the community analysis conducted during the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process. The inventory also identifies a number of key issues affecting the broader region both now and into the next decade, including an aging and declining population, a significant growth in the hiring needs of local companies, and the lack of a strong culture of innovation. These findings set the tone for much of the dialogue that has followed.

A second essential component of the research that has informed the formation of this Action Plan is the conduct of a social network mapping analysis of the key community and industry leaders of Allen County. More information regarding this work and its findings can be found at <http://allencountynetwork.com>.

The analysis yielded two essential findings. First, it was concluded that the region benefits from the presence of a closely-connected and highly-engaged core of community stakeholders. However, this network is persistent throughout a number of core functional areas creating the perception that only a few key actors do much of the important work in areas of community, economic, and workforce development. Second, the network mapping analysis revealed a lack of the same level of collaboration or connectedness in the region's business community. The disconnection between the public and private sector that may exist has the potential to limit the ultimate effectiveness of the initiatives and actions outlined here.

The Action Plan and other components of this project have been developed through the invaluable contribution of extensive public engagement and stakeholder input. This has included the following:

- Allen County Network Mapping Analysis Survey (N = 156)
- Allen County Strategic Planning Think Tank Workshop (N = 31)
- Allen County Action Plan Perceptions and Priorities Survey (N = 64)

The network mapping analysis survey provided the context of the key actors and the current level of collaboration active in the region. The Strategic Planning Think Tank Workshop participants both explored where people saw opportunities for community and economic growth through the key drivers of industry innovation and workforce development, but also how the organizations currently active in the region could most effectively be leveraged. The Action Plan Perceptions and Priorities Survey presented the recommendations in this report to a broader cross-section of community and business leaders to both validate and prioritize which actions are most feasible, impactful, and worthy of funding consideration.

In total, more than 240 data points have been collected and participants have been able to provide input at each step of the development process. This represents a comprehensive community engagement process. This, in turn provides a sense of legitimacy to the recommendations presented in this Action Plan.

The concepts outlined in the following sections are based on the dominant themes and ideas presented by workshop participants. They may be expanded at times to provide greater context without altering their original intent. In total they represent a compelling view of those steps needed to realize a strongly preferred future.



3.0 PREFERRED FUTURE SCENARIO – THE BASIS FOR STRONG ACTION

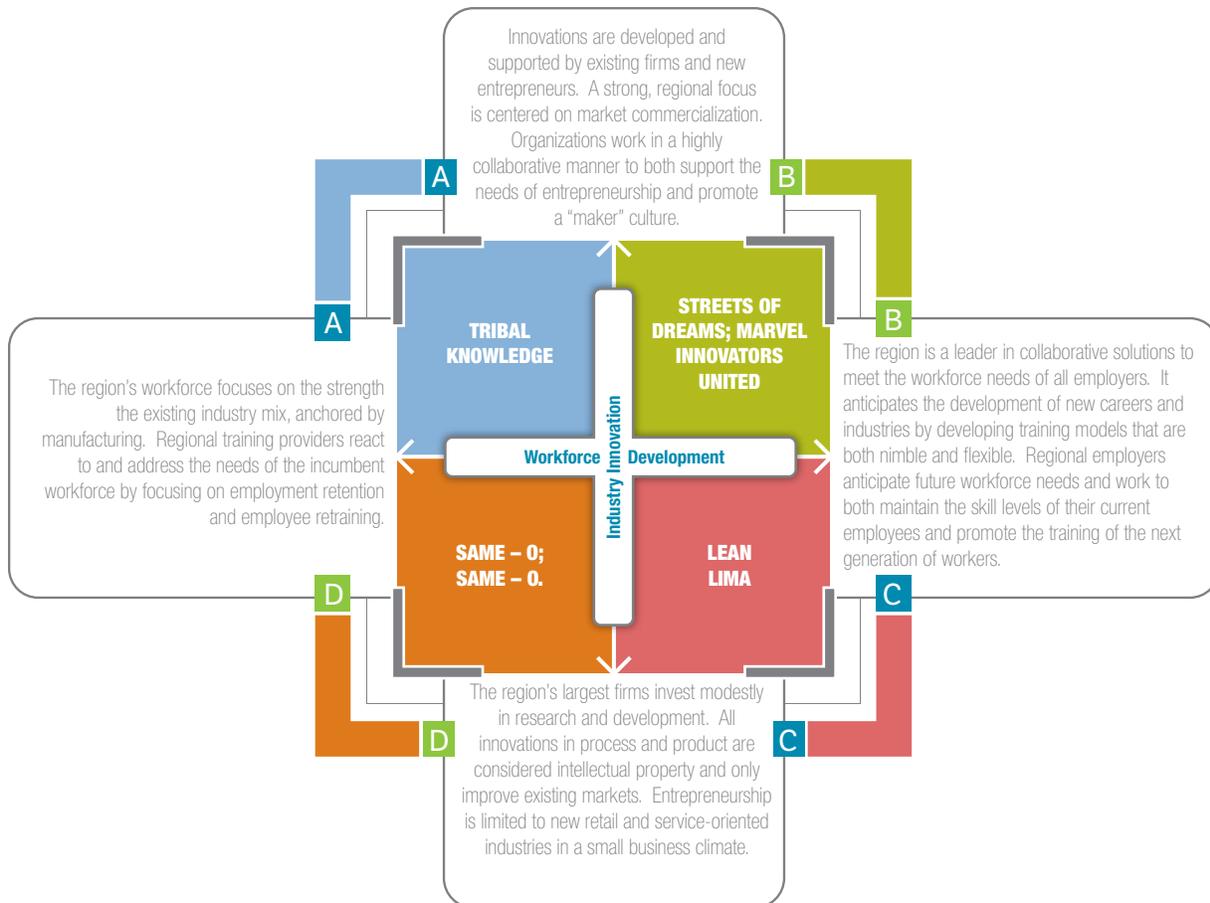
Participants that attended the Strategic Planning Think Tank workshop on April 15 and 16, 2015 started their work to develop the recommendations presented in this report here with an analysis of the key drivers affecting the region’s possible future. These community, demographic, and economic drivers were used to develop and define four plausible scenario spaces, from which specific recommendations were crafted. The full description of this process and each of the scenario spaces is included in the Allen County, Ohio Defense Initiative ‘Scenarios of the Future’ report.

The four scenarios presented in the diagram below are divided by two key driver axes:

- Industry Innovation
- Workforce Development

These drivers and descriptions that define each end point on the respective axes were developed on the basis of previous research and conversations with key stakeholders conducted in preparation for the workshop.

Workshop participants were divided into groups assigned to the four scenario spaces and asked to assign specific attributes and names to each. The scenario names are presented below.



At the end of the first day, participants were asked to complete a short survey which included their identification of both an expected and preferred scenario outcome. The consensus points for both the expected and preferred scenarios both fall in the 'Streets of Dreams; Marvel Innovators United' scenario space, though the expected consensus point lies close to the intersection of both driver axes. The preferred consensus is located more firmly in the scenario space.

The preferred future scenario of 'Streets of Dreams; Marvel Innovators United' is built on the premise that the region develops an innovation culture that supports both the commercialization of products and processes created by existing firms as well as a new class of entrepreneurs. It also envisions a collaborative model where economic development and education partner to support innovation and to instill a 'maker' culture in all students. The scenario also envisions a collaborative solution to meet the workforce needs of the region's employer base. The education system is again essential in the development of flexible and adaptable training solutions in both traditional and emerging career fields. The system moves from a reactive model responding to worker dislocations to one that proactively anticipates employer needs.

The sum of these initiatives will promote the development and retention of both the region's business community but also its young professionals. This will, in turn increase the economic vitality of the region and the families that are formed will both stabilize the region's population and invigorate its educational community. The region will be more successful and resilient in anticipating and preparing for future challenges and opportunities.

In each of these regards, collaboration among business and community organizations plays a critical role in the realization of the preferred future. This theme is common in many of the projects that Future iQ Partners has completed over the last twelve years. Its experience in this space and key lessons learned are summarized in the recently-released "Economics of Collaboration" technical brief. Collaboration lies at the heart of many effective regional initiatives. It depends on the concepts of trust, civic investment, and mutual accountability that are already prevalent in Allen County and the surrounding region. Collaborative solutions are also found throughout the recommendations presented in this Action Plan.

Each of the recommendations presented in the next section were built on the framework of the scenario planning process summarized in this report. Workshop participants were asked to suggest possible actions that may move the region towards realizing the preferred future. All proposed actions could be implemented within a twelve-month timeframe and are informed by the key driver axes of 'Industry Innovation' and 'Workforce Development.'



4.0 ACTION PLAN – RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations that are presented in the following section have been drawn directly from the collective knowledge of the key stakeholders engaged in the planning process. They have been validated and prioritized through an extensive community engagement process. It is important to remember that the recommended actions presented in this report are designed to enhance the capacity and alignment of organizations currently engaged in the region. The recommendations are not intended to duplicate or replace any existing activities. In many instances, the recommended actions and funding requests are proposed to enhance the capacity of the region's community, economic, and workforce development infrastructure. Some of the organizations specifically referenced in the Allen County Asset Inventory and Readiness Analysis and the Action Plan recommendations include:

- Allen Economic Development Group
- Automotive Supplier Task Force
- LINK Lima
- Ohio Energy and Advanced Manufacturing Center
- Task Force LIMA
- West Central Ohio Manufacturing Consortium

Each of these organizations has significantly advanced awareness of the core driver issues facing the region and has played vital roles in ensuring the resiliency of the regional economy. While this is not an exhaustive list of all organizations active in the region, it is expected that they will play a pivotal role in the execution of the recommendations presented in this report here. Again, it is important to remember that the recommendations presented are not intended to be viewed as a comprehensive solution to all of the issues that the region may face in the future. Rather, they have been identified as actions that may play a catalytic role in the transformation of the region's economy and workforce. They are intended to represent a series of medium-term (twelve to eighteen month) proposals that most effectively leverage existing community assets to capitalize on new potential funding. The recommendations are also intended to spark conversation within the region as to additional ways to work more collaboratively and effectively. The recommended actions have been divided into four core areas, as defined by workshop participants.

- Local and Regional Collaboration and Private Sector Engagement
- Economic Development Structure and Alignment
- Workforce Development Structure and Alignment
- Industry Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Anticipated funding needs have also been allocated where identified by workshop participants or in follow-up conversations. A summary of all recommended actions and estimated costs follows at the end of the section.



4.1 LOCAL & REGIONAL COLLABORATION & PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

4.1.1 OPPORTUNITY

The Allen County region currently possesses a deep and expansive network of community organizations and leadership. Many of these organizations, including economic development and workforce development organizations, industry associations, and educational institutions routinely collaborate on a number of key initiatives related to the Joint Systems Manufacturing Center and other aspects of the regional economy and social issues. However, there is also a considerable opportunity to strengthen both the existing community partnerships but also to further engage private sector interests from the region's business community in these efforts. Prior research and analysis in the region has suggested:

- Both scenario driver axes identify collaboration as a critical success factor.
- Expanding the current group of strong community and business leaders could represent a considerable advantage for the region. This has already been demonstrated in the experience of Task Force LIMA and the Joint Systems Manufacturing Center. The region must assume a culture of proactive leadership where opportunities are both identified and acted upon quickly and efficiently.
- Many of the recommendations that follow require application of collaborative practices, future thinking and proactive long-term planning.

The scale of the opportunities and challenges facing the region suggest that the cultivation of the next generation of community leaders and the fostering of stronger relationships between business and community leaders is essential.

4.1.2 CHALLENGES

The need for strong regional collaborative partnerships and a capacity for change were identified throughout the planning process. The network mapping analysis identified strong lines of collaboration and connectedness in the community, but that a greater sense of connectivity could be fostered between business and community leaders. The asset inventory also suggested that a number of organizations, such as LINK Lima and the West Central Ohio Manufacturing Consortium have missions that could potentially overlap in the future, leading to confusion and duplication of services. The future success of regions such as Allen County will increasingly be decided by leaders who are proactive and collaborative. This includes the need to expand existing partnerships beyond the boundaries of Allen County and local neighboring communities.



4.1.3 STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS



Action 1: Create an Allen County Plan for Collaborative Growth.

This plan will build on the capacity of existing organizations and identify the means for further collaboration. The focus of the plan will include:

- The creation of a community culture that promotes collaboration, cohesion, and convening.
- The organization of a forum for identifying goals and common ground for development. This may take the form of a leadership or executive forum or task force and will include representatives of regional economic development interests, local elected officials, and members of the business community. This structure will also utilize the network mapping platform to identify and strengthen greater connectedness within the region.
- A comprehensive analysis of the structure and progress of successful local organizations such as the Automotive Suppliers Task Force, the Lima/Allen County Chamber of Commerce Manufacturers Forum, the Ohio Energy and Advanced Manufacturing Center, Task Force LIMA, and the West Central Ohio Manufacturing Consortium. The analysis will focus on organizational structure, goals and objectives, and potential areas of collaboration.





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2

Action 2: Fund an Initial Endowment of the Link LIMA Foundation.

This will serve as a community resource to promote career exploration through programming and scholarships in cooperation with the region's educational institutions. The Foundation will:

- Serve as the convening body for all public-private workforce development activities in Allen County.
- Collect and disseminate best practices both from within the region and nationally to education and workforce development professionals.
- Develop national best practices in career exploration, youth engagement, and proactive workforce development activities.

3

Action 3: Develop a community fund, to be administered by the Allen Economic Development Group or other appropriate entity to promote innovation and entrepreneurship activities in the region.

This fund will build on existing capacity by:

- Identifying recommended methodologies and national best practices to drive innovation, such as Innovation Engineering in the private sector.





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4.1.4 BRIGHT IDEAS

- Regional collaborations should look to include strong participation from private sector interests. This includes the development of leadership roles and collaborative funding mechanisms.
- Community leaders in Allen County should actively engage their counterparts in neighboring counties and nationally to build additional capacity and a strong regional identity. This also includes engagement through professional organizations such as the International Economic Development Council and U.S. Conference of Mayors.
- The region should also look to examples throughout Ohio and nationally regarding collaboration and partnership formation.



4.1.5 KEY PARTNERS

- State organizations such as **Ohio Means Jobs** and higher educational institutions including **Apollo Career Center** and **Rhodes State College**.
- **City** and **county** elected officials.
- Community and regional organizations such as **local economic development organizations**, **chambers of commerce**, and **industry associations**.
- Potential funding sources, such as local and national philanthropic organizations, state and federal organizations.



4.1.6 RESOURCES NEEDED

- The Allen County Plan for Collaborative Growth would take between six and nine months to complete including background research, focus groups, plan formation, and regional adoption. It is expected that a consultant will be engaged in this process at the cost of \$150,000.
- The anticipated initial endowment of the Link LIMA Foundation would be \$300,000 based on similar efforts in other communities. This would fund at least the first two years of foundation programming.
- The initial budget for the community innovation and entrepreneurship fund is \$200,000, though the fund may become self-supporting depending on structure and activities.



4.2 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRUCTURE AND ALIGNMENT

4.2.1 OPPORTUNITY

The Allen County region's economic development ecosystem is comprised of a number of professionals at the local, county, and regional level, and includes such organizations as the Allen Economic Development Group, the Lima/Allen County Chamber of Commerce, as well as other local and state interests. Each of these groups works effectively and several groups regularly collaborate on business retention and expansion projects. However, the network mapping analysis and conversations with regional leaders suggest that the region lacks a cohesive vision and presence as it relates to economic development. The formation of such a strategy may position the region on the national and international stage as an attractive market for new business development. Other successfully growing regions have been able to capitalize on the economies of scale associated with presenting a portfolio of regional assets to prospective firms. There are a number of additional possible benefits to collaboration in this area, including:

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

This builds a compelling reason for more effective coordination between organizations in this sphere.

4.2.2 CHALLENGES

Many of the workshop respondents pointed to the previous actions of economic development organizations in promoting resiliency within the region. An expansion of their roles will be necessary to transition the region to a growth economy focused on innovation. It is possible that the region has grown more comfortable with its existing economic structure that this new orientation may be difficult to embrace. Economic development activities at the local level have the potential to become competitive as elected officials are more likely to measure 'wins' by firms and jobs that locate within their boundaries, rather than benefits accrued throughout the region.



4.2.3 STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

1

Action 1: Conduct a comprehensive gap analysis of the region.

This will expand upon the current asset inventory work conducted to measure such things as:

- The number of so-called ‘job ready’ development sites in the county
- Current and future workforce capacity
- The capacity of the existing business community to innovate and expand
- Entrepreneurship activities including business startups and access to capital

This will require the engagement of all local economic development organizations, as well as the formation of a number of local focus groups. It is suggested that a lead agency be designated for this and all other proposed actions in this section.

2

Action 2: Perform an analysis of local process and product innovation opportunities and needs.

This analysis will:

- Move the local culture from one focused on innovation to a commitment to product entrepreneurship.
- A consulting group will be engaged to analyze existing business process innovation practices. These may be compared against national and international best practices.
- The analysis will measure the extent to which local businesses support in-house product development or entrepreneurial activities.



Photo Credit General Dynamics Land Systems



3

Action 3: Coordinate the sharing of information with small-to-mid-size businesses regarding opportunities for growth.

These will be identified in the previous activities and will expand their reach by:

- Local economic groups will identify and contact potential businesses to share analysis results and best practices.
- Economic development groups will pursue the development of a supportive infrastructure of technical assistance, financing, and other incentives.
- A sustainable model of regular communications, analysis, and contact will be created.
- A consultant may be hired to assist in this effort.
- This action will also fund the hiring of a Manager of Industry Development for the region, to be possibly affiliated with the Allen Economic Development Group.

4

Action 4: Create a coordinated regional economic development marketing and communications plan for internal and external media markets.

This will promote and expand the regional identity through:

- The coordination of all major economic development and education websites with consistent data and messaging.
- Improving constant outreach coordination via a targeted communications strategy.
- This action would also promote the hiring of an experienced grant writer to sustain both outreach and analysis activities.





4.2.4 BRIGHT IDEAS

- The lead agency may not necessarily define the regional identity, but will be responsible for the promotion of this vision to external markets.
- The regional economic development plan should contain clear milestones for progress. It should also be revisited annually for updates and fully revised on a five-year basis.
- The regional economic development plan should also be consistent with other comprehensive planning efforts at the local, state, and national level.



4.2.5 KEY PARTNERS

- **Local, regional, and state economic development professionals** will be responsible for the development of the coordinated economic development plan and communications strategy.
- **State, county, and local elected officials** will be responsible for providing legal and financial support to many of the proposed activities.
- **Industry associations** will be helpful in identifying potential targeted firms and promoting the services provided by local agencies.



4.2.6 RESOURCES NEEDED

- The completion of both the gap and process and product opportunities analysis is expected to take between six and nine months at a cost of \$200,000.
- It is anticipated that the region's economic development organizations may need as much as \$500,000 to build out the infrastructure and incentives needed to support a comprehensive strategy.
- The proposed Manager of Industry Development would be funded at an annual cost of \$50,000 and the proposed grant writer would be funded at \$75,000 annually.
- The development of a coordinated marketing and communications strategy and its execution will cost an estimated \$200,000.



4.3 WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRUCTURE AND ALIGNMENT

4.3.1 OPPORTUNITY

The Allen County region has identified a number of considerable workforce development challenges that will be confronted by its employer base in the next five to ten years. The world-class workforce that has met the needs of the region's businesses will gradually decrease over the next thirty years as the Baby Boom generation enters into retirement. This creates a tremendous opportunity to both reassess workforce needs, the alignment of the region's training providers, and the role that attracting and retaining young workers will play in sustaining the regional economy. Addressing this challenge requires a regional strategy given the nature of the local labor market. The unique opportunity presented by this challenge will allow the region to consider a comprehensive strategy to address the needs of all employers rather than targeted strategies that are employer-specific. The timing of this conversation is also crucial as:

- Many other regions nationally are having similar conversations. The region that develops the best practice to address these workforce challenges will have a considerable advantage.
- Support for career exploration and workforce training activities throughout all aspects of education has grown over the course of the last decade as parents and students consider the return on investment of postsecondary education.
- The recently-passed federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act redefines the way that the workforce development ecosystem functions in a number of ways and stresses both the creation of regional solutions and collaboration between economic development and workforce development interests.

The confluence of each of these factors over the next twelve-to-eighteen months makes conversations regarding the creation of innovative and collaborative solutions especially timely. These recommendations are also appropriate for a wide variety of potential funding avenues.



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4.3.2 CHALLENGES

The current and projected future transition of the workforce due to retirements, the application of technology, and global competition offers an opportunity for the region to distinguish itself. It also represents a considerable challenge given the region's underlying demographics. There is also significant overlap of service and mission within this area, and organizations and service providers may not be as effectively aligned as is the case among the region's economic development community. As such, a clear definition of mission and roles will be essential to ensure the success of the recommendations presented in this report.

4.3.3 STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

1

Action 1: Sponsor a Joint Systems Manufacturing Center/General Dynamics Land Systems booth at 'Makerfest 2015.'

This event, to be hosted in Fall 2015 will:

- Highlight the services, products, and capabilities of local firms.
- Expose local students to career possibilities and needed skills.
- Connect prospective job seekers with career opportunities at local firms.
- A Joint Systems Manufacturing Center presence at this event will further reinforce the importance of the facility in the region.

2

Action 2: Initiate a series of strategic investments in the region's K-12 system.

This will promote the exploration of manufacturing careers by:

- Sponsoring advanced manufacturing clubs at all local high schools and career technology schools.
- Create and initiate a manufacturing career awareness program at the middle school level.
- Fund the purchase or donation of new manufacturing equipment to support technical education at the high school and career technology school level.
- Sponsor a series of annual scholarships to be awarded to graduating high school seniors who intend to pursue advanced manufacturing careers.



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3

Action 3: Promote the development of a pilot Adult Apprenticeship Program, possibly in conjunction with Ohio Means Jobs or the Ohio Commission on Jobs and Families.

This will build upon the career exploration activities described earlier to:

- Encourage unemployed and underemployed job seekers to consider careers in advanced manufacturing.
- Provide incentives to employers who support the up-skilling of job candidates in in-demand fields.

4

Action 4: Support the planning and hosting of ‘Makerfest 2016.’

By making this activity an annual event, it will build a culture of awareness and support for careers in advanced manufacturing.



4.3.4 BRIGHT IDEAS

- The region currently possesses considerable resources to support the local manufacturing sector. Many of the recommendations made in this report could eventually be replicated and transition to support for other key industry sectors, such as health care.
- The region's two principal career training institutions – Apollo Career Center and Rhodes State College each have strengths in a number of key areas and different processes for developing and delivering customized training solutions. These and other institutions should be involved in the formation of any collaborative strategy that leverages their respective strengths.
- Comprehensive regional solutions should also look to leverage the skills and experience of the retiring workforce either through career transitions or workforce mentorship programs.



4.3.5 KEY PARTNERS

- Local education institutions, including the **K-12 system**, **career technology centers**, and **colleges and universities** will develop comprehensive training solutions.
- **Link LIMA** and the **West Central Ohio Manufacturing Consortium** will conduct employer outreach and certify training programs.
- **Labor Unions**, such as the **United Auto Workers** and **International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers** among others can inform on current and projected needs and required skillsets.



4.3.6 RESOURCES NEEDED

- The Joint Systems Manufacturing Center/General Dynamics Land Systems Booth at Makerfest 2015 would cost \$5,000 to sponsor and staff.
- It is estimated that establishing and supporting advanced manufacturing clubs at each of the local high schools and career technology schools would cost \$40,000 annually to support.
- Support for manufacturing career awareness programs at the middle school level is estimated at \$25,000 annually.
- The workgroup has also requested an initial investment of \$100,000 to purchase manufacturing equipment to support technical education. This investment can also be leveraged against additional donations or contributions by local companies.
- The initial class of scholarships is estimated at \$25,000, though this could increase with industry and philanthropic donations.
- The development of the structure for the proposed adult apprenticeship program is estimated at \$25,000, though this will also be leveraged with additional state and employer resources.
- The planning and development of Makerfest 2016 is estimated at \$60,000, though this will also be offset through corporate, community, and philanthropic sponsorship.



4.4 INDUSTRY INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

4.4.1 OPPORTUNITY

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The Allen County region has a long history of being an industry leader in innovation and development in advanced manufacturing and energy production among other key sectors. The region has enjoyed the reputation of being a world-class manufacturing center. A number of recent innovative processes and products have been developed at the Joint Systems Manufacturing Center and other local companies, though few of these innovations have the potential to be widely commercialized. The region also has the benefit of an established organization in the Ohio Energy and Advanced Manufacturing Center that may foster further commercialization and entrepreneurship. A number of other communities are also pursuing similar entrepreneurial strategies and successful models can present a number of lessons learned.

4.4.2 CHALLENGES

The region's long history of innovation and industry leadership has depended on the commercialization of the products and processes developed both by existing firms and new entrepreneurs. More recently, however many of the innovative processes that are being developed are considered proprietary to the respective companies and are being applied to existing product lines. While this process benefits the firms that develop the innovation, it is less likely that these developments will be spun off into new commercial products. This climate may potentially hinder the creation of the innovation culture desired in the community since entrepreneurs may not be able to access prospective local markets.

4.4.3 RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES



Action 1: Establish a Regional Center for Innovation Excellence.

This center, to be housed at the Ohio Energy and Advanced Manufacturing Center (OEAMC) would:

- Serve as a regional focal point for research and development activities.
- Bring together entrepreneurs and technical resources such as academic faculty and industry mentors.
- Coordinate outreach throughout the region to inform companies about partnership ideas.



2

Action 2: Create a regional innovation and entrepreneurship website.

This would leverage information from a variety of sources including economic development and education institutions to provide a comprehensive resource for innovation companies and entrepreneurs, including:

- Consistent messaging about the innovation culture in the region.
- Access to technical information, business planning resources, and prospective financing.
- Serve as an external portal to promote local activities to national and international markets.

3

Action 3: Promote youth technology exploration and innovation.

This will build upon many of the recommendations included in the Workforce Development Structure and Alignment workgroup to help build a 'maker culture' in the region's youth through a number of activities, including:

- Support for Link LIMA's social media platform
- The hiring of a Youth project coordinator to share best practices and connect schools to resources.
- Promotion of activities, such as Lego Leagues and Robotic Leagues at all age levels.

4

Action 4: Phase II High Strain Rate Metal Forming Commercialization Center.

This funding would build upon existing investments by the State of Ohio and U.S. Department of Commerce to create a world-class facility focused on developing innovations in this critical area by:

- Underwriting the purchase of new machinery and equipment. This will be made available to local companies and entrepreneurs.
- The hiring of support personnel to provide both technical support and training on the use of all center equipment.
- The center would also host a series of entrepreneurship and innovation training programs in partnership with regional colleges and universities and technical experts.



5

Action 5: Engagement of specialized marketing consultant and initiation of a regional media advertising campaign.

This would be focused on branding the region as a world-class innovation destination, including:

- The rebranding of the region as an innovation leader.
- Strategies to highlight the productive capabilities of existing firms to external markets.
- A marketing strategy to connect new entrepreneurs to markets.



4.4.4 BRIGHT IDEAS

- The Ohio Energy and Advanced Manufacturing Center must be positioned at the nexus of innovation activity in the region.
- National and regional partners, such as Oak Ridge National Laboratories and regional colleges and universities can provide a great deal of technical support, but are also possible sources of new entrepreneurs.
- Other communities that are pursuing similar innovation practices, such as Youngstown and Columbus should be leveraged to create a statewide manufacturing innovation network.



4.4.5 KEY PARTNERS

- The **Ohio Energy and Advanced Manufacturing Center** is important to the support and promotion of an innovation culture.
- The region's **educational institutions** can provide technical support and training opportunities.
- **Industry associations** can promote innovation and entrepreneurship by identifying companies, markets, and opportunities.
- **Federal, state, and local economic development organizations** will provide financial and technical support for innovation and entrepreneurship activities.



4.4.6 RESOURCES NEEDED

- Formation of the Center for Innovation Excellence, including staff support is expected to cost \$50,000 per year.
- The development of a coordinated website and social media presence is estimated at \$10,000.
- The creation of a Youth Project Coordinator position is estimated at \$50,000 annually.
- Support for Link LIMA's social media activities is estimated at \$20,000 for staff support and may also be funded by other community partners.
- The total budget for the development of Phase II of the High Strain Rate Metal Forming Commercialization Center is estimated at \$1,000,000. This will be leveraged against other federal, state, and private sector funding commitments.
- The formation of a comprehensive media and marketing strategy is expected to cost \$160,000, to be divided between strategy development (\$60,000) and execution (\$100,000).



4.5 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The table below summarizes all of the recommended actions presented in the preceding sections. It also tabulates the estimated costs associated with each as presented by the workshop participants. The recommendations can be generally divided into three areas – strategy and planning, additional staff capacity, and foundation building. These themes suggest that the think tank participants considered those actions which may have an immediate impact as well as those which can be built upon in future years.

Recommended Action	Estimated Cost
Local and Regional Collaboration and Private Sector Engagement	
Allen County Plan for Collaborative Growth	\$150,000
Link LIMA Foundation Endowment	\$300,000
Community Fund for Innovation and Entrepreneurship	\$200,000
Total	\$650,000
Economic Development Structure and Alignment	
Gap and Process Analyses	\$200,000
Infrastructure Support	\$500,000
Industry Partnerships and Marketing Staff	\$125,000
Marketing and Communications Strategy	\$200,000
Total	\$1,025,000
Workforce Development Structure and Alignment	
JSMC/GDLS Booth at Makerfest 2015	\$5,000
Establish Advanced Manufacturing Clubs at High School Level	\$40,000
Middle School Manufacturing Career Awareness Programs	\$25,000
Manufacturing Equipment Fund	\$100,000
Manufacturing Careers Scholarships	\$25,000
Manufacturing Apprenticeship Programs	\$25,000
Makerfest 2016 Planning	\$60,000
Total	\$280,000
Industry Innovation and Entrepreneurship	
Center for Innovation Excellence	\$150,000
Website and Social Media Development	\$10,000
Youth Project Coordinator Support	\$50,000
Link LIMA Social Media Support	\$20,000
Phase II of the High Strain Rate Metal Forming Commercialization Center	\$1,000,000
Media and Marketing Strategy	\$160,000
Total	\$1,390,000
TOTAL OF ALL RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	\$3,345,000

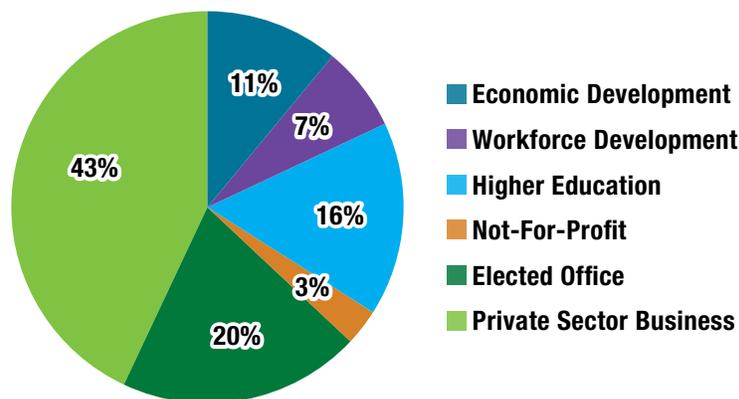
5.0 PRIORITIZING ACTIONS AND STRATEGIES

The final step in establishing a clear action plan for the region was to seek the input of business and community leaders in both validating and prioritizing the proposed action steps. To this end, a survey was administered online to a sample of 274 possible respondents in Allen County and the surrounding region during the two weeks between May 4 and May 15, 2015. The findings of that survey are summarized below.

5.1 RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

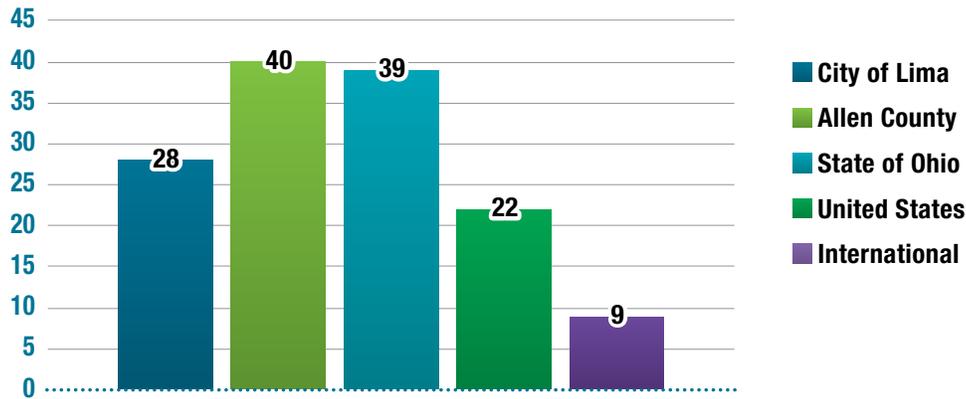
The survey sample was constructed from those individuals who were identified during the social network mapping exercise completed through this initiative. An additional number of individuals were included as being important voices in the community and were also invited to share their perspectives. Of the 274 individuals surveyed, 64 responses were received, yielding a response rate of 23.4 percent. The responses are considered to be statistically significant at a 90 percentile confidence interval within the sample. As such, one can conclude that the responses of those who completed the survey are representative of the perspectives of all possible respondents. Further, one can also conclude that the perspectives and priorities expressed are common throughout the region.

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



Survey respondents were fairly evenly divided between private and public sector interests. This distribution is consistent with the distribution of organizations in the social network mapping platform. Respondents are also well distributed among the various public sector organization types included. One respondent group that may be somewhat overrepresented is that of elected officials, as they submitted twenty percent of all responses.

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



The distribution suggests that while the bulk of respondents to the survey are located within Allen County, they consider their respective markets as having a broader scope. The relatively low number of individuals who engage in international markets limits this perspective somewhat.

5.2 VALIDATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The principal focus of the survey instrument was to first ask respondents to validate the various recommended actions as being both plausible and important and then to prioritize those actions that were viewed as the most feasible or impactful. Actions were divided by functional area and prioritized within each area. In order to validate each of the proposed actions, respondents were asked to rate each on a five-point scale, with 1 representing a low priority or viable action and 5 representing a highly viable action.

In order to determine the validation scores presented in the following tables, all responses were transformed using a value-weighting process. The scores therefore represent a weighted average of all responses for each action. They are presented to allow for comparability between recommended actions and in the interest of relative brevity. Also note that the action descriptions are truncated here for presentation. The full descriptions that are presented in the Action Plan were reproduced in the survey instrument.

Local and Regional Collaboration and Private Sector Engagement

Proposed Action	Weighted Validation Score
Action 1: Create an Allen County Plan for Collaborative Growth.	4.19
Action 2: Fund an Initial Endowment of the Link LIMA Foundation.	3.87
Action 3: Develop a community fund, to be administered by the Allen Economic Development Group or other appropriate entity to promote innovation and entrepreneurship activities in the region.	3.52

Each of the proposed actions offered by the Local and Regional Collaboration and Private Sector Engagement workgroup was viewed to be valid by the survey respondents, if one assumes that a weighted score higher than three signifies validation. The distribution of responses to each action corroborates these findings as 45 respondents considered Action 1 to be either impactful or highly impactful where only 26 respondents viewed Action 3 in the same light.

Economic Development Structure and Alignment

Proposed Action	Weighted Validation Score
Action 1: Conduct a comprehensive gap analysis of the region.	3.86
Action 2: Perform an analysis of local process and product innovation opportunities and needs.	3.34
Action 3: Coordinate the sharing of information with small-to-mid-size businesses regarding opportunities for growth.	3.96
Action 4: Create a coordinated regional economic development marketing and communications plan for internal and external media markets.	3.86

Again, each of the proposed actions offered by the Economic Development Structure and Alignment workgroup was viewed to be valid by the survey respondents. The scores here differ from those of the other workgroup as there is no clear differentiation, suggesting that three of the four recommendations were viewed more or less equally.

Workforce Development Structure and Alignment

Proposed Action	Weighted Validation Score
Action 1: Sponsor a Joint Systems Manufacturing Center/General Dynamics Land Systems booth at 'Makerfest 2015.'	3.63
Action 2: Initiate a series of strategic investments in the region's K-12 system.	4.20
Action 3: Promote the development of a pilot Adult Apprenticeship Program, possibly in conjunction with Ohio Means Jobs or the Ohio Commission on Jobs and Families.	3.44
Action 4: Support the planning and hosting of 'Makerfest 2016.'	3.71

Again, each of the proposed actions offered by the Workforce Development Structure and Alignment workgroup was viewed to be valid by the survey respondents. One of the more significant findings here is that Action 2, or those actions aligned with manufacturing career exploration and promotion in the region's K-12 system yielded the highest validation score of any of the recommended actions presented, suggesting that it received the strongest support from respondents.

Industry Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Proposed Action	Weighted Validation Score
Action 1: Establish a Regional Center for Innovation Excellence.	3.80
Action 2: Create a regional innovation and entrepreneurship website.	3.40
Action 3: Promote youth technology exploration and innovation.	4.02
Action 4: Phase II High Strain Rate Metal Forming Commercialization Center.	3.91
Action 5: Engagement of specialized marketing consultant and initiation of a regional media advertising campaign.	3.56

The final action area of Industry Innovation and Entrepreneurship again yielded a series of validated recommendations. It is important to note that both of the largely promotional action proposals expressed in Actions 2 and 5 received lower levels of support than most other recommended actions. It is possible that respondents assumed that these actions would be incorporated in other activities making them somewhat duplicative.

As a whole, we see that each of the recommendations developed by the workshop participants was deemed plausible and validated by these survey responses. Each received a varying level of support with some actions viewed to be more viable than others. These responses also illuminate another underlying theme in the body of recommendations, namely that there is a high level of support for actions which promote youth exploration and development, in order to build the future workforce. This is consistent with the selection of one of the driver axes of workforce development.

5.3 ACTIONS PRIORITIZATION

Each of the recommended actions developed by the participants in that Strategic Planning Think Tank Workshop have been validated by the participants themselves as well as a broader array of business and community leaders through a post-workshop survey. This suggests that each of the recommended actions is perceived to yield some future value in advancing the community and economic objectives of the region. However, each of these proposed actions requires the coordination of significant resources. As such, it is important that they are prioritized in order to capitalize on the resources already available or those that may become available to the region.

Survey respondents were asked to rank by priority each of the proposed actions by their perceived value and effectiveness. Respondents were further asked not to consider the relative cost of each action as ranking on this basis may introduce undue bias into the process. The sum of all individual rankings was then subjected to the same weighted-value analysis presented in the actions validation discussion. These are presented in the tables below, with a ranking of 1 indicating the most favored or highest priority action and lower ranks indicating lesser priorities.

Local and Regional Collaboration and Private Sector Engagement		
Rank	Proposed Action	Ranking Score
1	Action 1: Create an Allen County Plan for Collaborative Growth.	1.54
2	Action 2: Fund an Initial Endowment of the Link LIMA Foundation.	1.97
3	Action 3: Develop a community fund, to be administered by the Allen Economic Development Group or other appropriate entity to promote innovation and entrepreneurship activities in the region.	2.50

The ranking of priorities in the first recommended action section closely mirrors the validation scores discussed earlier. Note that the ranking scores presented here suggest that all three actions were assessed relatively similarly but that Actions 1 and 2 take greater precedence. This trend does not necessarily follow through the remaining proposed actions.

Economic Development Structure and Alignment		
Rank	Proposed Action	Ranking Score
1	Action 1: Conduct a comprehensive gap analysis of the region.	2.14
2	Action 3: Coordinate the sharing of information with small-to-mid-size businesses regarding opportunities for growth.	2.34
3	Action 2: Perform an analysis of local process and product innovation opportunities and needs.	2.67
4	Action 4: Create a coordinated regional economic development marketing and communications plan for internal and external media markets.	2.84

The ranking of the proposed actions in the Economic Development Structure and Alignment section are both lower than those found in the Local and Regional Collaboration and Private Sector Engagement section and diverge from the validation measures presented above. A ranking of the validation scores would yield an order of Action 3, 1, 4, and 2. The reordering of priorities here suggests that respondents viewed certain actions to be more likely to implement and to assign a sense of timing to those actions.

Workforce Development Structure and Alignment		
Rank	Proposed Action	Ranking Score
1	Action 2: Initiate a series of strategic investments in the region's K-12 system.	1.57
2	Action 3: Promote the development of a pilot Adult Apprenticeship Program, possibly in conjunction with Ohio Means Jobs or the Ohio Commission on Jobs and Families.	2.26
3	Action 1: Sponsor a Joint Systems Manufacturing Center/ General Dynamics Land Systems booth at 'Makerfest 2015.'	2.83
4	Action 4: Support the planning and hosting of 'Makerfest 2016.'	3.33

The ranking of proposed actions in the area of Workforce Development Structure and Alignment again diverges from the prioritization scores assigned. This further suggests that respondents viewed each of these questions separately, per the intent of the survey instrument. A ranking of prioritization scores would yield an order of Action 2, 4, 1, and 3. Support for Action 2 is quite clear, though the case of Action 3 is more interesting. The disparity between the ranked support for the creation of Adult Apprenticeship Program and its feasibility is significant. As such, this suggests some uncertainty as to who might best implement such a program.

Industry Innovation and Entrepreneurship		
Rank	Proposed Action	Ranking Score
1	Action 1: Establish a Regional Center for Innovation Excellence.	2.25
2	Action 3: Promote youth technology exploration and innovation.	2.49
3	Action 4: Phase II High Strain Rate Metal Forming Commercialization Center.	3.09
4	Action 2: Create a regional innovation and entrepreneurship website.	3.32
5	Action 5: Engagement of specialized marketing consultant and initiation of a regional media advertising campaign.	3.83

The proposed recommendations in the final issue area – Industry Innovation and Entrepreneurship further cements the conclusion that survey respondents balanced their judgement of impact and timing when ordering the proposed actions. The rankings here again diverge from a ranked order of the Validation Scores (Actions 3, 4, 1, 5, and 2). This again suggests that respondents here viewed the recommended actions as following a certain order with the establishment of a Regional Center for Innovation Excellence serving as the springboard for other initiatives.

Once the proposed actions recommended by each Strategic Planning Think Tank Workshop workgroup were presented for validation and prioritization, a clearer picture of regional needs and priorities emerges. While respondents were asked to rank each list of proposed actions in their respective issue areas, the ranking scores generated allows for the tabulation of a full rank order listing of all recommendations. The table below presents the top five proposed actions ranked across all issue areas along with their estimated costs.

TOP FIVE PROPOSED ACTIONS

Top Five Proposed Actions – by Ranking		
Rank	Proposed Action	Estimated Cost
1	Create an Allen County Plan for Collaborative Growth.	\$150,000
2	Initiate a series of strategic investments in the region's K-12 system.	\$190,000
3	Fund an Initial Endowment of the Link LIMA Foundation.	\$300,000
4	Conduct a comprehensive gap analysis of the region.	\$200,000
5	Establish a Regional Center for Innovation Excellence.	\$150,000
TOTAL ESTIMATED COST		\$990,000

It should again be noted here that the activities of a number of proposed actions can be coordinated as they serve common needs if the scope is expanded. As such, the highest priorities can be distilled into three major themes.

- The completion of a series of studies that identifies regional capacity, gaps and opportunities and establishes a framework for greater collaboration among business and community leaders. The region also has a number of possible models in Task Force LIMA and Link LIMA to build upon.
- The execution of a series of strategic investments to encourage career and technology exploration at the K-12 level. Emphasis should be directed at developing greater interest in advanced manufacturing careers and entrepreneurship.
- The establishment of a stronger innovation culture throughout the region beginning with the formation of a Regional Center for Innovation Excellence. This will build upon earlier efforts in the region and is a natural bridge to other innovation activities as it serves as a connecting and coordinating hub.

These prioritized actions may all potentially be executed within a short (12-18 months) timeframe and can be highly impactful given both the scale and the degree of interconnectedness in the region. Implementation of these strategies may also establish the Allen County region as a regional and national example of successful collaboration and innovation.



6.0 CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Allen County, Ohio is renowned for its strong manufacturing heritage, an established history of industry innovation, a world-class workforce, and a strong sense of community and economic resiliency. Each of these assets has been tested over the last twenty years, as changes in the global economy and other external forces have both impacted the region's standing. Business and community leaders recognize the nature and impact of these challenges and further recognize that the identification of collaborative solutions offers the best chance to reestablish the region as one of the nation's strongest manufacturing and innovation centers.

The recommendations presented in this Action Plan were developed through an intensive exploration process that highlights the regional strengths and the assets. The leaders that have contributed their time, knowledge, and insight in considering these opportunities have recognized the potential that exists within the region as well as the targeted actions that can be taken to redirect the region's economic and innovative energies.

The challenges faced by the Allen County region and the Joint Systems Manufacturing Center are common to a number of manufacturing and defense industry regions throughout the United States. What will differentiate the region from their peers is how it responds to these challenges. The recommendations presented in this report describe an approach built upon capacity building and collaboration to spur the development of the future workforce and foster a culture of innovation. This model has the potential to both meet the needs of the present and to shape a more prosperous future.

This Action Plan marks the end of the first phase of the Allen County Defense Initiative, but it is also a beginning. The recommendations included in this report will serve as the basis for a series of additional funding requests through both the U.S. Department of Defense Office of Economic Adjustment and other potential funding entities. It will also serve as a roadmap for future dialogue and planning efforts in the region. In this respect, the efforts of those individuals who contributed in the plan's formation have created an excellent starting point.

7.0 ABOUT FUTURE IQ PARTNERS

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

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

REPORT AND STRATEGIC PLANNING THINK TANK WORKSHOP PREPARED BY:



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DAVID BEURLE, CEO FUTURE IQ PARTNERS

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



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8.0 ABOUT TASK FORCE LIMA AND THE ALLEN COUNTY DEFENSE INITIATIVE

This study is one of many to be produced under an award issued by the U.S. Department of Defense Office of Economic Adjustment to assist Allen County and Task Force LIMA in developing strategies to ensure the economic health and vitality of the Joint Systems Manufacturing Center and the broader region.

For more information regarding Task Force LIMA or any aspect of this project, please contact:

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FOR MORE DETAILS, AND TO ACCESS COPIES OF ADDITIONAL REPORTS, PLEASE VISIT:

<http://future-iq.com/projects/task-force-lima-defense-initiative>
or www.allencountynetwork.com

Asset Inventory
March 2015

Scenarios of the Future
April 2015

Strategic Action Plan
May 2015

