Focus Area 1: Support the growth of Regional Innovation Clusters

What and Why.

A key focus area of the Together North Jersey Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is to foster a world-class regional economy that supports new employment and investment in a variety of innovative industries. Regional economic development partners will continue to promote growth in traditional economic engines such as Transportation, Logistics, and Distribution; Life Sciences; and Manufacturing, as well as to encourage new development opportunities in sectors such as Renewable Energy, Healthcare, and Tourism. Success will depend on enhancing the economic competitiveness of North Jersey. It will also require close collaboration between the private sector, local government, regional planning organizations, and higher education institutions in addressing the region’s long-term economic challenges and opportunities. Therefore, the regional CEDS seeks to create new platforms, forums, and programs all designed to enhance North Jersey as a location where Regional Innovation Clusters can flourish.

Supporting the development of Regional Innovative Clusters is a top priority of the State of New Jersey as well as the US Department of Commerce. Vibrant regional clusters can positively affect employment, wages, innovation, and entrepreneurship. At the same time, however, a region can be home to a cluster that is in decline and, through spillover effects, can bring down an entire regional or state economy. The concentration of the US auto industry in Michigan is such an example. The goal of the plan, therefore, should not solely be to support a fixed number of clusters, but to foster an innovation economy that can support a variety of industries, especially those for which North Jersey is uniquely positioned to nurture.

How.

The establishment of collaborative institutions, programs, and events would foster productive relationships between private sector actors, regulators, and policymakers. These efforts should focus in particular on strengthening innovative industries with potential to drive the regional economy.

Strategy 1.

Advance efforts to streamline state and local permitting processes. Simplifying the regulatory process in New Jersey is essential to attracting businesses and redeeming North Jersey’s reputation as a business-friendly environment. Businesses are attracted to states and regions where there is predictability, consistency, and efficiency across different levels of government. Coordinating and streamlining the permitting process can be accomplished by focusing on outcomes – job creation and private-sector investment - rather than process – cumbersome applications and evaluation inconsistencies.
Focus Area Write-up Worksheet

Strategy 2.

Establish a North Jersey Economic Development District (EDD) organization. A regional Economic Development District, established by NJTPA and its regional partners would serve as a coordinating agency in the implementation of the region’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. The district would allow the region to orchestrate efforts in order to realize goals that would be difficult to achieve by individual organizations or jurisdictions.

Strategy 3.

Host an annual North Jersey CEO Roundtable for each Regional Innovation Cluster (RIC). Seven industries driven by innovation have been identified by NJTPA as key components to a prosperous Together North Jersey region: bio/pharma & life sciences; trans., logistics, distribution; financial services; manufacturing; health care; technology; leisure, hospitality & retail. Annual North Jersey CEO roundtables for these RICs will provide a regional voice to the statewide RICs and Talent Networks and identify regional challenges or opportunities for growth of clusters. This will help raise awareness and create a platform for action.

Getting Started.

- Engage a municipality to serve as pilot location for streamlining the permitting process.
- Establish an economic development liaison office within NJTPA to assist in the implementation of the CEDS and the process for creating an EDD.
- Reach out to statewide industry associations, Talent Networks, and business groups to endorse the Roundtables and identify participants.
- Organize a group of regional leaders to serve on an exploratory committee to form Futures Council.
- Work with Regional Innovation Cluster Talent Networks to identify gaps in business assistance programs and develop strategies to meet those needs.

Strategy 4.

Create a North Jersey Futures Council. A North Jersey Futures Council would create an independent non-profit organization dedicated to studying and addressing the long-term economic competitiveness of the region. The council would help develop an investment agenda for the region that is informed by private sector needs and supported by independent research and analysis. The council’s professional staff would be guided by prominent private sector and institutional leaders and would align their work with a regional EDD in order to effectively employ resources and planning efforts.

Strategy 5.

Create a program(s) in the state or region to connect small businesses to growth and business development opportunities, with a focus on the regional innovation clusters. A “Business Connect” program should be established to help regional businesses increase sales and revenue through professional services, mentorships, supplier development initiatives, and connections to purchasers. Specific activities could include networking, matchmaking, and creation of an online marketplace to connect suppliers and buyers. This network could be built as a statewide program by working with the New Jersey Economic Development Authority or by encouraging local and county economic development organizations to create local programs that coordinate with regional and state business assistance resources.
Focus Area #

Strategy 1.1: Create a pilot project in the region to demonstrate a potential model for streamlining state and local permitting processes.

What and Why.

Simplifying the regulatory process in New Jersey is essential business attraction. Businesses will be attracted to states and regions where at every jurisdictional level there exists predictability, consistency, efficiency of the permitting process. However, it is not a simple task and requires a complex coordination framework of varying authorities. Technically, the approach is proven to be highly feasible. Political feasibility varies with the players – further complicated with the fact that New Jersey is a “home rule” state. Working with the New Jersey League of Municipalities, Together North Jersey should identify and implement a pilot project that has potential regional and state impact and can serve as a statewide model for process improvements. The pilot should be completed within a fixed timeframe and outcomes/lessons learned should be reported at its conclusion. Potential pilot project in North Jersey could include streamlining permitting for small manufacturing facilities, creating a “one-stop-shop” for local permits, and establishing a centralized electronic permit tracking system.

Actions.

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<tr>
<th>Actions:</th>
<th>Responsibility:</th>
<th>Timeframe:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Engage a municipality to serve as pilot location for streamlining the permitting process.</td>
<td>Bridgewater, NJTPA</td>
<td>Medium. 24-48 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Establish an interagency working group to identify a project and the appropriate agency to administer it.</td>
<td>Bridgewater, NJTPA</td>
<td>Medium. 24-48 months</td>
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<tr>
<td>c) Develop a plan and timeline for project implementation.</td>
<td>Bridgewater, NJTPA</td>
<td>Medium. 24-48 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Report annually on the progress of the project and lessons learned.</td>
<td>Bridgewater, NJTPA</td>
<td>Medium. 24-48 months</td>
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Feasibility.

Level of feasibility (High, Medium, or Low). Explanation.

Impact.
Strategy Write-up Worksheet

Level of feasibility (High, Medium, or Low). Explanation.

**Resources.**

**Examples/Case Studies.**

**State of Oregon’s Regulatory Streamlining and Simplification Project**
In 2012, the Office of Oregon Governor John A. Kitzhaber published a RoadMap to Improving Regulatory Effectiveness in Oregon, which like New Jersey, is a home rule state. One of the strategic initiatives recommended in the strategy was to promote and monitor select pilot projects to develop models for process improvements. The selected projects each involve substantive, regulated topics which are administered by various state, local, and federal agencies. They include regional wetlands permitting, a water permitting kaizen process, energy facility siting, and wave energy permitting. The objective of these pilot projects is not only to make the specific improvements in the processes that are the subject of the respective project, but to learn from the experience, record the lessons learned, and develop a reservoir of knowledge that may be applied to future collaborative work.

**State of Massachusetts Best Practices Model for Streamlined Local Permitting**
(http://www.mass.gov/hed/economic/eohed/pro/tools/best-practices-model-for-streamlined-local.html): The Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA) published a Best Practices Model to Streamlined Local Permitting. To create this guide, MARPA conducted a statewide municipal survey, hosted 14 permitting focus groups, conducted extensive research, and utilized the expertise of the Regional Planning Agencies throughout Massachusetts. The Best Practices are designed to make permitting more predictable, equitable, cost effective, and efficient while reinforcing local jurisdiction, encouraging community-supported projects, preserving local resources, and maintaining the standard of review.
Focus Area # 1: Support the growth of Regional Innovation Clusters
Strategy 1.2: Establish a North Jersey Economic Development District (EDD) Organization.

What and Why.

For the Together North Jersey CEDS to be successfully implemented there must be an orchestrated regional effort in which various organizations collaborate to realize goals that would be difficult to achieve in piecemeal fashion by individual organizations. Facilitating this effort is the primary job of any regional economic development organization. Together North Jersey’s challenge is the lack of formal structure and resources to carry out economic development activities. It is recommended, therefore, that NJTPA and its regional partners establish an Economic Development District to serve as a coordinating agency in the implementation of the regional CEDS. NJTPA should take the lead in the process by creating an internal liaison office to coordinate with regional partners through a working group, the State of New Jersey, and the US Economic Development Administration on forming an EDD. The NJTPA should designate staff to provide administrative and technical support to the EDD.

Actions.

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<tr>
<td>a) Establish an economic development liaison office within NJTPA to assist in the implementation of the CEDS and the process for creating an EDD.</td>
<td>NJTPA</td>
<td>Short. 9 – 12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Create a regional working group to explore the best options and process for establishing a regional EDD.</td>
<td>NJPTA, RU</td>
<td>Short. 9 – 12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Consult with EDA about the formal application process for establishing an EDD.</td>
<td>NJTPA</td>
<td>Short. 9 – 12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Hold a regional meeting of economic development stakeholders and state officials to formally agree to establish an EDD.</td>
<td>NJTPA, and other partners</td>
<td>Short. 9 – 12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Make formal application for EDA approval.</td>
<td>NJTPA</td>
<td>Short. (18 months)</td>
</tr>
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Feasibility.
Strategy Write-up Worksheet

Level of feasibility (High, Medium, or Low). Explanation.

**Impact.**

Level of feasibility (High, Medium, or Low). Explanation.

**Resources.**

**Examples/Case Studies.**

- Case study 1.
- Case Study 2.
- Case Study 3.
Focus Area #
Strategy 1.3: Host an annual North Jersey CEO Roundtables for each Regional Innovation Cluster.

What and Why.

Organize annual North Jersey CEO roundtables for the seven Regional Innovation Clusters: Bio/Pharma and Life Sciences; Transportation, Logistics, and Distribution; Financial Services; Manufacturing; Healthcare; Technology; and Tourism. These roundtables will provide a regional voice to the statewide RICs and Talent Networks and identify regional challenges or opportunities for cluster growth. This will help raise awareness and create a platform for action with local economic development groups and regional industry organizations.

Actions.

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<tr>
<td>a) Reach out to statewide industry associations, Talent Networks, and business groups to endorse the Roundtables and identify participants.</td>
<td>NJ EDD, NJTPA, NJDOL, NJBAC</td>
<td>Medium. 24-48 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Explore potential state and private funding sources for the Roundtables.</td>
<td>NJ EDD, NJTPA</td>
<td>Medium. 24-48 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Work with local chambers of commerce and business partnerships to host CEO Roundtables in different locations in the region.</td>
<td>NJTPA, Chambers of Commerce, and Business Partnerships</td>
<td>Medium. 24-48 months</td>
</tr>
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Feasibility.

Level of feasibility (High, Medium, or Low). Explanation.

Impact.

Level of feasibility (High, Medium, or Low). Explanation.

Resources.
Examples/Case Studies.

**Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber (http://www.cincinnatichamber.com/):** The Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber organizes CEO Roundtables to bring CEOs and presidents of regional companies together for a confidential and invigorating exchange of information, ideas and insights. Each Roundtable consists of 10 to 12 members of noncompetitive companies representing various types of industries and organizations. Through monthly meetings, members enjoy candid, confidential discussions and receive advice and support from fellow CEOs who understand and share the unique challenges of top-level management.

**Oregon Entrepreneurs Network (http://www.oen.org/events/ceo-roundtable/):** The Oregon Entrepreneurs Network (OEN) organizes CEO Roundtables for executives of emerging businesses in Oregon and Southwest Washington. Events are facilitated by experienced serial CEOs and limited to 12 attendees. They offer opportunities for leaders in their sectors to discuss issues of interest to them, including building a team, raising capital, exit strategies, and the role of the CEO in company culture.
Strategy Write-up Worksheet

Focus Area #
Strategy 1.4: Create a North Jersey Futures Council

What and Why.

A North Jersey Futures Council would create an independent non-profit organization dedicated to studying and addressing the long-term economic competitiveness of the region. The council would employ a professional staff and be guided by prominent private sector and institutional leaders in the region. It would help to develop an overall investment agenda for the region that is informed by private sector needs and supported by independent research and analysis. It would work in close alignment with a regional EDD to focus resources and planning efforts to meet economic development needs. A Futures Council will improve the economic competitiveness of North Jersey by directly engaging the private sector in addressing regional challenges, identifying solutions and opportunities, and catalyzing actions. The council will identify investment opportunities and needs, programs, and initiatives that enhance the economic vitality of the region.

Actions.

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<tr>
<td>a) Organize a group of regional leaders to serve on an exploratory committee. Committee members will visit potential benchmark organizations such as the Greater Louisville Project (GLP), Austin Area Research Organization, and the Economy League of Greater Philadelphia. The purpose of the visits is to learn best practices and lessons regarding leading, structuring, and supporting such an organization.</td>
<td>NJTPA, RU, NJBAC, NJDOL</td>
<td>Short. 9 – 12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Coordinate with the State of New Jersey and Choose Jersey.</td>
<td>NJTPA, RU, NJBAC, NJDOL</td>
<td>Short. 9 – 12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Develop a proposed mission and business plan for the Futures Council.</td>
<td>NJTPA, RU, NJBAC, NJDOL</td>
<td>Medium. 24-48 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Reach out to statewide industry associations, Talent Networks, and business groups to endorse the Roundtables and identify participants.</td>
<td>NJBAC, NJDOL, WIBs, TMAs</td>
<td>Medium. 24-48 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Hire a full-time professional to lead the organization.</td>
<td>NJTPA</td>
<td>Medium. 24-48 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Seek support from other regional and statewide institutions, industry associations, business groups, non-profits, and foundations.</td>
<td>NJTPA, RU</td>
<td>Medium. 24-48 months</td>
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**Feasibility.**

**Level of feasibility (High, Medium, or Low).** Explanation.

**Impact.**

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**Resources.**

**Examples/Case Studies.**

**Economy League of Greater Philadelphia** (http://economyleague.org/): The Economy League of Greater Philadelphia is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization that brings together regional leaders and organizations across all sectors to address the most pressing and challenging issues facing the Greater Philadelphia region. The organization provides in-depth research, collaboration with regional stakeholders, and creative problem-solving, and serves as a catalyst for action. Approximately half of the Economy League’s revenue is generated through Board of Directors membership. The balance is derived from projects and initiatives with local governments, foundations, corporations, and private sector leadership organizations.

**Austin Area Research Organization** (http://aaroregion.com/): The Austin Area Research Organization (AARO) is a non-profit organization comprised of 100 business and community leaders from the Central Texas region. AARO works to advance the economic and social well-being of Central Texas by researching and addressing public policy issues in 5 priority areas: Energy & Water, Health Care, P-16 Education, Social Equity, and Transportation.

**Greater Louisville Project** (http://greaterlouisvilleproject.org/): The Greater Louisville Project acts as a catalyst for civic action in the Louisville region by providing research and data analysis to engage the community in a shared agenda for long-term progress. Its research is focused on three Deep Drivers of Change: Education, 21st Century Jobs, and Quality of Place. The Greater Louisville Project is an independent, non-partisan civic initiative supported by a consortium of foundations.
Focus Area #1 Support the growth of Regional Innovation Clusters.
Strategy 1.5: Create a program(s) in the region to connect small businesses to growth and business development opportunities, with a focus on the Regional Innovation Clusters.

What and Why.

A “Business Connect” program should be established to help regional businesses increase sales and revenue through professional services, mentorships, supplier development initiatives, and connections to major procurements/leading business purchasers. Specific connection activities could include networking, matchmaking, and creation of an online marketplace to connect suppliers and buyers. Initial steps to developing such programs include inventorying existing local business assistance programs, identifying gaps in business services and programs, and working to fill critical gaps by establishing regional programs that coordinate with local and state business assistance assets.

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<tr>
<td>a) Identify and inventory local business technical assistance programs in the region.</td>
<td>RU</td>
<td>Medium. 24-48 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Work with Regional Innovation Cluster Talent Networks to identify gaps in business assistance programs and develop strategies to meet those needs.</td>
<td>Talent Networks</td>
<td>Medium. 24-48 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Work with the New Jersey EDA to explore the potential of establishing a Regional Business Connect program.</td>
<td>NJTPA, NJEDA</td>
<td>Medium. 24-48 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Identify and inventory local business technical assistance programs in the region.</td>
<td>RU</td>
<td>Medium. 24-48 months</td>
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Feasibility.

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Strategy Write-up Worksheet

Impact.

Level of feasibility (High, Medium, or Low). Explanation.

Resources.

Examples/Case Studies.

Pure Michigan Business Connect (http://www.puremichiganb2b.com/b2b-web/): Pure Michigan Business Connect (PMBC) is a public-private initiative developed by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) that introduces Michigan companies to opportunities that help them grow and expand, including procurement resources, new business opportunities, B2B networking, professional services/business assistance.

CONNECT (http://connect.org): CONNECT is a regional program that catalyzes the creation of innovative technology and life sciences products in the San Diego region by linking inventors and entrepreneurs with the resources they need for success.

Georgia Centers of Innovation (http://www.georgia.org/business-resources/georgia-centers-of-innovation/): The Georgia Centers of Innovation help nearly 3,000 clients each year, free of charge, to tap new markets and accelerate product development by providing technical expertise, cutting-edge research, and strategic partnerships.