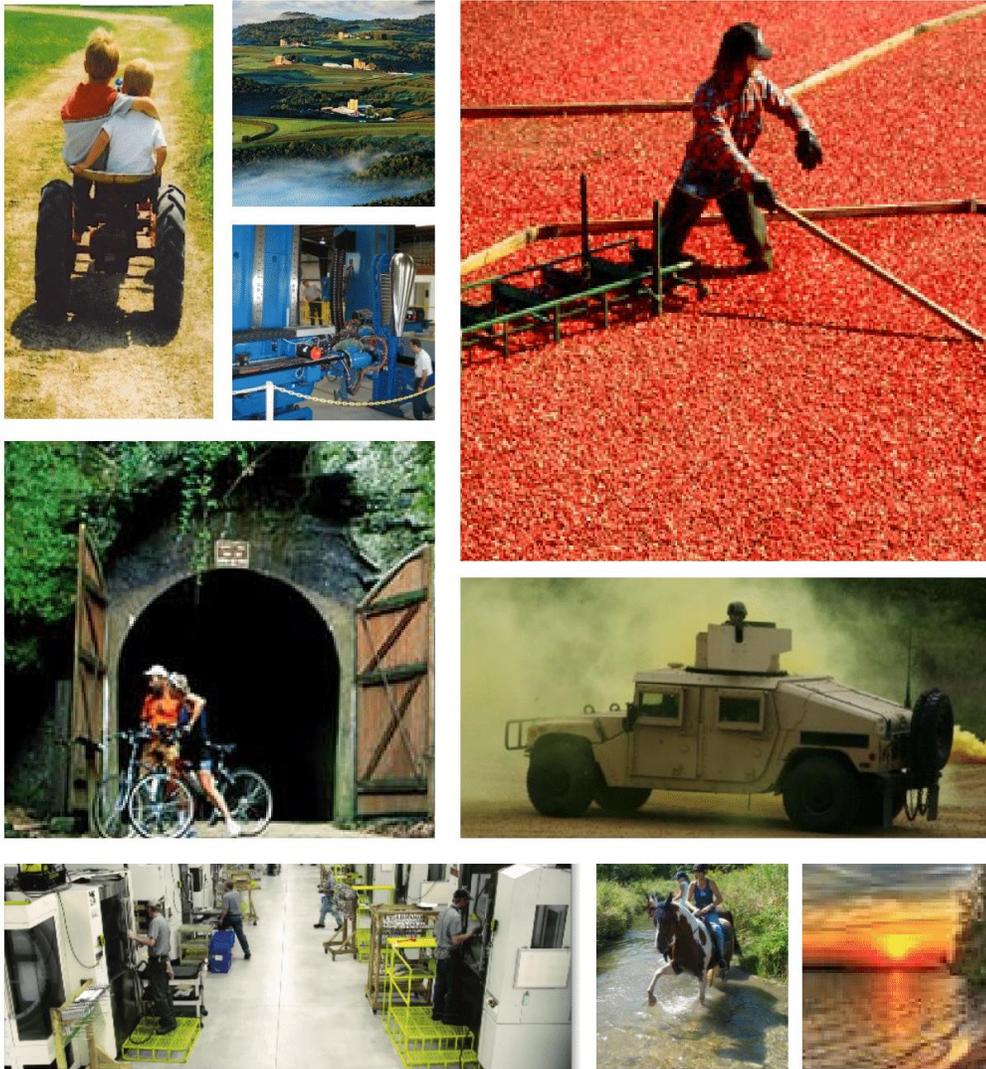




Stronger Economies Together

*The 7 Rivers Alliance Region:
Jackson, Monroe and Juneau Counties of Wisconsin
March 2017 (Revised June 2017)*



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Stronger Economies Together Initiative

SET was launched in 2009 by USDA Rural Development in collaboration with the nation's Regional Rural Development Centers (RRDC) and their land-grant university partners. The purpose of Stronger Economies Together (SET) is to strengthen the capacity of communities in rural America to work together in developing and implementing an economic development blueprint that strategically builds on the current and emerging economic strengths of their region. Important elements of the Stronger Economies Together program will build collaboration between communities in a region, provides economic analyses that is tailored to help capture the region's current or emerging clusters and comparative economic advantages and is supported by technical assistance provided by land-grant university extension systems to the regions over a period of several months including the SET training.

The Seven Rivers Region is comprised of 14 total counties. For the SET Program, Monroe, Juneau, and Jackson Counties, three of those 14 counties, were selected to participate. For this program these counties were afforded the opportunity to collaborate on planning that addresses shared business interests and natural assets. Several major employers, health and school systems, and significant transportation routes link this area, as does the setting—a beautiful agricultural and natural resources base. The region is home to the Ho Chunk Nation and Tribal Authority as well as Fort McCoy military installation and the Veteran's Administration Hospital serving the North Central part of Wisconsin. The economy has a number of assets, but also has challenges with a sizable transient population, substance abuse, lower educational attainment and earnings as compared to peer communities.

The promise of this three-county region has been proven in the alliance they have as members of the 7 Rivers Alliance economic development coalition. These counties have also partnered on business retention efforts, regional workshops, and other ad hoc shared efforts to attract tourism, agricultural and manufacturing opportunities.

This region was selected for SET VI in mid-2016 and developed an aggressive project plan and timeline. The initial planning work was done by the 10-person regional core team (see Appendix A). Among the core team the subset of Lisa Herr, Chris Hardie, Steve Peterson and Terry Whipple make up the ongoing implementation group.

The SET initiative was introduced to the public at the Civic Forum, which was held at the end of September 2016 in Tomah, Wisconsin. Tomah is the center of the three counties and a location that the region identifies as a mutually convenient and neutral place to convene. In particular, Tomah's location at the intersection of two Interstate highways that connect the three counties provides greater accessibility for residents of the region than more remote locations. Nearly 100 people turned out for a celebration of the local food and beverage providers of the area and a kick-off to this asset-based approach to developing a regional economic development plan. Participation was robust and many good ideas surfaced that continued to positively influence the process moving forward.

The initiative continued with Sessions 1 through 4. While these sessions attracted smaller turnouts of 25 to 35 participants, they were always high in energy and resulted in important ideas being discussed and moving toward key goals and outcomes. Among the attendees, there was both consistent participation from key sectors (health, education, manufacturing, tourism, government) and new participants who brought continued enthusiasm to the meetings. The result of the Civic Forum and the later sessions is the Seven Rivers Alliance High Quality Plan which is described in this document.

Executive Summary

This regional economic development plan serves as the roadmap for future collaborative economic development initiatives that serve the three-county region, addressing high priority opportunities that build on local assets, overcome barriers, and capitalize on the economic strengths of the region for the immediate and long term future.

Initially drawn together as a region formally through this project, a true spirit of collaboration and shared purpose has resulted in a commitment to address the region's economic future together. Key stakeholders from the three counties realize that the assets and opportunities of the whole offer far greater promise than their individual parts. It has also become evident that building on assets and the existing successful economic foundation offer the greatest possibilities for sustained economic success.

Participation in this process has been remarkable. There have been consistent participants from the Civic Forum through the final session and there has been one-time participation when the issue was sufficiently of interest. In all cases, the events were marked by high levels of enthusiasm and a robust exchange of ideas. Participants included owners/operators of metal fabrication industries and food manufacturers/producers; local and statewide elected officials, chambers of commerce, the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, the Tomah VA Hospital, local military facilities, county economic development corporations, county committees local newspapers, employment agencies, retailers, hospitality establishments, agricultural producers, contractors/builders, tourism promotion organizations and interested citizens among others.

Accordingly, these individuals contributed to the SET process to ensure that this plan is a result of significant public input and is based on strong evidence about local conditions and opportunities. In fact, the energy and enthusiasm and creative thought was so high that we found ourselves having to make difficult decisions about which priorities (among the many) would ultimately rise to the top for action.

The participation and buy-in of key stakeholders, interested individuals, and the region's citizenry was not only garnered through aggressively recruiting participants to each session, but also through a creative use of social media and local media outlets. Each partner county used their significant network to invite key people. The press actively covered each session. Participants brought peers that they knew had an interest in the effort. After the draft plan was prepared, each of the county contacts shared it with the media and the core team sent a copy to each person that had attended at least one session or expressed an interest in being kept up to date on the process.

Moving forward, the county economic development organization leaders and other members of the core team are making presentations to each of the county boards, school boards, and other governments, and to each of our significant partners (local industry leaders, Ho Chunk Nation, Fort McCoy and the VA Hospital). These public presentations will be featured by the local media and specific opportunities for the general public to comment on and become involved with the goals will be provided.

In the spirit of an aggressive agenda, this plan offers four goals with companion objectives and strategies:

1. Develop critical infrastructure to facilitate the attraction and expansion of businesses in high-wage industry sectors;
 - Increase access to broadband for all residents
 - Host broadband summit
 - Seek broadband grant funding
 - Increase access to broadband for attracting residents and growing a telecommuting labor pool
 - Map broadband coverage and speed
 - Invite providers to supply-demand solution meeting
 - Support business and community broadband planning
 - Develop regional transportation system for workers
 - Lobby for road improvement funding
 - Create long-range regional transportation plan
 - Develop new regional bus links
2. Provide students with better access to workplace readiness programs to improve the region's pool of prepared labor Launch career exploration program;
 - Implement INSPIRE workplace learning
 - Introduce CEOs to 8th grade classrooms
 - Offer industry cluster tours to 9th grade students
 - Create Center of Excellence Career Academies
 - Align high school and college readiness programs with industry demand
 - Strengthen entrepreneurship education in high school
3. Reduce barriers to workforce attraction and retention
 - Increase access to childcare
 - Develop childcare training cooperatives
 - Create new private-public funding partnerships
 - Provide childcare businesses with business mentors
 - Increase access to affordable housing
 - Conduct regional housing needs assessment
 - Develop long-range affordable housing plan

- Create public-private partnerships for housing projects
4. Create and promote a regional brand that better promotes and unifies the region's tourism economy
- Promote local assets and quality of life
 - Develop a regional brand
 - Create a regional marketing plan
 - Secure JEM grant
 - Create calendar and plan for social marketing campaign

To accomplish these robust goals, there are multiple lead organizations. This reflects the collaborative nature of the SET plan. The plan is also a rich combination of short, medium and long-term outcomes. There are some opportunities for early and easy successes, but the region is planning for the long term when it comes to preparing for the future. It will be apparent that the SMART goals arrived at allow for realistic targets and measurable outcomes.

Our initiatives are assigned primarily to the three county contacts and the overarching economic development organization. This reflects the local culture of taking ownership for the effort and providing guidance and facilitation. *It does not mean that the four people that serve as the staff for these organizations are solely responsible for the work. Each of these people represents a team of staff and volunteers that is rich and vast.* The designations simply are meant to provide lead assignments. It also should not be presumed that if one organization is the lead that other organizations won't play significant roles. Our experience is that these responses are fluid and opportunistic, but must have a champion that will bring it together with the right folks at the right time.

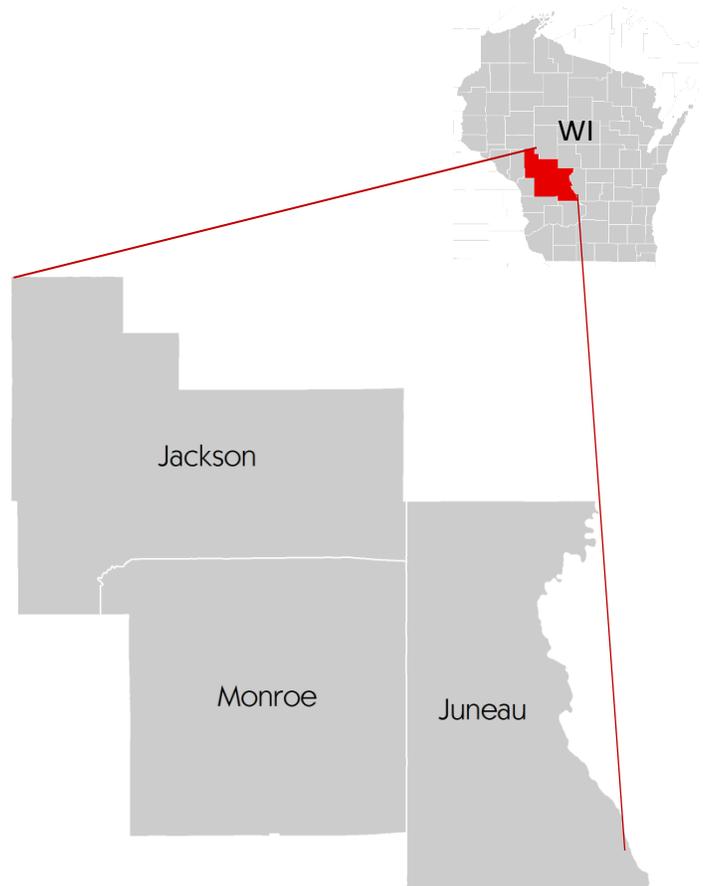
Introduction

The partners of The 7 Rivers alliance recognize that as a region they are stronger together; that building on our assets contributes to the overall success of our communities. The Stronger Economies Together initiative for Jackson, Monroe and Juneau Counties has brought together business, government, non-profit, and citizens to celebrate strengths and plan for a robust future. With good participation and research based on decision making, the regional plan set forward represents actions that will make a difference for all residents.

7 Rivers Alliance Region Description: Jackson, Monroe and Juneau Counties

Monroe, Juneau and Jackson Counties represent a significant and contiguous rural area of Western Wisconsin. This region shares several major employers, health care providers, school and transportation systems. There are about 93,000 residents in the three counties. The presence of tribal nations and military installations create transient populations that have unique challenges of substance abuse and limited educational attainment.

The largest employers in the region are federal and local government and this sector has continued to grow since 2006. Food services and eating establishments, transportation and logistics, and manufacturing that include food processing, are the next largest employers and these sectors have been in consistent decline since 2006. The average unemployment rate is 4.8% within these three counties which is the lowest in Western Wisconsin. The median household income within the three counties has demonstrated a steady decrease of 5% since 2000.



Acknowledgements

The 7 Rivers Alliance Region of Jackson, Monroe and Juneau Counties would like to thank the staff from the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development, the Regional Rural Development Centers, and Land Grant University Extension for support throughout the course of this project. They would also like to recognize the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation and Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission, and to the distinguished individuals that took part in the planning sessions, and numerous other individuals who contributed invaluable insight and ideas that led to the creation of this plan.

Regional Collaboration

The plan has the support of key stakeholders in the region including the individuals representing member organizations of the 7 Rivers Alliance, Jackson, Monroe and Juneau County officials, elected and appointed officials from local communities and school boards, and local economic development and Chambers of Commerce and tourism organizations. The Ho-Chunk Nation also provided financial support to this effort. None of the contributions are more important, however, than those of the tireless volunteers who attended community meetings and shared their gifts of time and knowledge.



The participation and buy-in of key stakeholders, interested individuals, and the region's citizenry was not only garnered through aggressively recruiting participants to each session. The Civic Forum, hosted in September 2016, was promoted through a creative use of the local media. (For example, see: http://lacrossetribune.com/tomahjournal/news/tell-us-about-the-county-tomah-economic-forum-seeks-citizen/article_3369ff06-6fd2-519c-a911-16d890b770a6.html) Social media was used to promote events. Each of the partner counties used their significant network to invite key people. Eventbrite was used to track registrations, and walk-ins were recorded at each session. The press actively covered each session. For sessions 1 through 4, county economic development corporations also actively targeted and invited industry leaders and other key stakeholders to contribute to the conversation. Participants brought peers that they knew had an interest in the effort. *After the draft plan was prepared, each of the county contacts shared it with the media and the core team sent a copy to each person that had attended at least one session or expressed an interest in being kept up to date on the process. The public is also encouraged to consider future engagement in the process if they have desire. Appendix D includes a list of the session participants and reflects the diversity of stakeholders in the region.*

Participation numbers varied from almost 100 attendees at the Civic Forum to 25-30 participants at Sessions 1 through 4. All of the sessions were held in Tomah, Wisconsin. As previously noted, Tomah sits at the center of the three county region. Its geographic position, along with its location at the intersection of two Interstate highways, creates a place that region identifies as a mutually convenient and neutral place to convene. Access to Tomah through Interstate highways likely increased turnout for several sessions, particularly those held during winter months.

Partners are also collaborating through an aggressive effort to take this plan directly to the county officials and other key stakeholders of the three county governments and key organizational sponsors. This plan serves as a blueprint to address challenges and opportunities in ways that will build even greater consensus and support for regional economic development. The region has a local culture of taking ownership for efforts and providing guidance and facilitation. Our experience is that these responses are fluid and opportunistic, but must have a champion that will bring it together with the right people at the right time. *With this in mind, the plan's initiatives are assigned primarily to the three county contacts and the overarching economic development organization (7 Rivers Alliance). However, it does not mean that the four people that serve as the leadership for these organizations are solely responsible for the work. Instead, each of these people represents a team of staff and volunteers that is rich and vast.* The designations simply are meant to provide lead assignments. It also should not be presumed that if one organization is the lead that other organizations will not play significant roles.

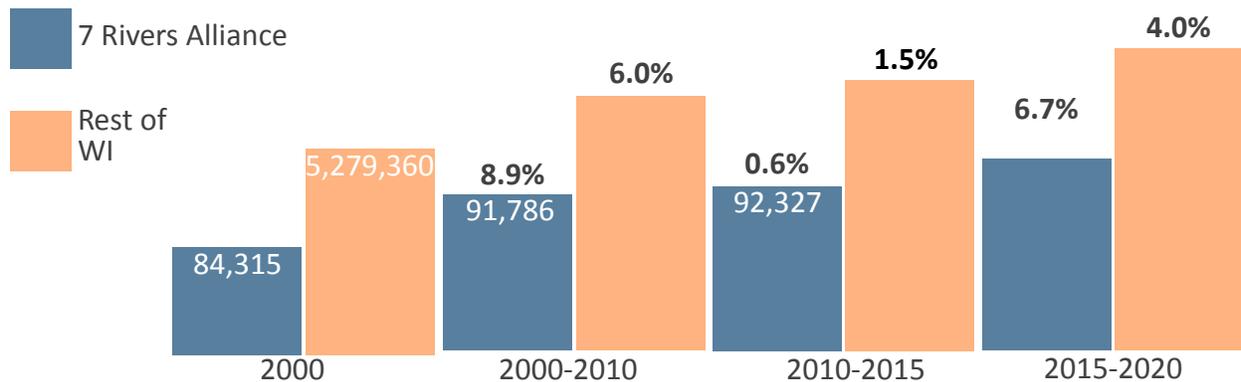
Evidence Basis for Plan – Regional Demographics

The 7 Rivers Region High Quality plan is partially based on the region’s demographic structure and characteristics. The following overview of challenges and opportunities is based partially on the information shared and discussed at the Civic Forum. Additional information is also provided to further explore several of the issues raised at the Civic Forum and during other sessions.

Population

In 2015, the 7 Rivers Alliance Region was home to an estimated 92,327 residents. Monroe County is the most populous county (45,549 residents), followed by Juneau County (26,224) and Jackson County (20,554). While population growth rates have largely trailed the national average over the past four decades, the region’s population increased at a rate greater than that of the State of Wisconsin between 2000 and 2010 (Figure 1 and Figure 2). However, population growth rates in the 7 Rivers Alliance Region slowed considerably during the period between 2010 and 2015. The diminished population growth rates are not surprising as they are found in many areas across the nation’s rural-urban continuum during the post-Great Recession recovery period. The slower population growth rates during this period are found individually in all three counties, but started waning prior to 2010 in Juneau County (Figure 2).

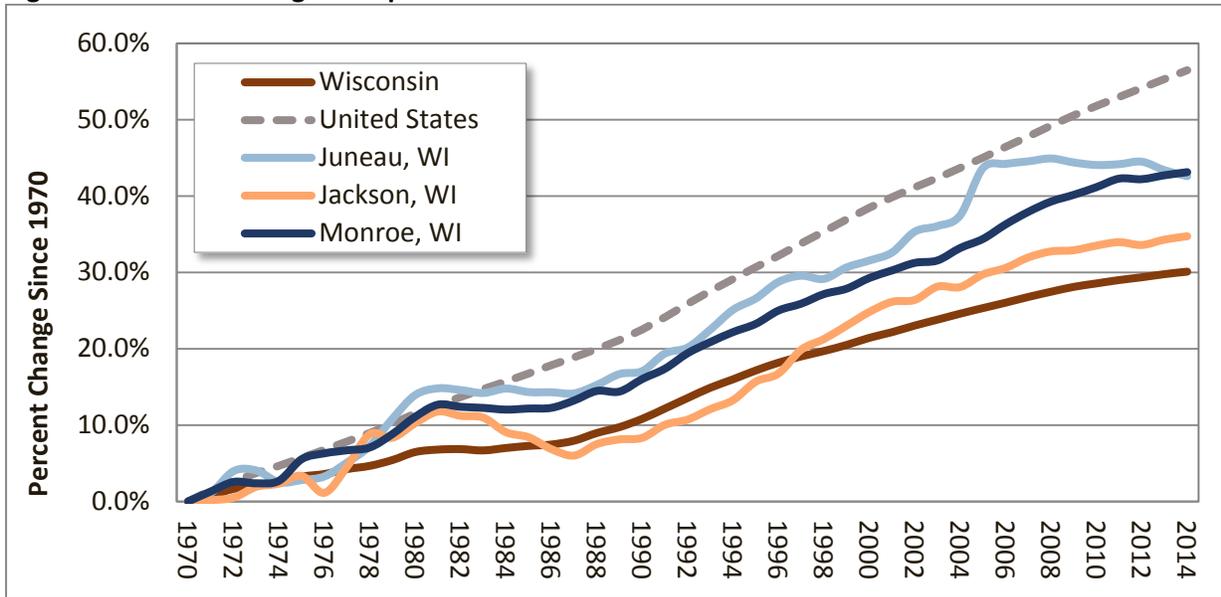
Figure 1 – Regional Population Trends 2000 to 2020



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 & 2010 Decennial Census and 2015 Population Estimates. 2020 Population Projection by Wisconsin Department of Administration, Demographic Service Center

While the region remains predominately white (93.1%), residents identifying as American Indian and Alaska Natives (2.7%) comprise the largest non-white component of the region. A large number of these residents are likely part of the Ho Chunk Nation which has its governmental headquarters in the city of Black River Falls, located in Jackson County. As with many other counties in Western Wisconsin, the 7 Rivers Alliance Region also experienced a growth in its Latino population. Specifically, Latino residents increased from 1.7% of the region’s population in 2000 to 3.7% in 2015.

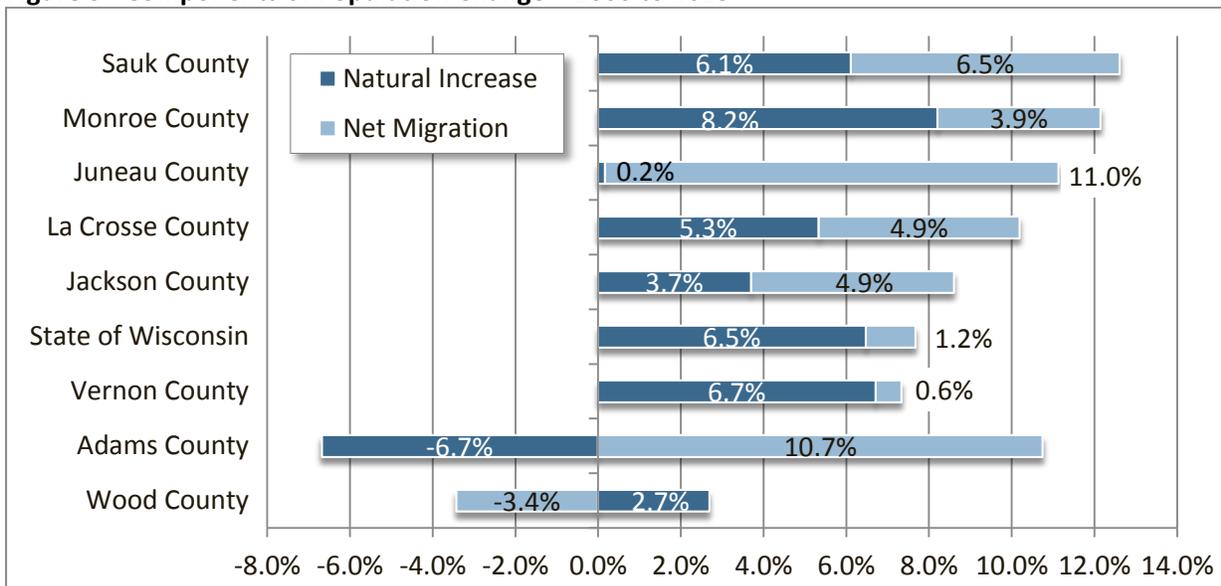
Figure 2 – Percent Change in Population Since 1970



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

Between 2000 and 2015, population growth in the region has been driven by a mix of natural increase and net migration (Figure 3). Compared to many neighboring counties and the State of Wisconsin, Monroe County’s population growth was largely influenced by natural increases. The share of population growth attributed to natural increase in Monroe County is somewhat associated to its younger age structure and the presence of Fort McCoy, a U.S. Army installation comprising 65,000 acres in the county. Jackson County has a somewhat larger reliance on net migration while Juneau County’s growth was driven almost exclusively by net migration. The net migration in Juneau County is partially influenced by the opening of the New Lisbon State Correctional Facility in 2004, which is a state prison housing just over 1,000 inmates. Migration dynamics by age are discussed later in this section.

Figure 3 - Components of Population Change – 2000 to 2015



Data Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration, Demographic Services Center

Age Structure

The age structure of the 7 Rivers Alliance Region differs from state and national distributions in several important manners (Figure 4). The region has an estimated 37.6% of its residents between the prime working ages of 25 and 54, which trails the state and national averages of 38.4% and 39.8% respectively. The region's total working age population between the ages of 16 and 64 also accounts for a smaller share of residents (62.1%) than both the State of Wisconsin (64.5%) and the United States (64.8%). The working age distribution of the 7 Rivers Alliance Region is largely attributed to a lower share of residents between the ages of 15 and 44.

Figure 4 – Age Distribution in the 7 Rivers Alliance Region (2015 Estimates)

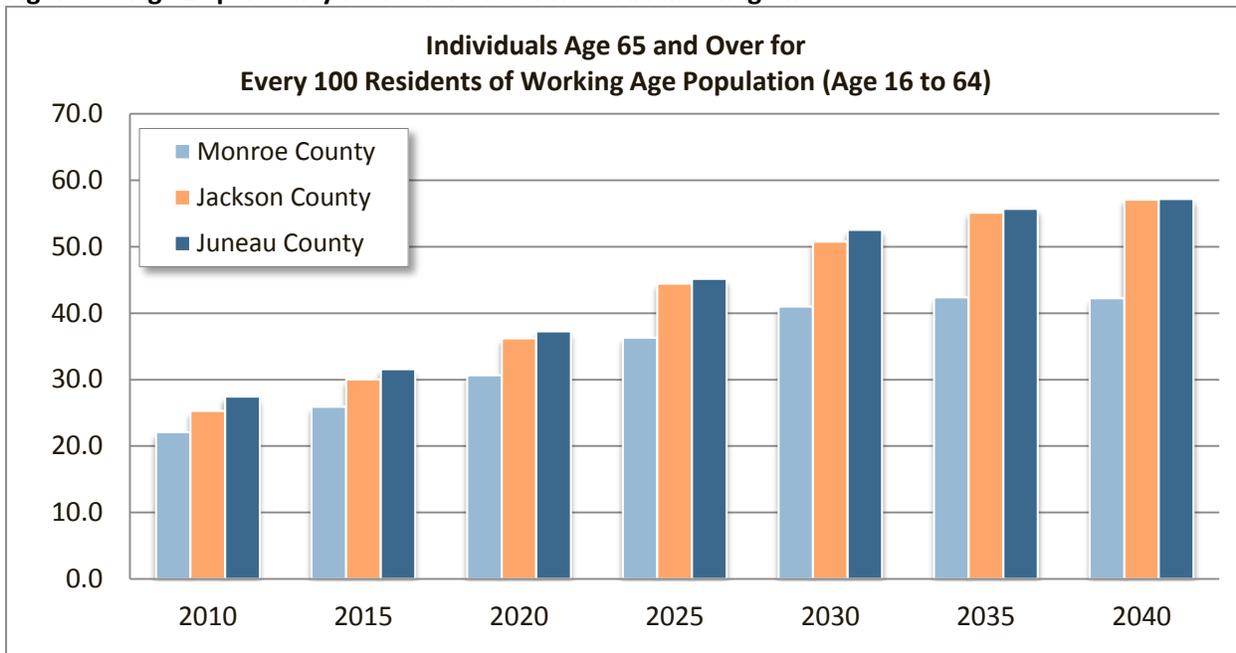
Age Group	7 Rivers Alliance Region	State of Wisconsin	United States
Age 25 to 54	37.6%	38.4%	39.8%
Age 16 to 64	62.1%	64.5%	64.8%
Total Population	92,327	5,771,337	321,418,820
Under 5	6.2%	5.9%	6.2%
5 to 14	13.0%	12.6%	12.8%
15 to 24	11.2%	13.7%	13.6%
25 to 34	11.7%	12.6%	13.7%
35 to 44	11.8%	12.0%	12.6%
45 to 54	14.2%	13.9%	13.4%
55 to 64	14.5%	13.8%	12.7%
65 to 74	10.1%	8.8%	8.6%
75 to 84	5.1%	4.6%	4.3%
85 or More	2.1%	2.2%	2.0%

Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 Population Estimates

Compared to state and national figures, the region's working age population is also comprised of a higher share of residents currently in the 45 to 54 age group and 55 to 64 age group. The differences in these age cohorts have important implications for the region's future labor force. Over the next two decades, workers in these cohorts will increasingly approach retirement age. While not all workers will retire in their mid-60s, it is likely many of them will retire either at or around this age. Furthermore, many residents who choose to continue working will be faced with capacity issues. That is, even though older workers may choose to remain in the labor force, many may not have the same physical abilities as their younger peers.

Age dependency ratios provide additional perspectives on the future age structure of the labor force. Between 2015 and 2030, the number of residents age 65 and over for every 100 residents of working age (i.e. ages 16 to 64) is projected to increase dramatically in the 7 Rivers Alliance region (Figure 5). In Juneau County, the dependency ratio is projected to jump from 31.6 in 2015 to 52.5 in 2030. Between 2015 and 2030, Jackson County's dependency ratio is expected to increase from 30.0 to 50.8. While Monroe County has a younger age distribution than either Jackson or Juneau, its age dependency ratio is still likely to increase from 25.9 to 41.0 between 2015 and 2030.

Figure 5 – Age Dependency Ratios for the 7 Rivers Alliance Region



Data Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration, Demographic Services Center

The changing age structure of the 7 Rivers Alliance Region will impact some industries more so than others (Figure 6). Manufacturing, public administration, and health care and social assistance all have more than 1,000 employees age 55 and over. These workers age 55 and older account for 30.4% of total employment in public administration; 24.9% of employment in health care and social assistance; and 24.7% of manufacturing employment. Over the next 10 years, these workers will approach retirement age and firms in these sectors will seek new and replacement workers and/or increase the productivity of remaining workers, or adopt new technologies and automation to offset workforce shortages.

Figure 6 – Number of Employees Age 55 and Over by Industry Sector - Top 10 in the Region (Q2 2015)



Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau LEHD

Not all employees working in the 7 Rivers Alliance Region reside in one of the three counties (Figure 7). Over 19,639 residents commute from the region to work in surrounding counties such as La Crosse, Sauk, Eau Claire, Trempealeau and Vernon Counties. La Crosse County is the destination for the largest number of these workers. A notable number of workers earning more than \$3,333 per month also commute to large employment centers found in Dane County (WI), Eau Claire County (WI), and Ramsey County (MN). However, there is no discernable difference for workers commuting out of the region versus those remaining in the region based on low, medium or high monthly earnings. Accordingly, there may be some opportunities to retain some of these out-commuters within the region.

Figure 7 – Commuting Patterns for the 7 Rivers Alliance Region (Q2 2014)

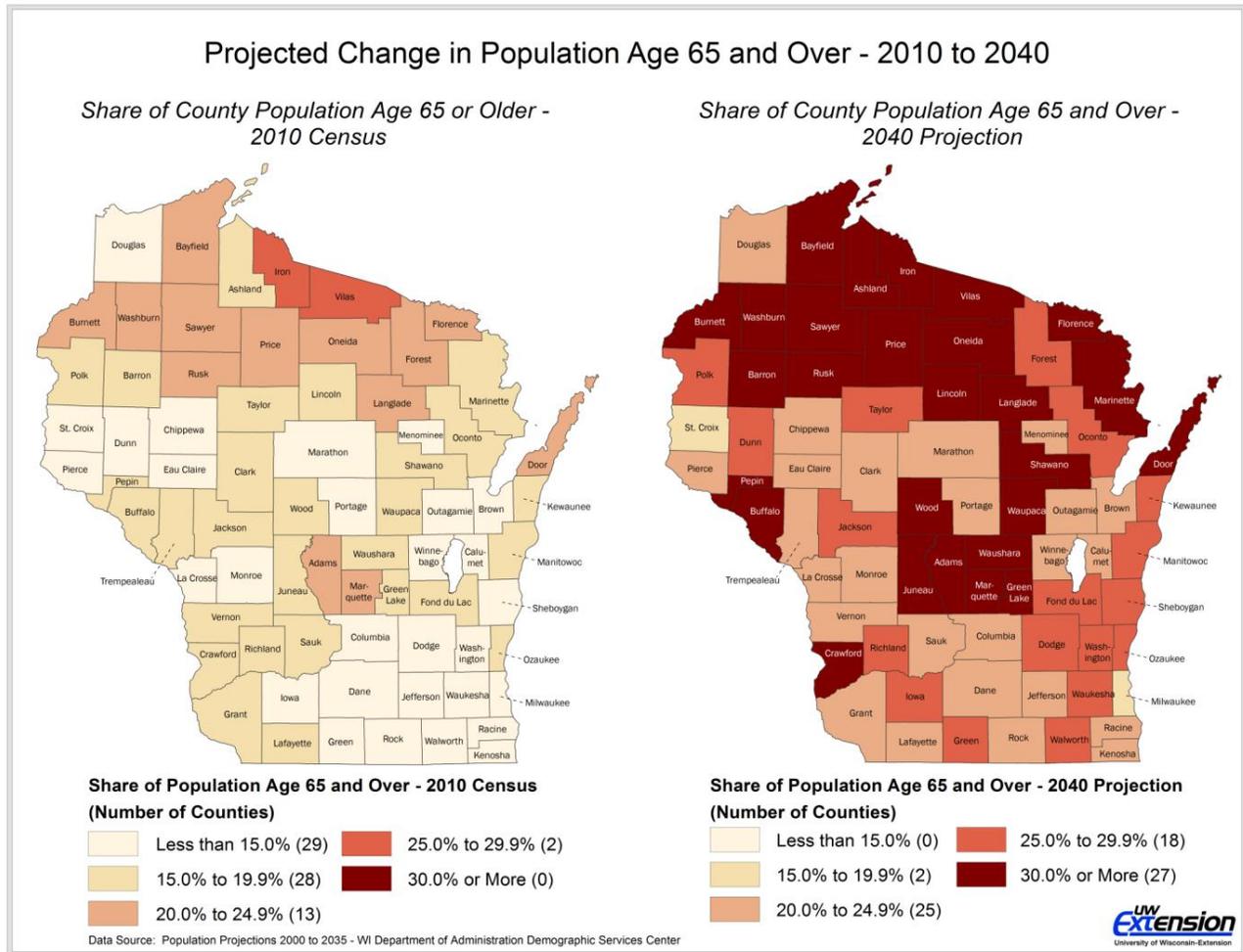


Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau OnTheMap LODES

A notable number of workers also commute into the region from nearby counties. Many of the 13,417 workers who commute from outside areas originate in La Crosse County, Vernon County, Wood County, and Trempealeau County. Importantly, many of these surrounding counties are also comprised of aging populations over the next several decades (Figure 8). As the share of residents ages 65 and over increases across the entire region, it will likely impact labor availability not only for those workers who live and work in the region, but also for those employees who commute from outlying areas.

The growing share of residents age 65 and older will certainly create challenges for the region and its neighbors. The percentage of residents age 65 and older in the 7 Rivers Alliance Region is expected to increase from 17.3% in 2015 to 25.5% by the year 2030. In addition to the previous discussion on labor availability, an aging population could also influence other local economic and fiscal conditions such as tax base, the demand for various goods and services, and housing needs. However, many of these future impacts could also bring opportunities to the region. Increasing demands for health care services could generate new employment in this sector. Changing housing preferences and requirements of senior citizens could induce additional construction activity. Furthermore, many of the retirees could create new recreational demand and provide additional sources of volunteers, mentors and other forms of social capital to the region.

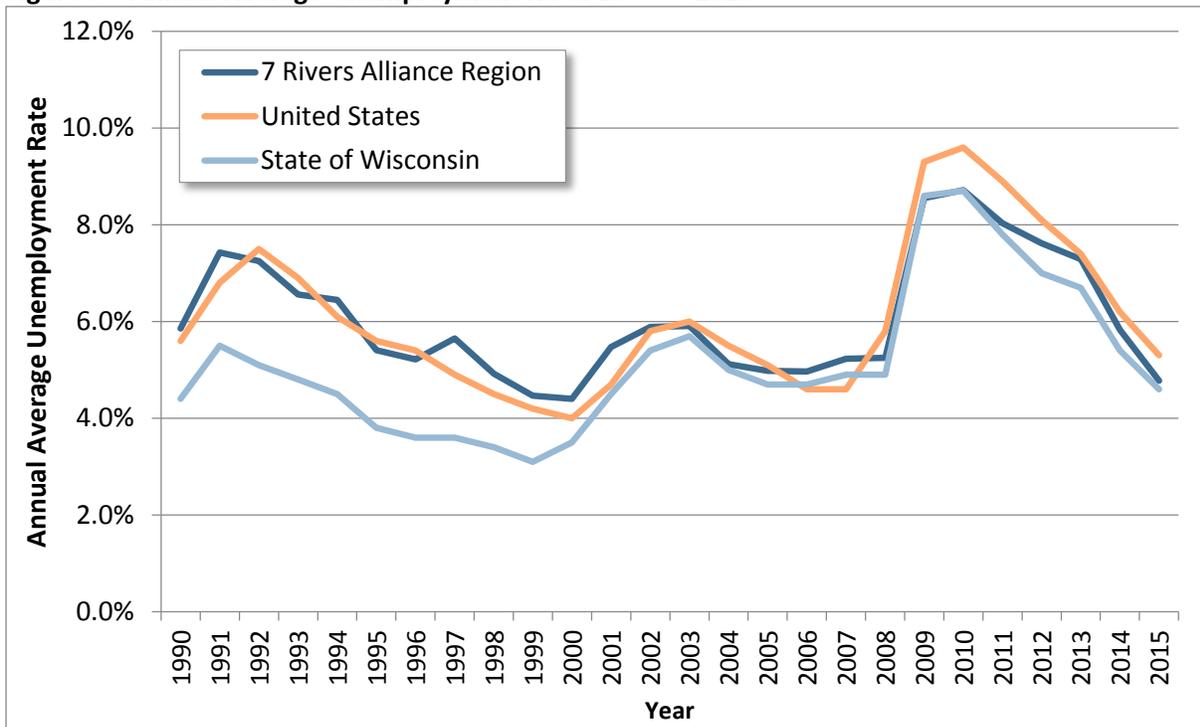
Figure 8 – Change in Population Age 65 and Over by Wisconsin County – 2010 to 2040



Unemployment Rates

Over the last 25 years, the region’s annual average unemployment rate has largely tracked the national unemployment trend (Figure 9). Unemployment rates in the region were slightly higher than the national average during the economic expansion of the late 1990s. However, unemployment rates in the 7 Rivers Alliance Region remained below national rates during the recovery period after the Great Recession. In fact, the region’s annual unemployment rate of 4.8% in 2015 was nearly its lowest rate since 1990. Only the region’s unemployment rates in 1999 (4.5%) and 1999 (4.4%) were lower than the annual average rate in 2015. While 2016 annual rates were not yet available at the time of analysis, it is expected that the region’s unemployment rate is approaching 4.0%. Specifically, the region is likely nearing full employment. The declining unemployment rates are partially a function of the region’s improving economy and the age structure shifts previously noted. Regardless of the precise reason, these unemployment rates are indicative of the growing pressures on labor availability in the 7 Rivers Alliance Region.

Figure 9 – Annual Average Unemployment Rate: 1990 to 2015



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics LAUS

Migration by Age Group

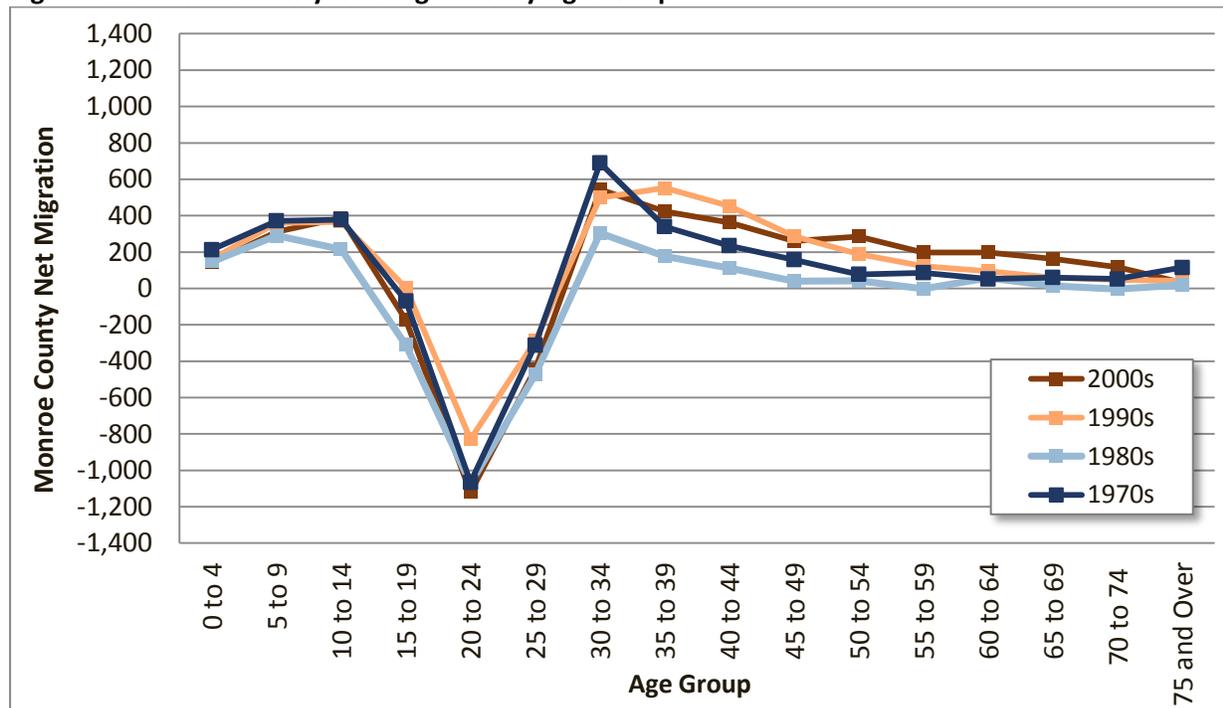
The prior discussion of population trends, changing age structure, and declining unemployment rates suggest that attracting and retaining talent could be a central component of the 7 Rivers Alliance plan. An analysis of the information gathered during the Civic Forum and Session 2 of the SET initiative reinforces that talent development, both in terms of quantity and quality, is one of the largest issues facing the region. Attracting and retaining talent in the region will be driven by a variety of economic and quality of life factors that may change by age group. Accordingly, an analysis of regional migration patterns across different age categories provides one opportunity for understanding population churn in the region.

The region's age structure, and ultimately its labor force, is partially driven by migration. Specifically, the size of an age group can be affected by residents moving into the region (in-migration) or moving to other areas (out-migration). Net migration of an age group is calculated by comparing the number in-migrants to out-migrants. *If in-migrants exceed out-migrants, then the region has a positive net migration of residents. In contrast, a greater number of out-migrants produces a negative net migration.*

Net migration patterns for Monroe County, Juneau County and Jackson County are depicted in Figure 10, Figure 11 and Figure 12 respectively. Migration figures are calculated for selected age groups for four periods: 1970 to 1980; 1980 to 1990; 1990 to 2000; and 2000 to 2010. While some variations do exist, migration patterns in the three counties are largely similar across all decades. These patterns reveal several important characteristics of the region:

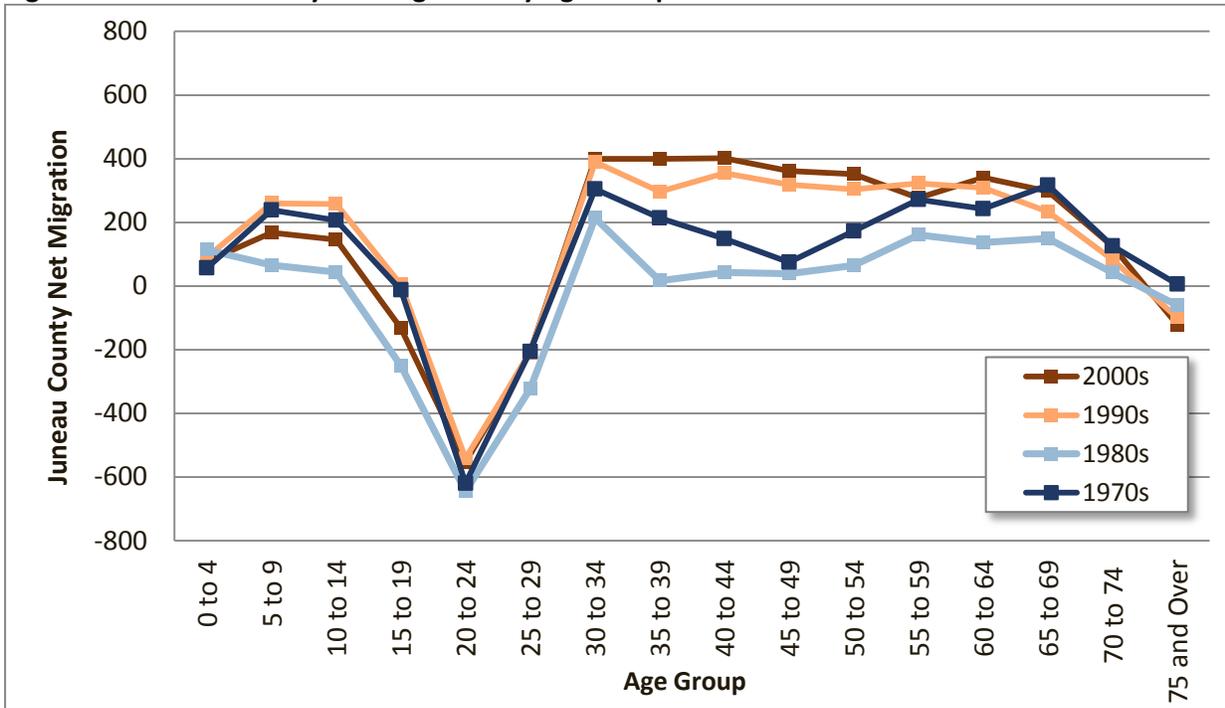
- All three counties show negative net migration among residents between the ages of 15 and 29. The one exception to this pattern is found in Jackson County during the 1990s. Jackson County’s minimal losses and small gains among these age groups are likely attributed to the opening of the Jackson Correctional Institution in 1996.
- The negative migration rates among younger age cohorts often cause concern among community leaders and workforce development professionals. No one wants to see a large number of young people leave their community and certainly retention can be part of a talent development strategy. However, many times these individuals are moving to acquire an education or gain work experiences. Consequently, if a region can attract these individuals later in life, then the region can benefit from education and/or skill investments made elsewhere;
- The region attracts residents in their 30s and early 40s on a net basis. While the positive net migration among these age groups may not directly offset the loss of residents in the 15 to 29 age group, residents in the 30s and 40s also are likely accounting for the net increase in residents under the age of 15. Accordingly, the 30 to 34 age group and 35 to 39 age groups may be particularly attractive targets for recruitment as these two age groups are both in prime working and child raising years and could also continue to contribute to the number of children in the region. Regional assets that are important to these age groups (housing, schools, day care, etc.) could be considered as key components to an attraction strategy;
- The migration rates among older age groups are also a potential asset to the region. The positive net migration rates among individuals either approaching or beyond retirement age show that some residents may be attracted to the 7 Rivers Alliance Region as a retirement destination. While these individuals may not necessarily directly participate in the labor force, they can contribute in other manners. Consequently, economic development efforts that target the needs of older residents may also provide opportunities for the region.

Figure 9 – Monroe County Net Migration by Age Group



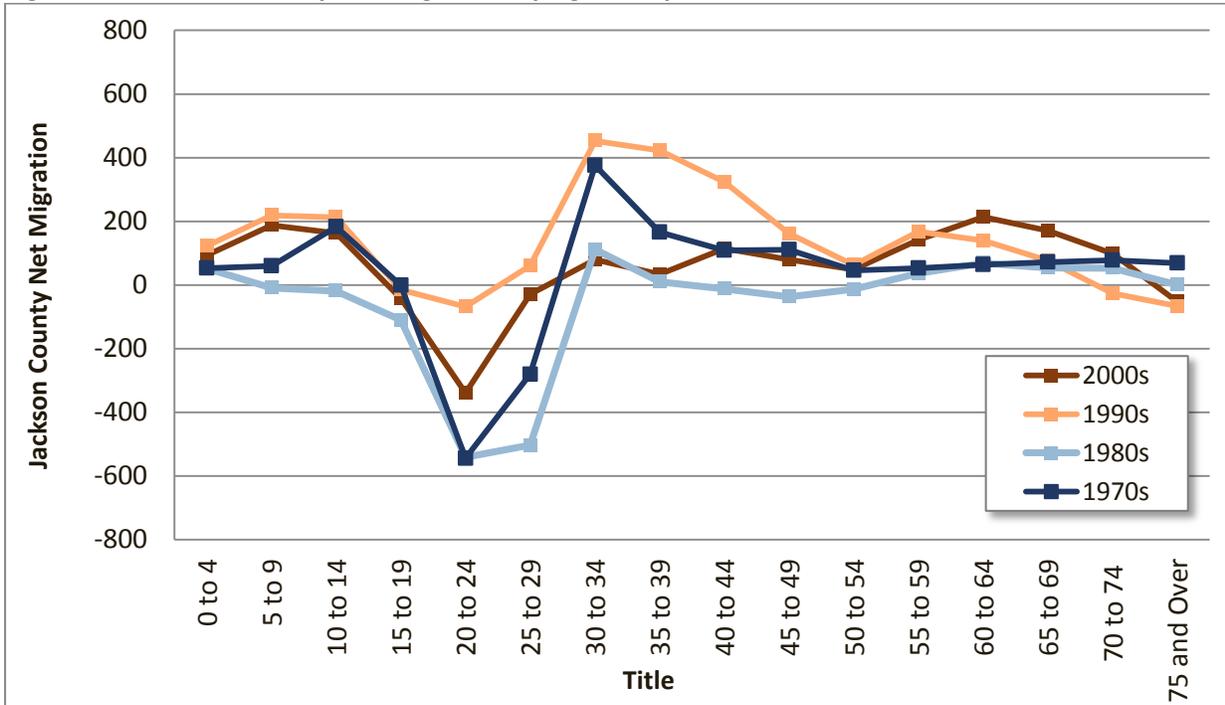
Source: Age-Specific Net Migration Estimates for US Counties, 1950-2010. Applied Population Laboratory, UW-Madison, 2013

Figure 10 – Juneau County Net Migration by Age Group



Source: Age-Specific Net Migration Estimates for US Counties, 1950-2010. Applied Population Laboratory, UW-Madison, 2013

Figure 11 – Jackson County Net Migration by Age Group



Source: Age-Specific Net Migration Estimates for US Counties, 1950-2010. Applied Population Laboratory, UW-Madison, 2013

Evidence Basis for Plan – Regional Economy

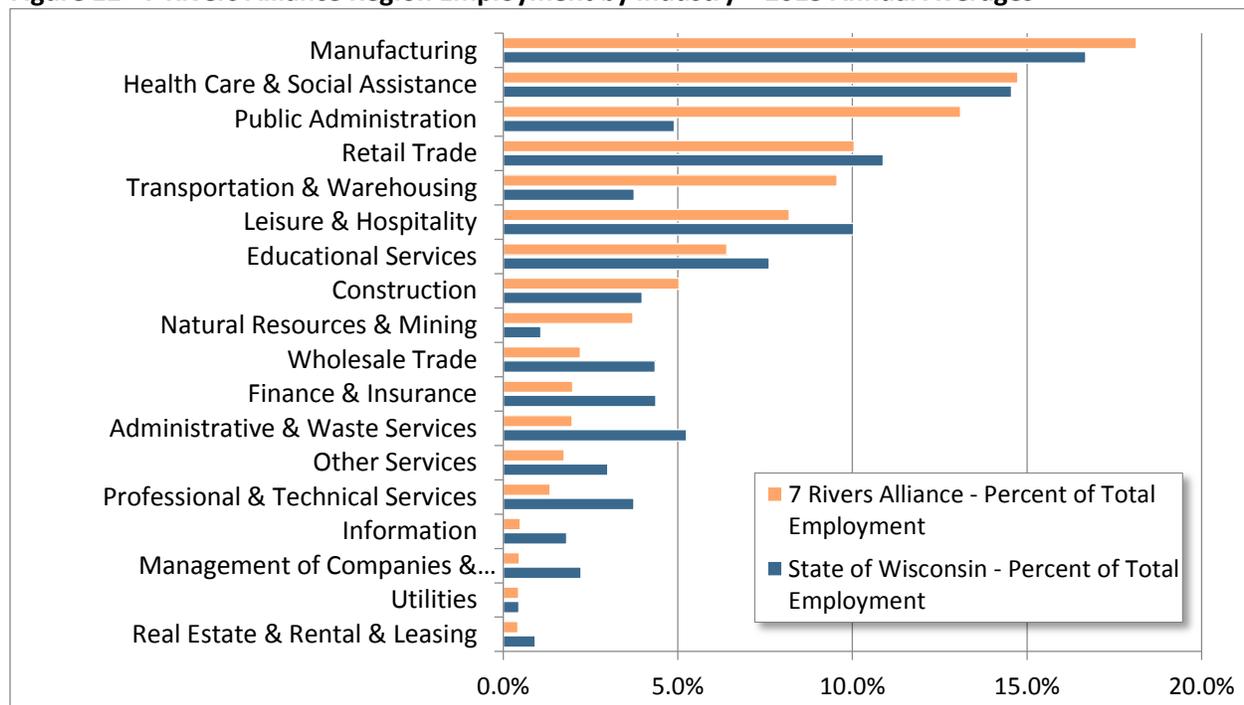
In addition to the region’s demographic characteristics, the 7 Rivers Region High Quality plan is also based on the region’s economic structure. Again, the identification of challenges and opportunities related to the region’s economic dynamism and industry composition is based partially on the information shared and discussed at Session 1 and Session 2 of the SET initiative.

Employment Concentrations by Industry

Manufacturing, health care and social assistance and public administration are the three largest employment sectors in the 7 Rivers Alliance Region. The region’s share of employment in each of these sectors exceeds the overall shares in the State of Wisconsin. The region’s high level of manufacturing jobs (18.1%) is particularly notable as Wisconsin is typically first or second in the nation in its share of employment in manufacturing. The manufacturing sector is largely a mix of machinery, fabricated metals, forest products, food products, chemicals and other materials.

Health care and social assistance (14.7%) is driven by the region’s hospital and ambulatory care system as well as the Tomah VA Medical Center. The high share of employment in public administration (13.1%) is not primarily attributed to local government units, but instead reflects the presence of two large military facilities (Fort McCoy and Volk Field/Camp Williams), two state correctional facilities, and the aforementioned headquarters of Ho Chunk Nation’s tribal government in Jackson County.

Figure 12 - 7 Rivers Alliance Region Employment by Industry – 2015 Annual Averages



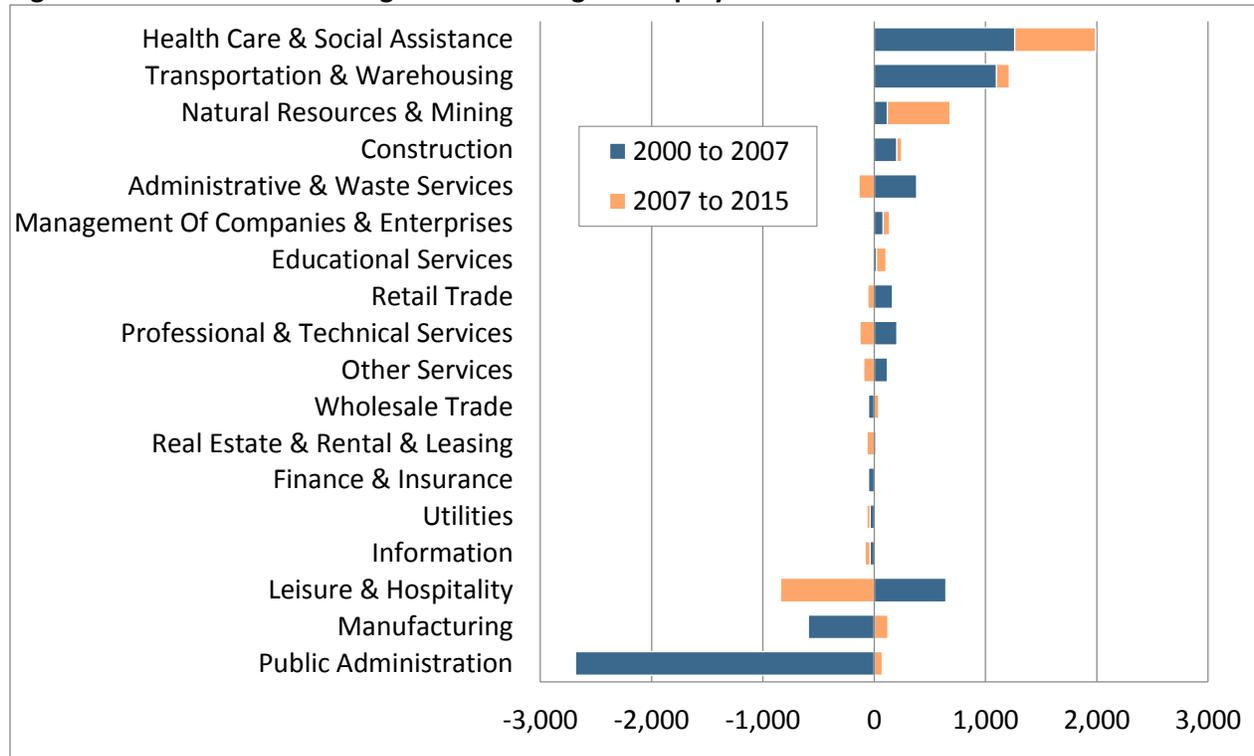
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

Employment has varied across sectors during the pre and post-recessionary periods of 2000 to 2007 and 2007 to 2015 respectively. As in many regions across Wisconsin and the United States, health care and social assistance showed the greatest gains both before and after the Great Recession. Employment in

transportation and warehousing also had a notable increase between 2000 and 2007, which was partly driven by the opening of a Wal-Mart distribution center in Tomah. Natural resources and mining was the second largest source of employment growth in the post-recessionary period. Employment increases in this industry partially reflect the expansion of sand mining facilities that supply hydraulic fracturing operations.

The region’s manufacturing sector lost almost 600 jobs between 2000 and 2007. Somewhat surprisingly, the sector actually reversed this trend and added jobs during the economic recovery period between 2007 and 2015. Public administration lost a significant number of jobs during the 2000 to 2007 period. However, these figures may reflect NAICS re-classifications for one of the government facilities in the region or a change of reporting requirements for employees of Ho Chunk Nation’s tribal government. Despite employment growth between 2000 and 2007, the leisure and hospitality sector lost almost 840 jobs in the post-recessionary period.

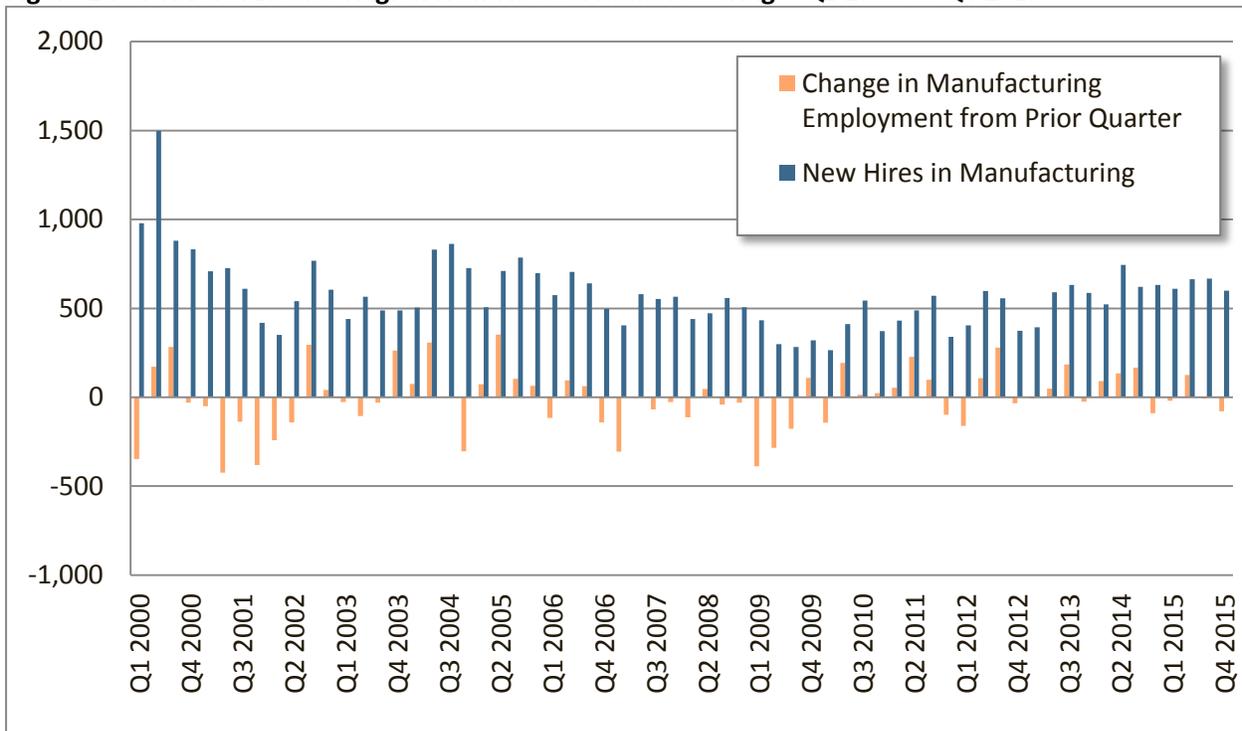
Figure 13 - 7 Rivers Alliance Region – Net Change in Employment 2000 to 2015



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

While net employment change by industry sector provides perspectives on the direction of the economy, it does not fully reflect employment churn that may occur in an industry. For instance, manufacturing in the 7 Rivers Alliance Region shows a net employment loss of -592 between 2000 and 2007, and a minor net gain of 123 jobs between 2007 and 2015. However, net employment losses and gains also stem from seasonal changes and cyclical changes in the industry (Figure 14). Furthermore, employment turnover within an industry occurs for many reasons other than layoffs or expansions. Despite minimal changes in net employment, manufacturing firms required more than 500 new hires in most quarters between 2000 and 2015. Consequently, the demand for labor should not be judged solely on net employment losses and gains in an industry. *This consideration is reflected in the development of the regional plan.*

Figure 14 - 7 Rivers Alliance Region New Hires in Manufacturing – Q1 2000 to Q4 2015



Source: U.S. Census Bureau LEHD

Furthermore, most of the job churn in the region is spurred by firm startups, spinoffs, expansions, closings and contractions. That is, most job changes in the region are attributed to the creation of new establishments or changes within existing firms (Figure 15). Very few jobs are affected by establishments migrating into the 7 Rivers Alliance Region or by firms leaving the three counties. While industrial attraction should not be ignored as a potential economic development strategy, the job creation metrics in Figure 15 suggest that entrepreneurial development, retention and expansion strategies are important to the future growth of the region.

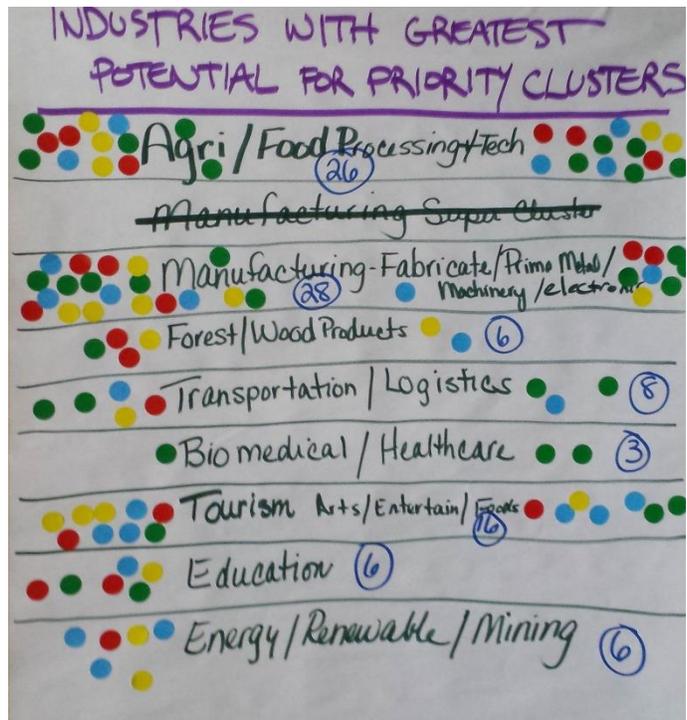
Figure 15 – Job Creation by Source – 2009 to 2015

Changes in Jobs (2009-2015)		
Gained by	New Startups	13,498
	Spinoffs	3,120
	Expansion	7,046
	In-migration	686
Lost by	Closings	-16,242
	Contractions	-5,118
	Out-migration	-384
	Net change	2,606

Source: YourEconomy.org

In addition to the aforementioned overview of employment by industry sector, a more in-depth analysis of industrial changes was performed as part of the industry cluster analysis in Session 1 of the SET process. Session 1 included attendees representing the region’s manufacturers, food processors, elected officials, the VA Hospital, tourism organizations, economic development professionals and other interested citizens intrigued by the SET initiative as a result of their participation at the Civic Forum. Using the input of these individuals, four specific clusters were selected for further analysis and development. These clusters include:

- **Agribusiness, Food Processing and Technology** – Agricultural production (crops, animals, animal products, etc.), food manufacturing, beverage manufacturing, and agricultural support industries (wholesalers, equipment manufacturers, farm management services, etc.);
- **Arts, Entertainment, Recreation and Visitor Industries** – Hotels/traveler accommodations, recreational facilities, campgrounds, museums, historical sites, parks, performing arts, movie theaters, etc.
- **Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing** - Turned products, metal coating, heat treating, metal containers/tanks, metal patterns, machine shops, etc.
- **Machinery Manufacturing** - Farm machinery, construction machinery, mining machinery, food product machinery, HVAC equipment, industrial trailers, pumps, turbines, etc.



Agribusiness, Food Processing and Technology and Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing are classified as “star” clusters, or industries with a location quotient that is both above 1.0 and increasing over time (Figure 16). The Arts, Entertainment, Recreation and Visitor Industries cluster is considered to be an emerging cluster, or one with a location quotient below 1.0, but also increasing. *While Machinery Manufacturing is neither a star cluster nor an emerging cluster, it was selected due to its employment size in the region; its significant location quotient; and its synergies with the Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing cluster. The connections between these two clusters are discussed later in this plan.*

Figure 16 - 7 Rivers Alliance Region Industry Cluster Summary

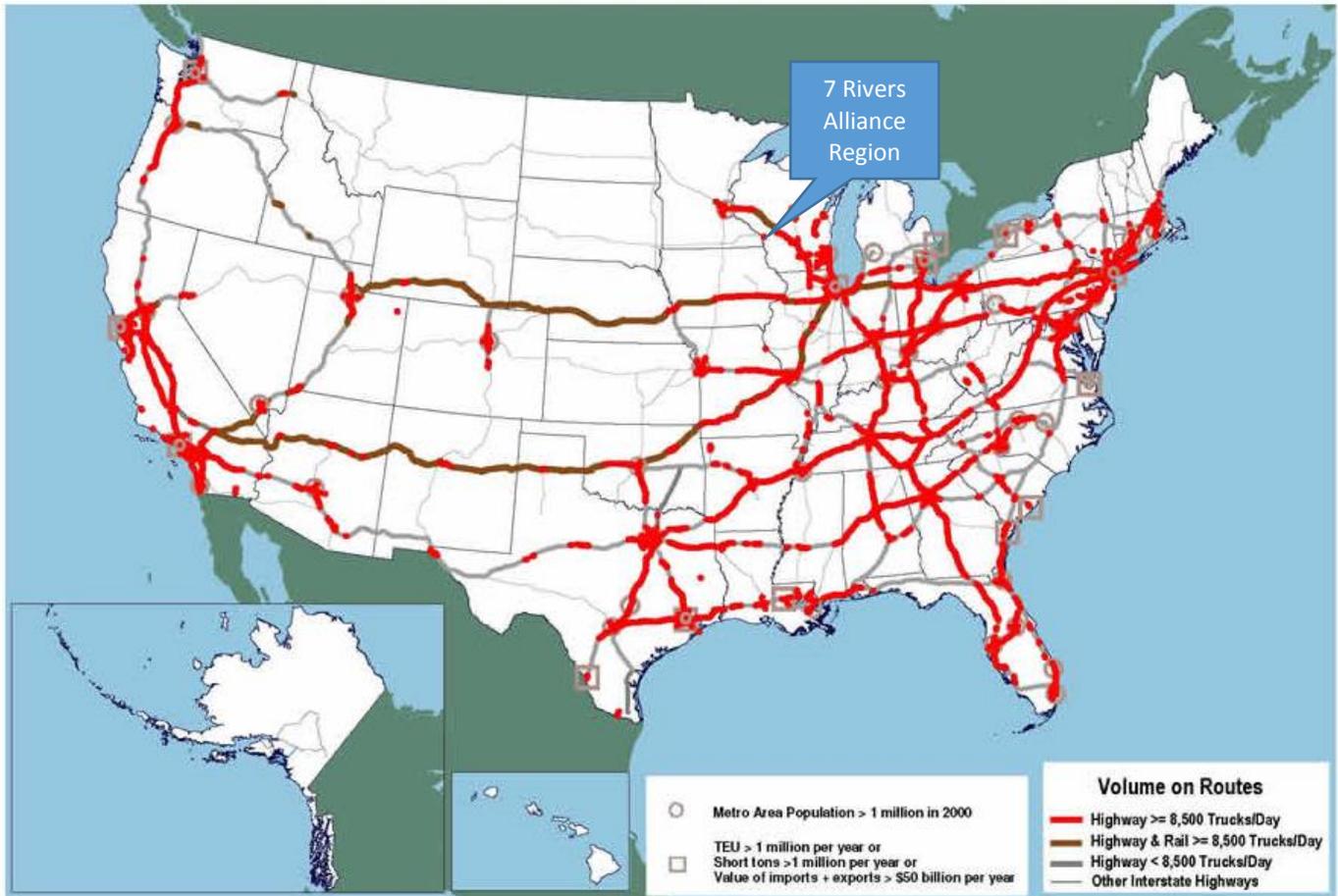


The 7 Rivers Alliance Region’s geographic location is also important to the potential success of its selected industry clusters. One of the nation’s major freight corridors runs through all three counties in the region, providing connection to the major markets of Minneapolis-St. Paul and Chicago (Figure 17). The corridor includes both Interstate highways and potential access to three Class 1 railroads (Canadian Pacific, Union Pacific and Canadian National). *Accordingly, the location of the region and its ability to access these major transportation networks are considered as part of the plan.*

A further analysis of individual opportunities for each cluster was performed in Session 2. *Session 2 included many participants from Session 1, but a special effort was made by each of the county economic development organizations to specifically target businesses in these three target clusters.* The attendance of these key cluster stakeholders was important to further understanding and identifying C.A.R.E opportunities which are further discussed below.

Figure 17 – Major Freight Corridors in the United States

Major Freight Corridors



Note: Highway & Rail is additional highway mileage with daily truck payload equivalents based on annual average daily truck traffic (2011) plus average daily intermodal service on parallel railroads. Average daily intermodal service is the annual tonnage moved by container-on-flatcar and trailer-on-flatcar service divided by 365 days per year and 16 tons per average truck payload.

Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Office of Freight Management and Operations, 2013

Agribusiness, Food Processing and Technology Industry Cluster

The region's Agribusiness, Food Processing and Technology industry cluster is diverse. The cluster employs a significant number of workers in the region and has high location quotients across many industry categories. Between 2009 and 2015, job growth was positive across the cluster when measured on both a net basis and in terms of the competitive effect resulting from a shift share analysis of the cluster (Figure 18).¹

Figure 18 – Job Change in the Agribusiness, Food Processing and Technology Cluster

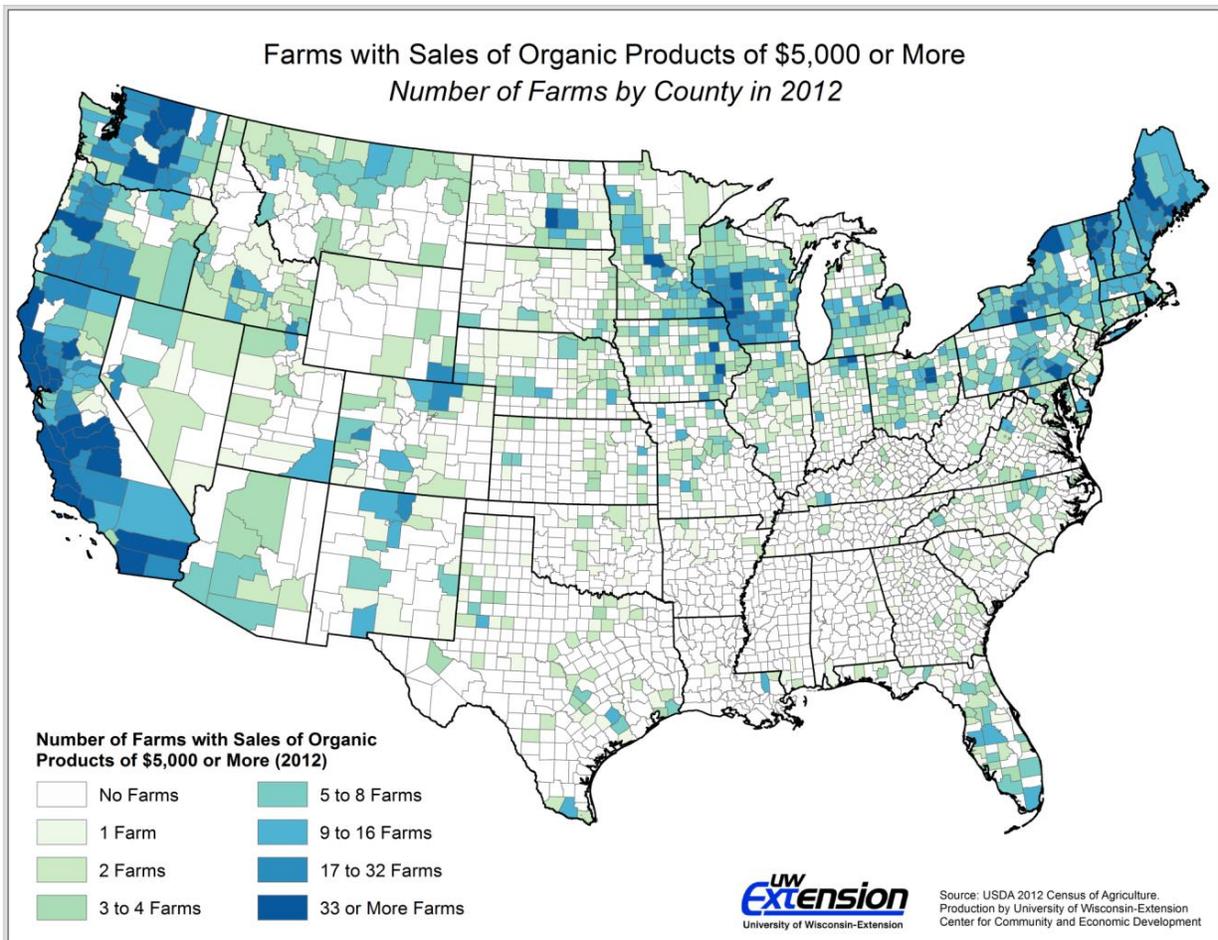
Industries	Total Jobs 2015	Location Quotient	Net Job Growth 2009-2015	Percent Job Growth 2009 - 2015	Competitive Effect
Animal Production and Aquaculture	1,962	6.2	396	25.3%	420
Crop Production	1,866	4.5	-600	-24.3%	-648
Farm Machinery and Equipment Mfg.	613	33.8	88	16.8%	13
Dry, Condensed, and Evaporated Dairy Product Mfg.	512	116.4	237	86.2%	204
Farm Supplies Merchant Wholesalers	252	7.7	114	82.6%	105
Dried and Dehydrated Food Mfg.	145	44.3	-27	-15.7%	-40
Fruit and Vegetable Canning	142	7.9	11	8.4%	16
Animal (except Poultry) Slaughtering	139	3.7	96	223.3%	99
Farm and Garden Machinery and Equipment Merchant Wholesalers	129	4.4	-6	-4.4%	-13
Farm Labor Contractors and Crew Leaders	99	1.1	-19	-16.1%	-40
Soil Preparation, Planting, and Cultivating	66	3.4	12	22.2%	7
Cheese Mfg.	64	5.2	-56	-46.7%	-72
Other Farm Product Raw Material Merchant Wholesalers	63	22.3	-5	-7.4%	-9
Dog and Cat Food Mfg.	36	5.4	19	111.8%	16
Other Animal Food Mfg.	32	3.3	-14	-30.4%	-17

Source: EMSI Class of Worker 2016.4 (QCEW, non-QCEW, self-employed and extended proprietors).

¹ The competitive effect explains how much of the change in a given industry is due to some unique competitive advantage that the region possesses.

While the cluster is driven by many different industry types, it is also differentiated by several niches. Not surprisingly, dairy farming and processing is heavily concentrated in the region. The region is also home to one of the largest cranberry producing regions in the nation. Furthermore, the region also contains a large number of organic farms (Figure 19). Many of these farms are part of Organic Valley, which is the nation’s largest farmer-owned organic cooperative. Organic Valley recently opened a new operation in Monroe County and provides important market access for local farms.

Figure 19 – Organic Farm Distribution (2012)



Most occupations in the Agribusiness, Food Processing and Technology industry cluster require a high school education as an entry-level requirement. As 41% of the region’s population has a high school degree as its highest level of educational attainment, the educational requirements of the industry largely align with those of the region’s residents. Eight of the most common occupations in the cluster have median earnings above \$15 per hour, while no occupations show median earnings below \$12 per hour. Furthermore, all but two occupation categories experienced job growth between 2009 and 2015. While the Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers occupational category declined in total employment, this trend likely reflects the loss or consolidation of farm operations that occurred across Wisconsin over this period.

Figure 19 – Occupations in the Agribusiness, Food Processing and Technology Cluster

Occupations	Jobs 2015	% Change, 2009-2015	Median Hr. Earnings	Entry Level Education
Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers	2,851	-10%	\$16.0	High school diploma or equivalent
Farmworkers and Laborers, Crop, Nursery, and Greenhouse	565	18%	\$12.9	No formal educational credential
Food Batchmakers	223	27%	\$14.1	High school diploma or equivalent
Packaging and Filling Machine Operators and Tenders	109	20%	\$13.9	High school diploma or equivalent
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	107	23%	\$13.6	No formal educational credential
Sales Reps, Wholesale and Mfg., Exc. Technical and Scientific Products	104	28%	\$23.5	High school diploma or equivalent
Team Assemblers	91	17%	\$14.3	High school diploma or equivalent
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	81	17%	\$18.1	High school diploma or equivalent
Agricultural Equipment Operators	71	34%	\$15.3	No formal educational credential
Office Clerks, General	71	27%	\$14.3	High school diploma or equivalent
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	69	23%	\$18.0	High school diploma or equivalent
Farmworkers, Farm, Ranch, and Aquacultural Animals	66	16%	\$14.2	No formal educational credential
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	62	22%	\$19.1	Postsecondary non-degree award
First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	61	24%	\$22.3	High school diploma or equivalent
Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	57	-3%	\$16.2	Some college, no degree

Source: EMSI Class of Worker 2016.4 (QCEW, non-QCEW, self-employed and extended proprietors).

As part of Session 2, participants noted several potential strategies for growing the cluster using the “create, attract, retain, and expand” (C.A.R.E.) model. Importantly, a number of these participants represented firms operating in the cluster. These opportunities broadly included agricultural tourism, business incubators/commercial kitchens, the supply chain development and entrepreneurial support (Figure 20). However, workforce development and workforce housing were noted as important foundational issues affecting the region’s cluster. *As this analysis will later show, an emphasis on workforce development and housing are common foundational themes facing all of the region’s clusters.*

Figure 20 – Potential C.A.R.E. Strategies for the Agribusiness, Food Processing and Technology Cluster

Create	Attract	Retain	Expand
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • De-zoning – Making agriculture available to everybody; • Community processing kitchens; business incubators; • Continued support in FFA & similar groups for future agriculture entrepreneurs; • Agriculture tourism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ag tourism in all areas such as dairy production, vegetable production; • Education to new entrepreneurs – How to start; How to do what is envisioned; • Culinary retreats. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting FFA & 4-H to partners with farms and keep young people in agriculture/succession of family farms; • Providing educational classes to refresh skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create support businesses; • Centralized source for resources.

Foundation

- Workforce housing;
- Workforce skills, including motivation; soft skills.

As suggested earlier, the geographic location of the region is also an important consideration to growing the cluster. Specifically, the 7 Rivers Alliance Region is located between two of the nation’s largest household demand centers for food at home and food away from home. The region’s location on the aforementioned major freight corridor directly links firms to these markets for both products and also to tourists who may be interested in agricultural tourism or culinary retreats (Figure 22). Furthermore, the corridor links primary and secondary food products produced in the region to high concentrations of food manufacturing establishments in these areas as well (Figure 23). The food manufacturing establishments in these markets could provide downstream opportunities to selling locally produced products.

Figure 22 – Household Demand for Food at Home and Food Away from Home

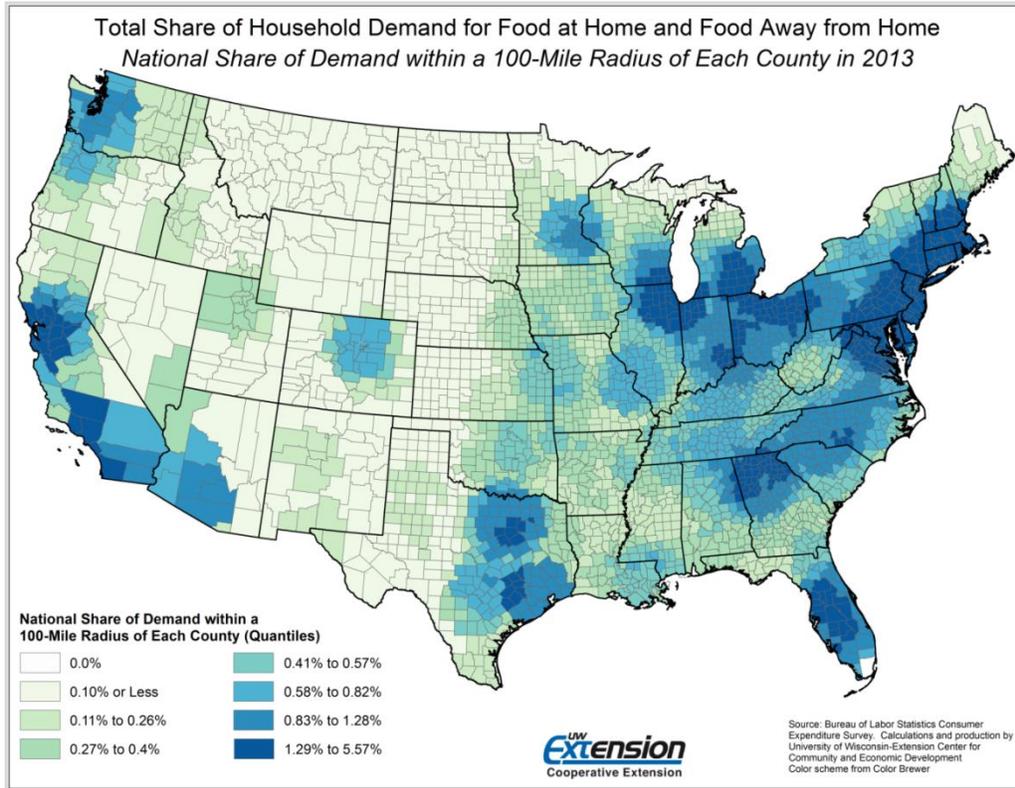
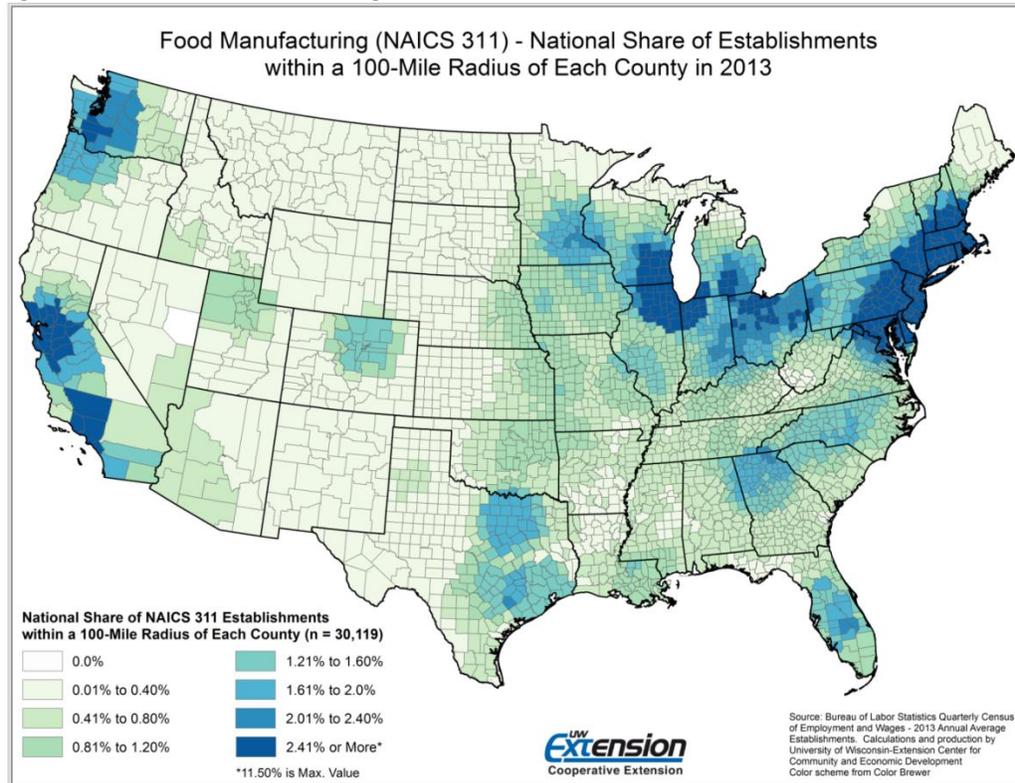


Figure 23 – Food Manufacturing Establishments within 100 Mile Radius of each county (2013)



Arts, Entertainment, Recreation and Visitor Industries

The Arts, Entertainment, Recreation and Visitor industry cluster contains many of the region’s tourist and hospitality attractions. While many industries within the cluster have location quotients near or below 1.0, the cluster is considered to be emerging in the region and employs a significant number of workers in the region (Figure 24). Net job growth and job growth attributed to the competitive effects of a shift-share analysis are mixed across industries in the cluster. Nonetheless, the cluster continues to employ more than 1,700 workers in the 7 Rivers Alliance Region. *One of the region’s key assets in the Ho Chunk Nation also operates two casinos located in the region which contribute to this cluster.*

Figure 24 – Job Change in the Arts, Entertainment, Recreation and Visitor Cluster

Industries	Total Jobs 2015	Location Quotient	Net Job Growth 2009-2015	Percent Job Growth 2009 - 2015	Competitive Effect
Hotels (except Casino Hotels) and Motels	579	1.3	72	14.2%	18
Sporting and Athletic Goods Mfg.	286	18.4	131	84.5%	123
Independent Artists, Writers, and Performers	134	0.4	7	5.5%	-4
Golf Courses and Country Clubs	114	1.0	19	20.0%	12
Radio Stations	71	2.6	16	29.1%	16
Bowling Centers	66	3.1	0	0.0%	3
Fitness and Recreational Sports Centers	61	0.3	1	1.7%	-8
RV (Recreational Vehicle) Parks and Campgrounds	47	4.1	-23	-32.9%	-33
Sporting and Recreational Goods and Supplies Merchant Wholesalers	45	2.3	17	60.7%	12
All Other Amusement and Recreation Industries	44	0.5	12	37.5%	1
Racetracks	38	2.2	-2	-5.0%	4
Travel Agencies	25	0.7	-4	-13.8%	-4
Other Spectator Sports	21	0.4	-5	-19.2%	-6
Motion Picture Theaters (except Drive-Ins)	16	0.4	-26	-61.9%	-28
All Other Traveler Accommodation	15	2.8	-28	-65.1%	-42

Source: EMSI Class of Worker 2016.4 (QCEW, non-QCEW, self-employed and extended proprietors).

As with the Agribusiness, Food Processing and Technology cluster, a number of occupations in the Arts, Entertainment, Recreation and Visitor cluster suggest that a high school diploma is needed as an entry level educational requirement. However, many occupations concentrated in the cluster require no formal educational credential. While these educational requirements may provide opportunities for residents with lower levels of educational attainment, they also result in relatively low median hourly wages. Furthermore, many of these occupations are also affected by seasonal demand fluctuations. Both wage levels and seasonality issues were discussed frequently in Session 2 of the SET process.

Figure 25 – Occupations in the Arts, Entertainment, Recreation and Visitor Cluster

Occupations	Jobs 2015	% Change, 2009-2015	Median Hr. Earnings	Entry Level Education
Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	163	9%	\$9.7	No formal educational credential
Hotel, Motel, and Resort Desk Clerks	101	6%	\$9.8	High school diploma or equivalent
Lodging Managers	70	-13%	\$18.7	High school diploma or equivalent
Waiters and Waitresses	57	2%	\$9.3	No formal educational credential
Musicians and Singers	50	14%	\$11.8	No formal educational credential
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	50	-2%	\$18.0	High school diploma or equivalent
Fitness Trainers and Aerobics Instructors	43	34%	\$12.8	High school diploma or equivalent
Writers and Authors	43	10%	\$13.3	Bachelor's degree
Team Assemblers	39	86%	\$14.3	High school diploma or equivalent
Bartenders	39	5%	\$9.6	No formal educational credential
Coaches and Scouts	31	29%	\$12.7	Bachelor's degree
Office Clerks, General	31	19%	\$14.3	High school diploma or equivalent
Cooks, Restaurant	27	8%	\$9.9	No formal educational credential
Fine Artists, Including Painters, Sculptors, and Illustrators	26	0%	\$6.9	Bachelor's degree
Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	24	0%	\$12.3	No formal educational credential

Source: EMSI Class of Worker 2016.4 (QCEW, non-QCEW, self-employed and extended proprietors).

Foundational workforce issues related to living wages and housing availability were also a focus of the C.A.R.E. model discussion for the Arts, Entertainment, Recreation and Visitor Industries cluster (Figure 26). Adequate broadband was also identified as a need for both business owners, but also as an amenity needed by visitors to the region. Another strategy identified frequently during the process was the need to better market and brand the region as a whole, rather than trying to promote counties and attractions individually. These opportunities include connecting the region's trails, agricultural attractions and cultural amenities in social media campaigns or by using printed maps and brochures.

An emphasis on branding and leveraging the region’s natural amenities was also mentioned during the process. While the region’s three counties have a lower-to-middle ranking on the USDA National Amenity Scale, this scale fails to recognize many of the features that make the region unique. In fact, the region’s lakes and rivers, recreational areas, trails, and forests are some of the primary reasons the region has a high concentration of seasonal and second homes (Figure 27). These second-homes are a potential asset to the region’s Arts, Entertainment, Recreation and Visitor Industries cluster, but also perhaps provide a source of future full-time residents.

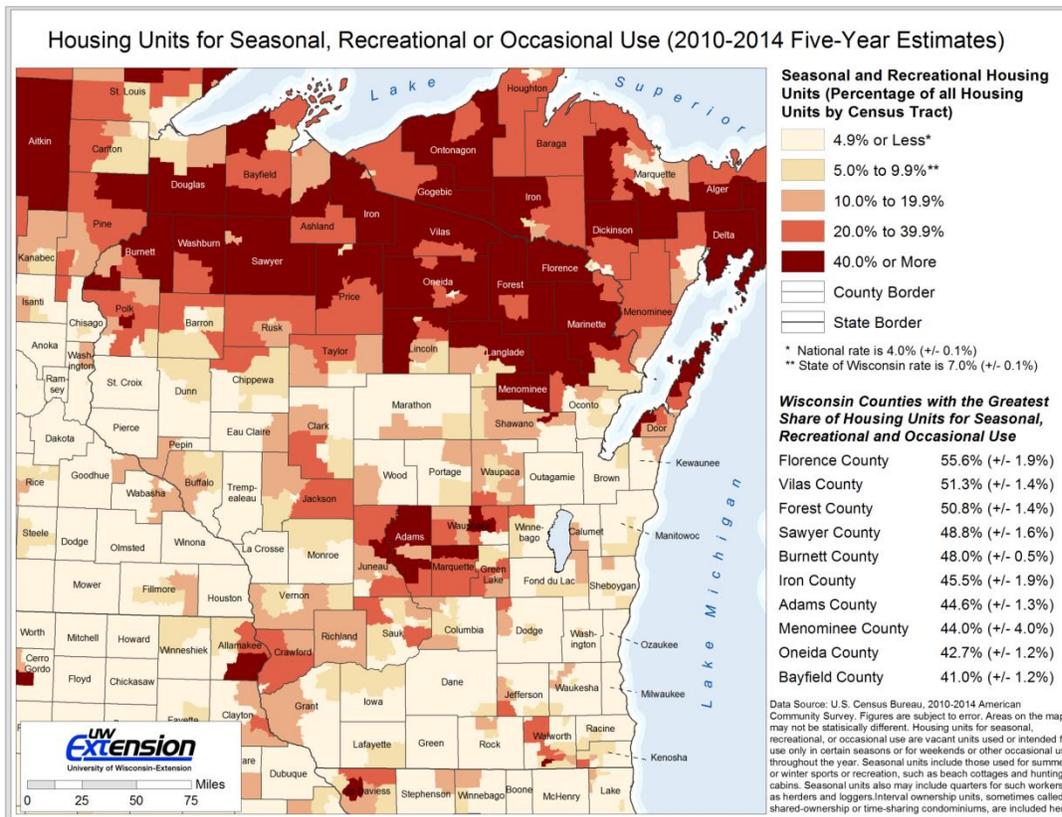
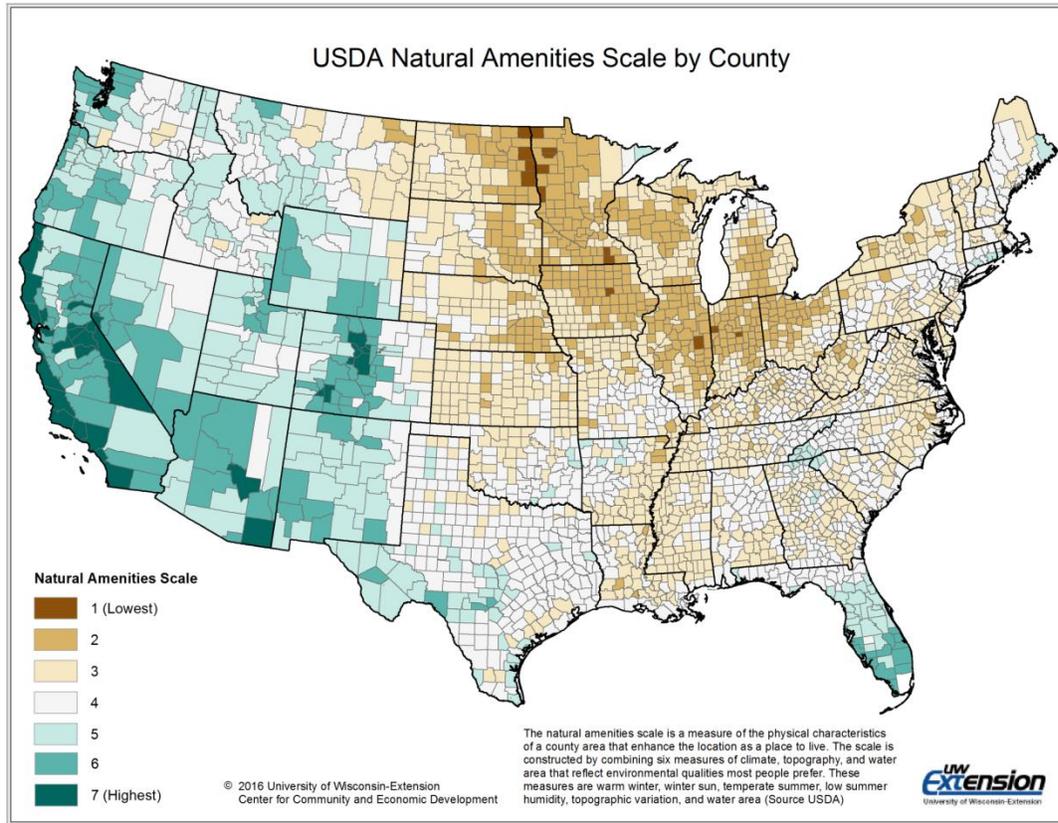
Figure 26 – Potential C.A.R.E. Strategies for the Arts, Entertainment, Recreation and Visitor Cluster

Create	Attract	Retain	Expand
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • iLEAD; • I&E Club; • Destination attractions; • Branding; • Customer Service/Hospitality Training; • Recreational trail connections/maps – ATV, UTV, snowmobiles, bicycles, rustic roads. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff/Labor; • Visitors (millennials); • Arts/Entertainment; • New clientele to areas previously not served (social media, marketing). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth (workforce); • Clientele by providing expansion of regional opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create connectors/circle/ tours and map of a variety of things (examples – bus tours of Amish farms, bus winery tours, seasonal festivals, ag tourism destinations); • Technology access/marketing of destinations/ attractions; • Broadband and cell access throughout; • Regional connections of ATV trails, bike trails, canoeing, etc. ; • New opportunities for business expansions in niche markets.

Foundation

- Workforce – living wages;
- Housing – low/mid income;
- Marketing – real-time communication of events/weather/conditions/opportunities;
- Decentralized resources for entrepreneurs...make info easier to find/centralize;
- Regional map;
- Consistent and accessible internet and cell phone services.

Figure 27 – USDA National Amenity Scale and Second and Recreational Home Distribution



Fabricated Metals/Machinery Manufacturing

The region's fabricated metals and machinery manufacturing clusters are considered together for several reasons, including occupational overlap and supply chain connections to be discussed later in this overview. Combined, the clusters employ almost 2,500 workers in the region. With few exceptions, almost all of the industry categories within the cluster have high location quotients, with many figures above 3.0 (Figure 28 and Figure 29). The industry is diverse in terms of its products, but is heavily influenced by employment in metal tank manufacturing; miscellaneous fabricated metal products; bolt, nut, screw, rivet and washer manufacturing; farm machinery; and air-conditioning and warm air heating equipment and commercial and industrial refrigeration equipment.

Job growth characteristics in the two clusters are varied. Within fabricated metals, most industries showed positive net job growth and positive competitive effects arising from the shift-share analysis. In fact, metal tank manufacturing, miscellaneous fabricated metal product manufacturing and machine shops all showed strong employment growth during the post-recessionary period from 2009 to 2015. Within machinery manufacturing, warm air heating equipment and commercial and industrial refrigeration equipment also experienced job growth over this period.

Figure 28 – Job Change in the Fabricated Metals Cluster

Industries	Total Jobs 2015	Location Quotient	Net Job Growth 2009-2015	Percent Job Growth 2009 - 2015	Competitive Effect
Metal Tank (Heavy Gauge) Manufacturing	371	35.5	206	124.8%	152
All Other Miscellaneous Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	272	11.9	197	262.7%	188
Bolt, Nut, Screw, Rivet, and Washer Manufacturing	244	21.6	30	14.0%	1
Fluid Power Valve and Hose Fitting Manufacturing	132	12.6	-187	-58.6%	-255
Machine Shops	98	1.1	81	476.5%	78
Metal Coating, Engraving, and Allied Services to Manufacturers	67	4.0	35	109.4%	29
Precision Turned Product Manufacturing	47	3.9	-2	-4.1%	-15
Fabricated Structural Metal Manufacturing	35	1.4	35	N/A	35
Prefabricated Metal Building and Component Manufacturing	31	3.7	14	82.4%	14
Sheet Metal Work Manufacturing	12	0.4	6	100.0%	6

Source: EMSI Class of Worker 2016.4 (QCEW, non-QCEW, self-employed and extended proprietors).

Figure 29 – Job Change in the Machinery Manufacturing Cluster

Industries	Total Jobs 2015	Location Quotient	Net Job Growth 2009-2015	Percent Job Growth 2009 - 2015	Competitive Effect
Farm Machinery and Equipment Manufacturing	613	33.8	88	16.8%	13
Air-Conditioning and Warm Air Heating Equipment and Commercial and Industrial Refrigeration Equipment Manufacturing	349	15	167	91.8%	174
All Other Miscellaneous General Purpose Machinery Manufacturing	88	7.3	-144	-62.1%	-170
Other Commercial and Service Industry Machinery Manufacturing	42	2.3	-33	-44.0%	-33
Industrial Mold Manufacturing	18	1.5	-6	-25.0%	-11
Mining Machinery and Equipment Manufacturing	10	N/A	10	N/A	10

Source: EMSI Class of Worker 2016.4 (QCEW, non-QCEW, self-employed and extended proprietors).

Most occupations in the fabricated metals cluster and the machinery cluster have median hourly wages above \$15 per hour. In fact, a number of occupations pay more than \$18 per hour (Figure 30 and Figure 31). The occupations with somewhat lower wages are mostly associated with assembly or material moving, which typically require lower skill levels. With few exceptions, almost all occupations in the fabricated metals cluster and machinery cluster require a high school diploma as an entry level educational requirement. However, advances in these industries are likely not reflected in these estimates. Conversations with regional owners and operators in these industries suggest that additional technical training is needed beyond a high diploma for many of these occupations.

Importantly, there is a notable overlap in occupations concentrated in the fabricated metals cluster with those concentrated in machinery manufacturing. That is, many of the occupations listed in Figure 30 are also found in Figure 31. This overlap is confirmed with national occupational distributions in these two industries, as nine of their 12 most common occupations are found in both fabricated metals and machinery manufacturing (Figure 32). As a result, there may be a number of workforce development synergies found between these two industries and are therefore considered together in this plan.

Figure 30 – Occupations in the Fabricated Metals Cluster

Occupations	Jobs 2015	% Change, 2009-2015	Median Hr. Earnings	Entry Level Education
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	149	52%	\$18.1	High school diploma or equivalent
Machinists	90	43%	\$18.6	High school diploma or equivalent
Team Assemblers	79	18%	\$14.3	High school diploma or equivalent
Computer-Controlled Machine Tool Operators, Metal and Plastic	74	48%	\$17.5	High school diploma or equivalent
Cutting, Punching, and Press Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plastic	54	15%	\$15.7	High school diploma or equivalent
First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	53	29%	\$22.3	High school diploma or equivalent
Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	44	22%	\$16.5	High school diploma or equivalent
Multiple Machine Tool Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plastic	40	21%	\$16.7	High school diploma or equivalent
Coating, Painting, and Spraying Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders	38	65%	\$18.0	High school diploma or equivalent
Office Clerks, General	32	33%	\$14.3	High school diploma or equivalent
Structural Metal Fabricators and Fitters	31	19%	\$16.7	High school diploma or equivalent
Grinding, Lapping, Polishing, and Buffing Machine Tool Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plastic	27	17%	\$17.2	High school diploma or equivalent
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	25	47%	\$18.0	High school diploma or equivalent
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	22	16%	\$23.5	High school diploma or equivalent
Helpers--Production Workers	19	19%	\$12.5	No formal educational credential

Source: EMSI Class of Worker 2016.4 (QCEW, non-QCEW, self-employed and extended proprietors).

Figure 31 – Occupations in the Machinery Manufacturing Cluster

Occupations	Jobs 2015	% Change, 2009-2015	Median Hr. Earnings	Entry Level Education
Team Assemblers	154	14%	\$14.3	High school diploma or equivalent
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	118	7%	\$18.1	High school diploma or equivalent
Computer-Controlled Machine Tool Operators, Metal and Plastic	39	11%	\$17.5	High school diploma or equivalent
Machinists	37	-12%	\$18.6	High school diploma or equivalent
First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	34	3%	\$22.3	High school diploma or equivalent
Mechanical Engineers	34	0%	\$34.8	Bachelor's degree
Cutting, Punching, and Press Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plastic	32	10%	\$15.7	High school diploma or equivalent
Electrical and Electronic Equipment Assemblers	28	27%	\$11.7	High school diploma or equivalent
Industrial Engineers	27	4%	\$32.6	Bachelor's degree
Multiple Machine Tool Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plastic	26	13%	\$16.7	High school diploma or equivalent
Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	24	4%	\$16.5	High school diploma or equivalent
Office Clerks, General	23	0%	\$14.3	High school diploma or equivalent
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	23	0%	\$23.5	High school diploma or equivalent
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	22	10%	\$13.6	No formal educational credential
Coating, Painting, and Spraying Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders	21	5%	\$18.0	High school diploma or equivalent

Source: EMSI Class of Worker 2016.4 (QCEW, non-QCEW, self-employed and extended proprietors).

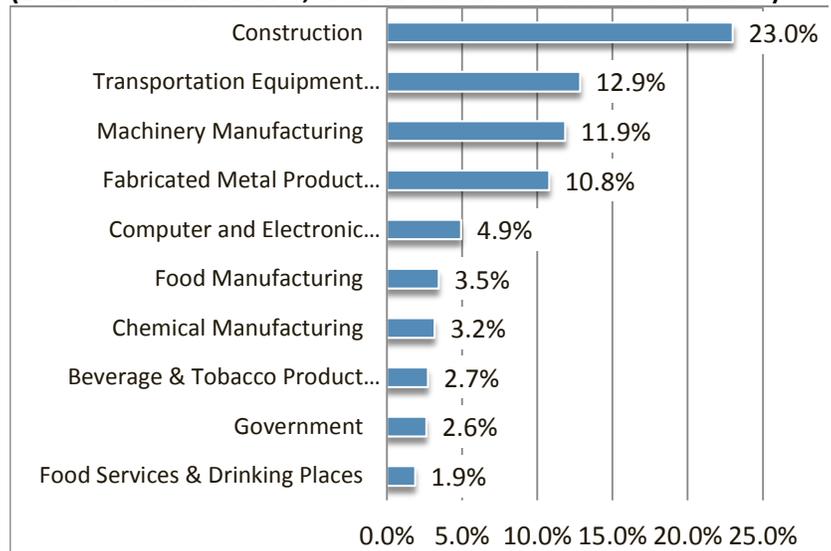
Figure 32 – Occupation Overlap in the Fabricated Metals and Machinery Manufacturing Clusters

Twelve Most Common Occupations in Machinery Manufacturing (National % of All Occupations)	Twelve Most Common Occupations in Fabricated Metal Manufacturing (National % of All Occupations)
Team Assemblers (10.6%)	Machinists (9.2%)
Machinists (6.5%)	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers (6.0%)
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers (5.1%)	Team Assemblers (5.3%)
First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers (3.4%)	First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers (4.4%)
Mechanical Engineers (3.1%)	Metal and Plastic Cutting, Punching, and Press Machine Setters, etc. (4.1%)
Computer-Controlled Machine Tool Operators, Metal and Plastic (2.5%)	Computer-Controlled Machine Tool Operators, Metal and Plastic (3.5%)
Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers (2.3%)	Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers (2.8%)
Wholesale and Manufacturing Sales Representatives (exc. Tech. & Sci.) (2.2%)	Structural Metal Fabricators and Fitters (2.8%)
Tool and Die Makers (2.1%)	Helpers--Production Workers (2.7%)
General and Operations Managers (1.9%)	General and Operations Managers (2.3%)
Metal and Plastic Cutting, Punching and Press Machine Setters, etc. (1.9%)	Wholesale and Manufacturing Sales Representatives (exc. Tech. & Sci.) (2.1%)
Shipping, Receiving, and Traffic Clerks (1.8%)	Metal and Plastic Grinding, Lapping, Polishing & Buffing Machine Setters, etc. (2.0%)

Data Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

In addition to the potential synergies among occupations, these two clusters may also be connected through supply chains. Machinery manufacturing is one of the largest purchasers of fabricated metal products for use in their production processes. Fabricated metal product producers also purchase many products from each other (Figure 33). Accordingly, connecting these two clusters as part of the strategy development and implementation processes may uncover additional growth opportunities in the region. The geographic location of the region also positions it to access many other of these downstream industries in the

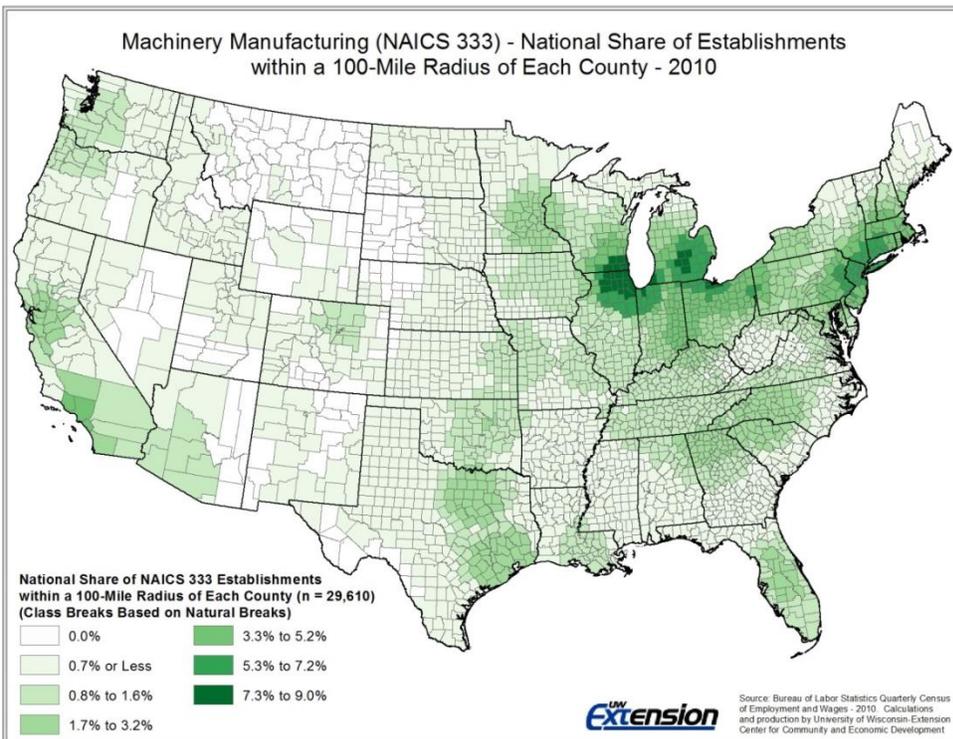
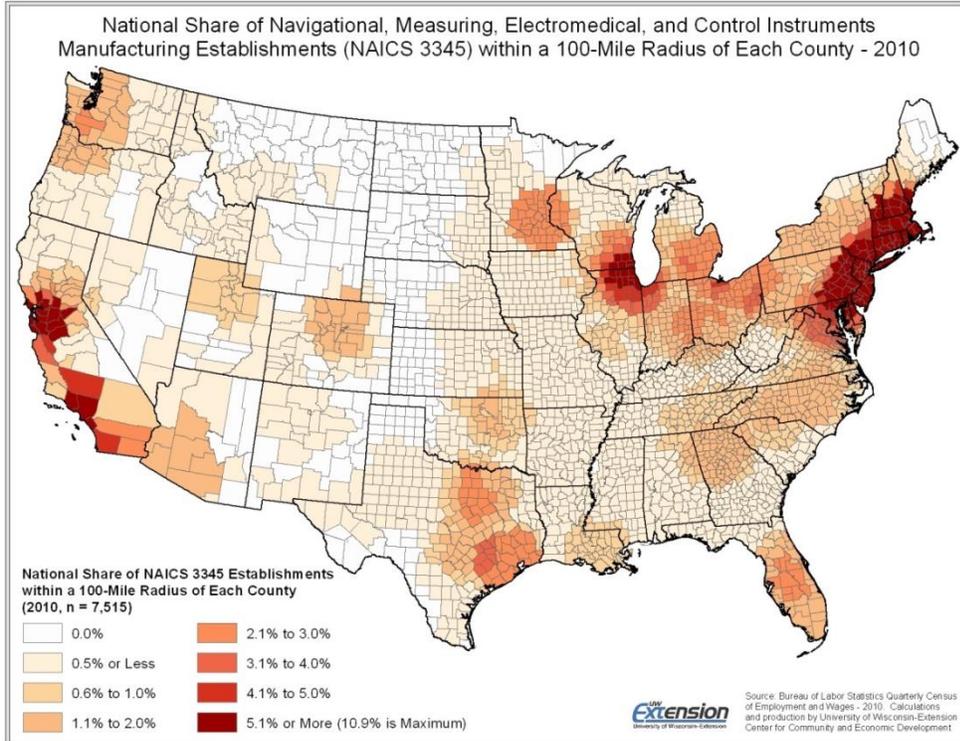
Figure 33 - Top Domestic Purchasers of Fabricated Metal Products (Downstream Industries, % of all Fab. Metal Product Purchases)



Data Source: IMPLAN

Chicago and Minneapolis-St. Paul markets, including other concentrations of machinery manufacturing and electronic component manufacturing in the form of navigational, measuring, electromedical and control instruments.

Figure 34 – Selected Concentrations of Downstream Industries



As part of the cluster analysis process in Session 2, issues associated with workforce development again were raised. Attendees recognized that skill requirements in the clusters were increasing. These changing skills, along with a perceived cultural attitude that manufacturing jobs are bad or gone, create challenges to attracting new workers. Several employers in this cluster also noted that limited day care availability and housing in the region were barriers to attracting workers. Addressing these issues related to talent attraction and retention were identified as opportunities.

Other opportunities for the fabricated metals and machinery manufacturing clusters focus on the region’s human capital in these industries. A number of former employees of firms in the cluster have spun off their own firms and are now part of the region’s supply chain. Furthermore, there may be opportunities to leverage university resources to help in technology transfer and operations improvement. Finally, a number of strategies acknowledged the freight corridor in the region and suggested opportunities to increase rail shipments through intermodal transit or new rail spurs.

Figure 35 – Potential C.A.R.E. Strategies for the Fabricated Metals/Machinery Manufacturing Clusters

Create	Attract	Retain	Expand
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spinoffs from manufacturing; • Leverage New Ideas; • Strengthen our entrepreneurs club; • Teams from the university to identify opportunities for improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sell the lifestyle; • Promote Midwest work ethic; • Promote Low Cost of living; • Interstate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shipping; • Parks; • Schools; • Broadband; • Housing; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day Care – challenge with regulations for in-house; • Help them find other opportunities; • Networking with each other

Foundation

- Creative, skilled workers;
- Change of processes/automate to produce more with less;
- Educate or change the culture that manufacturing jobs are bad/gone. Jobs to keep them in the area;
- We have good interstate. Could expand intermodal;
- We could have more spurs/more railroad.

Evidence Basis for Plan – Other Regional Assets

The 7 Rivers Alliance Region is committed to building a positive and sustainable economic development program on the strengths and assets of the area. In addition to the region's industry and demographic characteristics, partners recognize that the region has other assets that support opportunities in the region, both directly and indirectly related to the region's key industries. Building on all of the region's assets will not only further differentiate the 7 Rivers Region in a crowded marketplace, but also offers the most promise for sustainable economic growth. In the Civic Forum and again throughout the planning sessions, project partners engaged participants in highlighting assets of the entire region.

An important aspect of the region's SET planning program was the awareness that resulted from considering the array of assets that form the Community Capitals Framework. By taking a holistic approach to quality of life; quality of environment; and quality of economy issues, the region was better able to take stock of strengths that can be built on and featured to differentiate the region. Project partners are intent on turning the following key assets into opportunities:

- Location
- Natural Resources/Amenities/Recreational Opportunities
- Economic Diversity
- Quality of Life
- Work Ethic and Values
- Health Care Assets
- Community Involvement

The complete summary of the region's strengths and challenges is captured by community capital in the Appendix B.

Evidence Basis for Plan - Potential Barriers and Related Strategies

The process of identifying barriers was addressed both in terms of the asset exercise during the Civic Forum and again when partners spent time looking at the Community Capital Framework prior to drafting the SMART Goals. Partners identified some of the major challenges in the region:

- Resistance to change
- Aging workforce
- Under employment and employee turnover

- Poverty levels
- Lack of public transportation
- Inadequate housing
- Substance abuse
- Inconsistent community involvement

A number of strategies—opportunities for further development—were identified that related to these barriers and challenges (and that took advantage of our region’s assets), including:

- Workforce development (targeting clusters)
- Housing
- Child care provision
- Broadband Improvements
- Regional marketing
- Supporting entrepreneurs
- Transportation

As partners further assessed strategies, the SET process provided an opportunity to develop unique regional goals that built on regional assets and that took into account the barriers. *Appendix C captures some of these important details that will be addressed in the implementation of our selected goals.*

Regional Economic Development Plan

As noted in Appendix D, the following regional economic development plan is based on the input of over 100 regional leaders and residents coupled with the data explored throughout the Stronger Economies Together process. These individuals represented metal fabrication industries, food manufacturers/producers, local and state-wide elected officials, chambers of commerce, the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, the Tomah VA Hospital, local military facilities, county economic development corporations, local newspapers, employment agencies, technical schools, retailers, hospitality establishments, agricultural producers, contractors/builders, tourism promotion organizations and interested citizens (among others). Based on their input and participation, the partners recommend a regional economic development plan that pursues four goals for the 7 Rivers Alliance Region:

- Goal 1: Develop critical infrastructure to facilitate the attraction and expansion of businesses in high-wage industry sectors;
- Goal 2: Provide students with better access to workplace readiness programs to improve the region's pool of prepared labor;
- Goal 3: Reduce barriers to workforce attraction and retention;
- Goal 4: Create and promote a regional brand that better promotes and unifies the region's tourism economy.

Each of these goals is detailed below in terms of their regional economic benefits and the evidence used to support their need in the region. These goals are certainly based on the needs of the aforementioned key industry clusters and the region's residents. However, other key assets in the region, such as large employers including the VA Hospital, Ft. McCoy and Ho Chunk Tribal Nation, will also benefit from the pursuit of these goals. Importantly, these goals largely address foundational issues identified in the C.A.R.E. process in Session 2 as well as issues identified in the Civic Forum. One rationale for this emphasis on foundational issues is that these challenges are consistently identified across numerous industry clusters and consequently have the potential to have greater impacts and multipliers in the region.

The goals are structured in terms of objectives, strategies, lead organizations, partners, completion dates and target outcomes. Progress measures and indicators are also provided as a means of evaluating progress and success. As previously noted, initiatives are assigned primarily to the three county contacts and the overarching economic development organization. This reflects the local culture of taking ownership for the effort and providing guidance and facilitation. It does not mean that the four people that serve as the staff for these organizations are solely responsible for the work. Each of these people represents a team of staff and volunteers that is rich and vast. The designations simply are meant to provide lead assignments. It also should not be presumed that if one organization is the lead that other organizations will not play significant roles.

Goal I: Develop critical infrastructure to facilitate the attraction and expansion of businesses in high-wage industry sectors

Regional Economic Benefit: As identified in the regional demographic and economic analysis, the region faces a potential shortage of labor in the region. Furthermore, the region's key clusters rely on the region's transportation network for access to markets and labor. Infrastructure in terms of transportation and broadband are needed to ensure that the region remains competitive in the global economy.

Evidence Base for Goal: The region's infrastructure in terms of broadband availability was identified as a key challenge in the Civic Forum and as a foundational issue affecting the region's key industry clusters during Session 2 of the SET process. Effective and efficient broadband is needed by establishments in the region's Fabricated Metals/Machinery Manufacturing Cluster and in the Agribusiness, Food Processing and Technology Industry Cluster to submit and receive orders up and down supply chains. The region's Arts, Entertainment, Recreation and Visitor Industries also need to provide adequate broadband to their guests as a means of attracting customers. Furthermore, the region's current and projected age structures, combined with low unemployment rates, suggests that attracting and retaining a future workforce will be a priority. The region will need to offer potential residents with sufficient broadband as a necessary amenity or risk losing prospects to other regions.

The region's transportation system was identified as one of the region's key assets. Access to the Interstate system in all three counties, combined with the region's strategic geographic location, positions the region with an opportunity to attract customers (both consumer and industrial) from the key markets of Chicago and Minneapolis -St. Paul (as well as points in between). Businesses in the 7 Rivers Alliance Region also rely on more than 13,000 workers that commute into the region from outside areas. Consequently, maintaining and enhancing the region's transportation system provides an opportunity to improve access to both labor and markets.

Accordingly, Goal 1 has two key objectives: 1) increase access to efficient broadband in the region for current, residents, future residents, potential telecommuters and businesses (particularly those in the target clusters); and 2) enhance the regional transportation system to increase the mobility of goods and workers. These objectives are further described in Figure 36, including strategies to meet the objectives, project leads, targeted outcomes, and progress measures that will be used to evaluate the success and progress of the objective. In addition to the project leads, other partners include Wisconsin USDA RD, University of Wisconsin-Extension, Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, local Broadband Providers, elected officials, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission.

Figure 36 - Goal I: Develop critical infrastructure to facilitate the attraction and expansion of businesses in high-wage industry sectors

Objectives	Strategies to meet Objective	Leads	Outcomes	Progress Measures/ Indicators and Target Dates
<p>Objective 1. Increase access to efficient broadband in the region for current, residents, future residents, potential telecommuters and businesses (particularly those in the target clusters).</p>	<p>Host a summit of broadband providers to discuss how to increase access throughout the region.</p>	<p>Steve Peterson – Monroe County EDC</p>	<p>Summit held with at least 25 participants. Summit participants become more knowledgeable about service delivery information and new planned projects shared with all participants. (Short Term)</p>	<p>Summit attendance is tracked and attendee evaluations report a better understanding of broadband access issues (9/22/2017).</p>
	<p>Submit Connect Community Applications to secure funding to help identify broadband infrastructure needs in the region.</p>	<p>Terry Whipple – Juneau County EDC</p>		<p>Connect Community applications are submitted (9/30/2017).</p>
	<p>Identify true upload and download speeds in the region by using local high school students and smart phone speed test apps to collect speeds across the three counties.</p>	<p>Chris Hardie – Black River Falls Area Chamber of Commerce</p>	<p>Connect community applications result in increased broadband funding for the region (Short Term).</p>	<p>Collected information is geocoded and map is completed and distributed to partners and stakeholders (6/30/2018).</p>
	<p>Meet with broadband providers to identify and problem-solve inadequate broadband coverage areas.</p>	<p>Matt Kures – University of Wisconsin-Extension</p>	<p>Map of upload and download speeds for broadband created for each county (Medium Term)</p>	<p>Collected information is geocoded and map is completed and distributed to partners and stakeholders (6/30/2018).</p>
	<p>Host a broadband planning meeting with business and community leaders and telecom companies.</p>		<p>Service gap areas identified and prioritized for development (Medium Term)</p>	<p>Map and conversations with broadband providers used to identify at least six gaps in coverage where upload and download speeds do not meet federal standards (8/31/2018).</p>
			<p>Each county sets and achieves an annual goal for increasing access to Internet Service Providers (Medium Term)</p>	<p>Based on gap analysis, county ED directors establish annual goal for number of new households and businesses served (12/31/2018).</p>
			<p>At least 2 new Internet Service Provider projects funded each year from 2017-2020 (Long Term)</p>	<p>Inventory spreadsheet/system is created to track new ISP projects using local EDC input and Wisconsin Public Service Commission data. (12/31/2020).</p>

Figure 36 (continued) - Goal I: Develop critical infrastructure to facilitate the attraction and expansion of businesses in high-wage industry sectors

Objectives	Strategies to meet Objective	Leads	Outcomes	Progress Measures/ Indicators and Target Dates
Objective 2. Enhance the regional transportation system to increase the mobility of goods and workers.	Convene region’s transportation stakeholders including employers, school districts, military facilities, elected officials, DOT and road builders to identify priority needs for the region.	Lisa Herr – 7 Rivers Alliance	Stakeholders become more knowledgeable about the region’s transportation needs (Short Term)	Transportation summit is held to identify road funding projects to pursue in the region. This information is used to inform the development of county/regional transportation plans. (06/30/2018).
	Pursue funding to support road improvements throughout the region	Steve Peterson – Monroe County EDC	A written plan created to guide transportation development and adopted by each county board of supervisors by 2019 (Medium Term)	A plan for each county is crafted, adopted and posted to the 7 Rivers Alliance websites (12/31/2019).
	Create a long-range plan for a connected regional transportation system	Terry Whipple – Juneau County EDC	At least \$10 million in new road funding secured by 2020 (Long Term)	Database of new road projects, funding sources and funding amounts is established using county highway and state DOT information (12/31/2020).
	Develop new regional bus links throughout the region	Chris Hardie – Black River Falls Area Chamber of Commerce	At least 3 new bus routes created by 2020 to better connect labor and employers (Long Term)	Bus routes are established and promoted to the region’s employers (12/31/2020).

Goal 2: Provide students with better access to workplace readiness programs to improve the region's pool of prepared labor

Regional Economic Benefit: The prior analysis suggests that workforce quality/quantity is one of the foundational issues facing the region over the coming years. The proposed programs in Goal 2 address an unmet need for career readiness programs for students. Employers will benefit from a better prepared entry level workforce. This goal benefits not only the region's key industry clusters, but also other larger employment assets in the region such as the VA Hospital, Ft. McCoy and Ho Chunk Tribal Nation...

Evidence Base for Goal: During Session 2, businesses in the region's target industry clusters suggested that worker awareness and readiness and is a foundational issue that needs to be addressed. Many students may perceive manufacturing as an inappropriate or undesirable career path. While not all of these industries have experienced significant employment growth over the past decade, discussions with employers, and the analysis of demographics show that job openings are numerous due to worker turnover and an aging labor force that is contributing to a growing number of individuals approaching retirement age. Given the region's future age structure, as discussed as part of the Civic Forum, workplace readiness programs could help create a future pipeline of employees for the region's key industries.

Goal 2 has one key objective: Launch career exploration programs in 8th through 12th grades. This objective are further described in Figure 37, including strategies to meet the objectives, project leads, targeted outcomes, and progress measures that will be used to evaluate the success and progress of the objective. In addition to the project leads, other partners include Wisconsin USDA RD, University of Wisconsin-Extension, Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, local employers, workforce development entities, Western Technical College, local school districts and the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development.

Figure 37 – Goal 2: Provide students with better access to workplace readiness programs

Objectives	Strategies to meet Objective	Leads	Outcomes	Progress Measures/ Indicators and Target Dates
Objective 1. Launch career exploration programs in 8 th through 12 th grades	Offer work-based learning experiences via INSPIRE in high demand sectors	Lisa Herr – 7 Rivers Alliance	At least 50 work-based experiences available and utilized by students (Short Term)	Inventory of number of students participating in INSPIRE, including an evaluation of INSPIRE by participants (9/30/2017)
	Introduce CEO in the Classroom program in 8th grade classes	Steve Peterson – Monroe County EDC	At least 90% of 8th grade classes participate in a CEO presentation between December 2017 and June 2019 (Short-to-Medium Term)	School districts are contacted and introduced to CEO in the Classroom and industry cluster tour programs by 12/31/2017.
	Offer industry cluster tours for 9th grade students	Terry Whipple – Juneau County EDC	At least 4 cluster tours offered with 40 participants in each tour by December 2019 (Medium Term)	Businesses in target industry clusters are recruited for CEO in the classroom and industry cluster tours by 06/30/2018
	Create Center of Excellence Career Academies in high schools in partnership with Western Technical College	Chris Hardie – Black River Falls Area Chamber of Commerce	At least 3 new career academies created (1 per county) with at least 25 students enrolled by September 2020 (Long Term).	Number of classes and attendees are tallied and reported for industry cluster tours/ CEO in the Classroom by semester (06/30/2019)
	Annually align high school and college Career and Tech Ed Programs with industry demand		At least 4 training programs audited annually in each county by business leaders (Long Term).	Identify one school district per county for Career Academies by 6/30/2019. Academies are funded and launched by 09/01/2020.
	Strengthen entrepreneur classes offered by high schools		Launch an iLEAD high school program in each county by September 2025 (Long Term).	Identify industry cluster representatives to audit training programs. Audit programs are developed by 12/31/2020 Educate other school districts on the iLEAD program by 06/30/2020. Identify funding or other resource needs by 06/2021. Launch in each district by 09/01/2025

Goal 3: Reduce barriers to workforce attraction and retention

Regional Economic Benefit: In addition to the need to improve/expand the existing local labor pool, the region's key industry clusters and other key businesses (such as the VA Hospital and Ft. McCoy), will likely need to attract new residents to the region. The proposed strategies address two potential barriers to attracting new residents in their 30s and 40s. Specifically, overcoming the challenges of providing child care access could reduce employee turnover, entice parents into the labor force and increase productivity and staffing levels at businesses in the region. An adequate affordable housing stock could also assist in attracting new, young workers to the region.

Evidence Base for Goal: As noted in the evidence for Goal 1 and Goal 2, the region's low levels of population growth and an aging labor force suggest that workforce attraction and retention will be one of the region's greatest needs in the next decade. While migration patterns by age suggest that the region loses residents in their late teens and 20s, the region is able to attract residents in their 30s and 40s. *However, information collected in the Civic Forum, Session 2 and Session 3 suggests that the supplies of child care and affordable housing are limited.* Efforts to provide additional access to child care and housing could reduce some of these barriers to attracting/retaining future residents, particularly those that are in their prime years of family/household formation.

Goal 3 has two objectives: 1) Increase access to childcare; and 2) Increase access to affordable housing. These objectives are further described in Figure 38, including strategies to meet the objectives, project leads, targeted outcomes, and progress measures that will be used to evaluate the success and progress of the objective. In addition to the project leads, other partners include Wisconsin USDA RD, Employers Partners, the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority, The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, HUD and Builders Associations.

Figure 38 – Goal 3: Reduce barriers to workforce attraction and retention

Objectives	Strategies to meet Objective	Leads	Outcomes	Progress Measures/ Indicators and Target Dates
Objective I: Increase access to childcare	Conduct a census of childcare in Juneau, Monroe and Jackson Counties in Wisconsin	Lisa Herr - 7 Rivers Alliance	Better understand childcare capacity within the region (Short term)	Hire consultant and perform child care census (06/29/2017).
	Develop childcare provider training cooperatives with school districts and community based organizations	Steve Peterson – Monroe County EDC	Based on the census of childcare, further capacity by offering least 2 training programs in each county each year to at least 4 participants in 2018 and 2019 (Short-to-Medium Term)	School district partners and community organizations are contacted and recruited for training cooperatives by 9/30/2017.
	Create public-private partnerships to finance new childcare start-ups in each county	Terry Whipple – Juneau County EDC	Training curriculum is developed by 12/31/2018.	Two training programs are offered and evaluated between 12/31/2018 and 12/31/2019.
	Recruit and match business mentors with each new childcare provider to increase their likelihood of success	Chris Hardie – Black River Falls Area Chamber of Commerce	At least 3 new childcare start-ups launch by September 2019 (Medium Term).	Coalition of potential child care funding sources is identified by 12/31/2018. Three new child care start-ups are identified and funded by 09/01/2019.
			At least 3 new mentors matched with new childcare providers, meeting with them twice a month (Medium Term).	Using the business connections of the region’s ED professionals, mentors are identified and connected to new child care providers that are trained by the cooperatives hosted by School district partners and community (3/31/2019)

Figure 38 (continued) – Goal 3: Reduce barriers to workforce attraction and retention

Objectives	Strategies to meet Objective	Leads	Outcomes	Progress Measures/ Indicators and Target Dates
Objective 2. Increase access to affordable housing	Conduct a housing needs assessment for the region	Lisa Herr - 7 Rivers Alliance	An analysis of housing needs conducted in each county that quantifies the market for the types of housing units needed by the region (Short Term).	County-by-county supply and demand estimates are compiled using U.S. Census Bureau data, WI Department of Administration housing and population trends, and, local property management firms, Wisconsin Realtors Association data. (6/30/2018).
	Develop a long-range plan to build affordable housing in each county	Matt Kures – University of Wisconsin-Extension	A 10-year housing development plan created for each county. (Medium Term).	Housing needs analysis is used to craft 10-year housing plans for each county. Plans are drafted and submitted to county boards. Plans are shared with developers and builders (12/31/2019).
	Create public-private partnerships to fund new housing projects in each county	Steve Peterson – Monroe County EDC	Funding sources are identified to fund and build at least 10 housing units in each county (Long Term).	A database of potential public/private funding sources for affordable housing construction/ financing is compiled from existing sources and shared with local builders/developers. (06/30/2019).
		Terry Whipple – Juneau County EDC		New housing units in the region are tracked using building permit data provided by local units of government. Number of new units is evaluated according to demand estimates in housing plans (12/31/2019).
		Chris Hardie – Black River Falls Area Chamber of Commerce		

Goal 4: Create and promote a regional brand that better promotes and unifies the region's tourism economy.

Regional Economic Benefit: This goal recognizes the inconsistent branding and promotion of the region. The adoption of a coherent and consistent brand and marketing plan will contribute to increased tourism to the region. *Importantly, it is expected that this goal could also help in supporting the need to attract talent to the region. That is, a better brand that unifies the region could also be used to help promote quality of life characteristics that may be needed or desired by new residents.*

Evidence Base for Goal: Recreational venues, cultural events, and quality of life considerations were consistently identified as some of the 7 Rivers Alliance Region's key assets. The region's Arts, Entertainment, Recreation and Visitor Industries cluster is partially driven by many of these assets, as is the region's ability to attract retirees. While many of these assets are successful as individual entities, there is little coordination in terms of promotion or branding. The absence of a consistent regional identity and the lack of a perceived critical mass of attractions/events create challenges to competing with other tourist destinations. In particular, these challenges are compounded as the region is located adjacent to one of the state's largest tourist destinations (Wisconsin Dells), which is positioned just to the southwest of the 7 Rivers Alliance Region. *The need for further coordination and a stronger regional identity were consistently noted in the Civic Forum and during Session 2 of the SET process.*

Goal 4 has one objective which is to promote local assets and quality of life. This objective is further described in Figure 39, including strategies to meet the objectives, project leads, targeted outcomes, and progress measures that will be used to evaluate the success and progress of the objective. In addition to the project leads, other partners include: the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, county tourism committees, regional convention center and visitor's bureau.

Figure 39 – Goal 4: Create and promote a regional brand that better promotes and unifies the region’s tourism economy.

Objectives	Strategies to meet Objective	Leads	Outcomes	Progress Measures/ Indicators and Target Dates
Objective I: Promote local assets and quality of life	Develop a regional brand that connects the local assets of the three regions into a unified message.	Lisa Herr - 7 Rivers Alliance	A better understanding of each county’s needs and further communications among regional tourism partners/promoters (Short Term)	Assemble local chambers of commerce, convention and visitors bureaus, regional Department of Tourism representatives and tourism business owners to identify specific opportunities for further communications and discussions (03/31/2018)
	Create a marketing plan for promotion of regional brand.	Steve Peterson – Monroe County EDC		
	Secure Joint Effort Marketing (JEM) grant from the Wisconsin Department of Tourism to market one new event in each county	Terry Whipple – Juneau County EDC	The number of annual visitors increased by 5% each year from 2018 through 2021 (Short to Long Term).	Track annual visitors in counties using either intercept surveys at events, visitor business surveys or economic impact numbers provided by the Wisconsin Department of Tourism (Annually in December of each year between 2018 and 2021).
	Create calendar and plan to maximize use of social media to promote regional assets	Chris Hardie – Black River Falls Area Chamber of Commerce	Funding sources for developing a brand and logo (Medium Term)	Identify funding sources and craft an RFP for developing a brand, logo and marketing plan (06/30/2018)
			A regional brand and logo created and adopted by each county (Medium Term).	Hire a consultant(s) or identify other entity to develop a regional brand and marketing plan (06/30/2018)
			A five-year marketing plan that identifies new tourism events is created and adopted by each county in the region (Medium Term).	Present logo/brand to county boards (12/31/2018)
			Each county will launch one new event identified in the marketing plan (Long Term).	Present marketing plans to county boards/committees (12/31/2019)

Appendix A – Regional Core Team and Training Team

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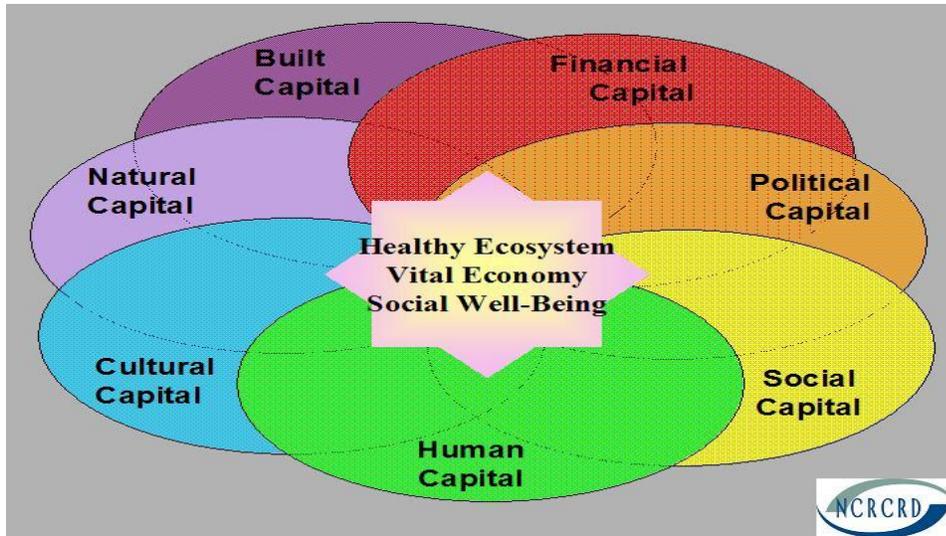
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Appendix B – Regional Assets by Community Capital (from Civic Forum)

The Community Capitals Framework is an approach to analyze how communities work. It reflects the reality that the quality of life in a community is made up of many aspects. Research has found that the communities that are most successful in supporting healthy sustainable community and economic development paid attention to all seven types of capital: Natural, Cultural, Human, Political, Social, Financial, and Built.



Source: Cornelia Flora, Jan Flora, Susan Fey, Mary Emery

Natural Capital - Air quality, land, water, water quality, natural resources, biodiversity, scenery, and climate

Strengths in Region

- Cranberry County
- Natural Resources
- Tourism
- Beauty of land, lakes, woods
- Recreation: bike trails, hunting, fishing, ATV
- Agricultural and mining history/diversity
- Public land/ clean natural resources
- Environment: mix of resources and available land

Challenges in Region

- Cold weather

Cultural Capital—Values, heritage recognition and celebration

Strengths in Region

- Quality of Life
- No place like home
- Small town
- Cranberry County
- Family values
- Good people (common sense, ambition, sense of community)
- Work ethic/business agriculture
- Above average workforce participation

Challenges in Region

- Anti-public investment
 - Resistant to diversity/change
 - Close-knit/closed minded
-

Human Capital - Population, education, skills, health, creativity, youth, diverse groups

Strengths in Region

- Healthcare
- Educational
- Health care/Medical assets
- Employment Opportunities
- Work force (experienced, reliable, stable, expanding, high participation rate)
- Community services
- Returning population
- Students returning to area labor
- Net migration working age
- High rate of high school grad with vocational training opportunities
- Higher percent of seniors remain in the 7 Rivers Region

Challenges in Region

- Workforce: aging, no succession, lack of start-ups, shortage
 - Employee retention
 - Under employment
 - Mismatch of job skills with available employment
 - Lack of resources
 - Wages less → more poverty
 - Keeping up healthcare
 - Alcohol and other drugs
 - Engaging individuals in higher education
 - Youth moving to cities/retaining youth/brain drain
 - Lower educational attainment/Post-secondary education
 - Improving rural schools
 - Lack of youth programs
 - Aging population and the potential drain on services
-

Social Capital - Trust, norms of reciprocity, network structure, group membership, cooperation, common vision and goals, leadership, acceptance, diverse representation.

Strengths in Region

- Leadership/Risk-takers
- Community involvement-volunteerism
- Strong support network
- Diversity

Challenges in Region

- Duplication of efforts with lack of communication
 - Indifference to change
 - Lack of training
 - Community involvement
 - Millennial and Gen X apathy to volunteering in politics, boards, associations, etc.
-

Financial Capital - Tax burden/savings, state and federal tax monies, philanthropic donations, grants, contracts, investments, reallocation, loans, poverty rates.

Strengths in Region

- Tourism/Recreation (Ag Tourism) economy (tourism, ag, industry and business diversity)
- Employment Opportunities
- Entrepreneurship
- Work ethic
- VA Ft. McCoy, Volk, Camp Wms
-

Challenges in Region

- Poverty levels
 - Lower average earnings
 - Lack of disposable spending money, low commodity prices
 - Attracting higher wage opportunities
 - Tourism advertising
 - Teaching and supporting small business in use of e-commerce trade
 - Dead-end jobs not careers
 - Restaurants
-

Political Capital - Level of community organization through use of government, ability of government to garner resources.

Strengths in Region

- Public administration
- Prevalence of Public admin/govt. jobs
- Contributes significantly to area's economic impact

Challenges in Region

- Lack of resources
 - Community involvement
 - Government regulations
 - Funding cuts to local municipalities and school districts
 - Poor perception, regard of government, public admin.
 - DMV
-

Built Capital - Housing, transportation infrastructure, telecommunications infrastructure, utilities, buildings.

Strengths in Region

- Transportation infrastructure
- Regional location
- Land use
- Recreation opportunities
- Housing

Challenges in Region

- Transportation
 - Local road infrastructure maintenance
 - Driving long distances to work
 - Public transportation
 - Affordable housing
 - Communication: lack of cell phone, internet services
 - Keeping up healthcare
 - Keeping up housing
 - Unattractive commercial and residential facades
-

Appendix C – Potential Opportunities and Related Assets and Barriers (from Session 2 and Session 3)

Opportunity 1 – Broadband Improvements

Capitals/Assets	Challenges/Barriers
- Broadband summit	- Cost
- Lynxx broadband	- Cost
- Fiber optics	- Cost
- Paul Potter – Tech Director Microsoft Engineer TASD	- Cost for very rural area
- Direct Access to Centurylink	- Cost/Benefit for Providers
- Visit several times a year with all six county legislators	- Lack of Competition
- Gigabyte Business Park	- Lack of Availability in rural Areas
- Deans Satellite Broadband	- Area Coverage Issues
- Industrial Recreation Committee	- No to poor connectivity in west areas
	- Cellular towers
	- A Co-op Effort of towns and counties to provide broadband in more remote areas

Opportunity 2 – Regional Marketing

Capitals/Assets	Challenges/Barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 10 years North Central Regional Planning- Natural-Resort Recreation for community to attract visitors- Organic Valley- Destination marketing office- Marketing degrees- Marketing communication- Mennonite grocery store and community- Ft. McCoy/Volk Field- Regional marketing- Business development/coaching- County Extension Agents- County economic development directors- Wineries- Mysteries of Driftless Region documentary- 40 years of experience in business mfg. and supply chain logistics- 7 Rivers marketing- Get work out of the region and do it in the region- Black River State forest- Amish community- Social opportunity to meet new people @ resort and talk to new friends- Ability to join with other cultural arts centers- Young professionals organization- Trade shows for regional marketing- Ho Chunk Nation- Craft breweries- Woodside Sports complex- Website Design/Marketing Assessments- Necedah Wildlife Refuge- Farm Bureau members and ag in classroom create beauty of landscape- Each community chamber directors and members- Benefactors/Foundations- Quality Health care – Hospital/clinic- Hidden Valleys Organization- 200 Miles of ATV/Snowmobile trails- 100,000 sq. ft. Lunda Community Center- Lake Wazee Recreational Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Small budgets compared to other regions- Territorial issues- Build small successes- Cost of marketing- Resistance to change- Quality, timely information (widespread)- Local government- Cooperation- Parochialism- Budget tightening – limited funds

Opportunity 3 – Workforce Development

Capitals/Assets	Challenges/Barriers
- Career Academies – Medical/Construction/Technology	- Transportation between school districts
- Apprenticeships at Tomah High School	- Lack of respect for service providers
- I & E Club – encouragement for inventors	- Work ethics
- Work Ethic – dedicated	- Bodies
- Workforce – employ flexible schedule employees	- Mental health issues
- Workforce – good technical school training	- Lack of skilled workers
- School-to-work educational opportunities at Tomah High School	- Transportation
- Political Capital	- Not enough staff to man the offices
- Intern programs	- Educational programs not supporting critical technical labor needs
- Career fairs at school	- Drug dependency
- Amish workers	- Local education opportunities
- Entry level positions	- Aging workforce
- School-to-work apprenticeship programs	- Low competitive wages
- Hire and train employees	- No immigration policy
- Strong understanding of the workforce needs of many regional companies	- Lack of interest in offerings
- Chamber of commerce	- Aging workforce (with good work ethic)
- CEOs in the classroom	- Hiring good employees
- On Western WI workforce development board	- Broadband availability
- Career fair	- Lack of skilled tradespeople
- Students	- Mental illness
- Political visit several times a year with all 6 legislators in our county – serve on elected officials workforce board	- Retention
- Riverfront and DUR	
- WTC/Tech colleges and UW System	
- Temporary workforce providers	
- Technical college training	
- Colleges, tech schools and high schools	

Opportunity 4 – Supporting Entrepreneurs

Capitals/Assets	Challenges/Barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Business incubator buildings- Available store fronts/retail space- Business capital fund in Jackson County- RLF in Jackson, Juneau and Monroe counties- Sparta RLF- Tomah RLF- Block grants- Business education series- Rotary club member- I & E club as regional entrepreneur feeder system- Business coaching/mentoring- “time” to offer consulting advice in strategic planning and marketing- Block grants- WEDC- 30 years in politics- Town chairman for 16 years- Benefactors/Foundations- SCORE program- Small start-up businesses operating for 1-2 years in the region- Cultural opportunity to relax, snowtube, try disc golf, X-C ski, snow shoe- SBDC- Tomah Rotary – Offer support/community help- Inventors and Entrepreneurs Club- Tech colleges and universities- Have helped people chose career fields- Entrepreneur mentor/30-year business owner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Conservative Attitude- Department of Safety and Professional Services rules and regulations- No mentoring or little coaching- Marketing- Incentive- Lack of knowledge of resources- Access to capital- Business incubator sites

Opportunity 5 – Child Care Provision

Capitals/Assets	Challenges/Barriers
- Meals for preschoolers	- Low pay for child care employees
- School teacher coach/ Boys and Girls Club Board Member/Afterschool activities coordinator	- Cost vs. Staying home with children
- More hours for afterschool	- Rural distances to facilities
- Boys and Girls Club	- Legislative and legal requirements
- Preschool sub – start minds growing	- Lack of care providers
- Business community connections	- Regulatory requirements
- Boys and Girls Club – Karen DeSanto	- Buildings
- Organic Valley partnership day care center	- Demand greater than supply
- Trustee for Black River Falls Area Foundation	- Cost
- Tomah School	- Regulations
- Political Visit several times a year with all 6 legislators of county	- Low wages
- 14 years of day care	Regulations by State Department of Children and Families
- Boys and Girls club	
- Fort McCoy Day Care	
- Department of Human Services – Family and Children	
- Benefactors/Foundations	
- Boys and Girls club	
- Early childhood educators	
- Ho Chunk Nation	

Opportunity 6 – Transportation-Related Development

Capitals/Assets	Challenges/Barriers
- Interstate	- Funding
- Interstate and highway system	- Lack of Air Assets
- Railroad	- Affordable commuter and elderly transportation
- Semis and trucks to transport product	- Finding drivers
- Smart Bus – need 20% local match to run buses from Tomah to La Crosse	- Winter
- I 90/94	- Self-driving cars and trucks
- Trucking companies	- Financing for roads
- Interstate Highway and paved roads – Great for bicycling and motorcycling	- Sustainable funding for state transportation system
- Bus system in TASD	- Regulations/DOT laws
- Personally know director of transportation development authority Craig Thompson	- Connecting schools in different cities
- Bike trails	- Cost
- One more Amtrak a day both ways from Chicago to St. Paul	- Aging roadways
- Railroads	- Roads and bridges in need of repair/upgrade
- Trucking companies	- Large geography
- Handicap and elderly transportation services (i.e. Abby Vans)	- Federal issues
- Martins trucking	
- Amtrak service	
- Working on park and ride in Sparta	
- Local airport	
- Millis transfer	

Opportunity 7 – Housing

Capitals/Assets

- Political capital
- Home repair/remodeling and redesign – cost effective options
- Building trades class at Tomah High School working with city
- Low income housing
- Rent out a house
- 54 years of contracting
- More for young families – safe, medium income
- Housing authority
- Real estate contacts – Diana Gerke Hininger (sp?)
- All-American construction
- Several contractors to build houses
- Mobile home parks
- Benefactors/Foundations
- Construction companies
- Ho Chunk nation
- Home builders in this area
- Architect/Designers
- Fort McCoy

Challenges/Barriers

- Regulations
 - Lack of Affordable Housing
 - Quality Housing
 - Return on Investment
 - Variety of levels
 - Regulation
 - Lack of Developers
-

Appendix D – List of Unique Session Attendees

The following individuals attended one or more of the SET programs (Civic Forum and Sessions 1 through 4). They represent a diversity of stakeholders including metal fabrication industries, food manufacturers/producers, local and statewide elected officials, chambers of commerce, the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, the Tomah VA Hospital, local military facilities, county economic development corporations, county committees local newspapers, employment agencies, retailers, hospitality establishments, agricultural producers, contractors/builders, tourism promotion organizations and interested citizens among others.

- Marina Abbott
- Kate Ahl
- Jeremy Ames
- Jim Arena
- Bernie Arena
- Sarah Arendt
- Kevin Babock
- Doug Bellile
- John Belmonte
- Mike Belmonte
- Victoria Brahm
- Scott Brookman
- Judy Budnick
- Keith Carlson
- Brad Chown
- Lisa Christopherson
- Kathy Coblentz
- Jim Costello
- Chetue Dejay
- Kyle Deno
- Dick Durrett
- Karen Eggelston
- Mary Eiler Radl
- Greg Ellis
- Todd Fahning
- Ray Feldman
- Mike Finnigan
- Gary Fish
- Greg Flogstad
- Meghan Flynn
- Sharon Folcey
- Kahya Fox
- Roger Gorius
- Roy Granger
- Patty Gross
- Chris Hackner
- James Hanke
- Mary Hanson
- Chris Hardie
- Nick Helstad
- Angie Hemmersbach
- John Hendricks
- Lisa Herr
- James Hoffman
- Vicki Horstman
- Mary Hudack
- Brian Hudson
- Tim Hyma
- Jack Jacinski
- Donna Justin
- Russ Kind
- Gary Kirling
- Bob Kliebenstein
- Jennifer Kuderer
- Matt Kures
- Debbie Larson
- Shaun Lescher
- Ronald Luethe
- Ed Lukasek
- David May
- John Medinger
- Veronica Meyer
- Ronald Meyer
- Jim Mohrbacher
- Bree Morgan
- Jim O'Keefe
- Tamaya Jo Oldenhoff
- Brent Olson
- Kinjal Patel
- Bonnie Peterson
- Steve Peterson
- Alan Peterson
- Steve Pierce
- Eric Prise
- Gail Raddatz
- Ray Ranson
- Lynn Rasmussen
- Dick Roellig
- Jim Rosenberg
- Shane Rowan
- Ruth Rupp
- Sue Schedler
- Keith Schedler
- Jake Schedler
- Lenore Schroeder
- Richard Schuh
- Brian Slater
- Kit Sorenson
- Mark Stanek
- Aileen Steinolfson-Luethe
- Ronald Stonek
- Anna Straight
- Mark Sund
- Joan Sutherland
- Ronald Sutherland
- Tyler Tardiff
- Barb Theis
- Dennis Theo
- Nathan Thiel
- Kayla Thomas
- Tina Thompson
- Tonya Townsell
- Nancy VanderMeer
- Nodji VanWychen
- Carol Wagenson
- Steve Walker
- Joanne Westpfahl
- Carol Wetuski
- Terry Whipple
- Joe Williams
- Greg Wise
- Eva Woywod
- Cindy Zahrt

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National Partnership for Stronger Economies Together

