

**Indiana Strategic Skills Initiative:  
An Independent Assessment of the  
SSI Process**

**January 2008**

**Indiana Department of  
Workforce Development**

**Prepared by  
Workforce Development Associates**

## Acknowledgements

This report has been prepared by Workforce Development Associates in partial fulfillment of a contract with the Indiana Department of Workforce Development to conduct an independent assessment of the Indiana Strategic Skills Initiative (SSI). Professionals across Indiana were involved in providing invaluable insight into the solutions funded by the Department of Workforce Development as a part of the SSI process.

The willingness of Indiana professionals to share their successes in both identifying and addressing occupational shortages in high-wage industries is to be commended. The solutions funded to address occupational shortages have resulted in a high level of collaboration and involvement of individuals representing the public and private sector.

The findings and recommendations reflected herein are those of Workforce Development Associates and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Indiana Department of Workforce Development.

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## Executive Summary

In June 2005 the Indiana Department of Workforce Development (DWD) announced a two-year, \$23 million Strategic Skills Initiative (SSI). This initiative was designed to identify occupational and skills shortages in high-wage industries, determine the root causes of those shortages, and design and implement competitively-funded solutions to address the shortages.

As a result of the SSI planning process, eleven Economic Growth Regions' (EGRs) identified fifteen high-wage industries and occupations were identified with significant shortages. The DWD ultimately sponsored 46 different solutions with an allocation of \$14,234,793.

This assessment of the SSI process included two phases. The first phase included a comprehensive document review of quarterly and year-end reports from each of the eleven EGRs. Specifically, the reports are designed to describe for the DWD the extent to which each EGR is making progress on addressing the outcomes for each of the solutions. The second phase of the assessment included visits with individuals from a variety of agencies/organizations responsible for carrying out the solutions in each of the EGRs. Those visits occurred from September through November 2007.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The following conclusions and recommendations are derived from all sources in the second year independent assessment of the SSI process—document reviews and onsite visits.

#### Conclusions

- DWD staff has been instrumental in limiting programmatic or fiscal barriers associated with implementation of SSI solutions in each EGR. The Department was clearly willing to work with EGRs to assist them in assuring that solutions were given every opportunity to be successful.
- The SSI process continues to provide a viable framework for regional collaboration. Regional Workforce Boards continue to be involved in setting policy and many of the solutions involve the direct participation of representatives from the public and private sector. A number of partnerships established as a result of the SSI process will result in solutions that will continue long after SSI funding ceases.
- The SSI process has served as a catalyst for leveraging substantial resources to address occupation and skills shortages solutions well beyond the allocation provided by the DWD.

- Several of the EGRs are working on solutions that address common purposes. In some cases the individuals responsible for implementing these solutions have struggled with the best way to market and deliver these programs to new and incumbent workers. Individuals responsible for implementation of like programs should be brought together to share best practices as they address these common solutions.
- Funding for SSI solutions has been provided by the Department in two yearly allocations. Currently, the Regions are all at different places with their funding within grants and sometimes within items for individual solutions. Some of the budgets have multiple funding streams adding to the unique, complex, and sometimes confusing budgets in the regions. To their credit, instead of being rigid, DWD has been instrumental in allowing a great deal of budgetary flexibility to allow each Region to successfully carry out their solutions.
- At the time of this report, there are clearly mixes of traditional and non-traditional solutions to address occupation and skills shortages. Some solutions are focused on youth and others on adults. Many of the solutions have a high level of interaction with the private sector. While the majority of the solutions are reaching the intended targets set out by the EGR, there are those that deserve closer scrutiny by the Department as they may not be successful without substantial modification.
- Regional Operators have been instrumental in assuring that the implementation of SSI solutions is successful. They continue to provide regional leadership on behalf of the respective workforce boards to assure that solution implementation is successful despite not having funding for staff and (in most cases) marketing to assist in working with services providers implementing solutions.
- Any evidence to suggest that an SSI funded solution is having an impact on economic activity in a region is limited and mostly anecdotal. Individuals enrolled in programs have, for the most part, not had time to complete an education or training program. However, there is every indication that at the conclusion of SSI funding there will be a substantial impact on Indiana Hoosiers and the State's private sector.

## **Recommendations**

- Continue to build upon the regional capacity to address occupation and skills shortages that has been established in each EGR. The Department should consider a new round of competitive solutions that are “percolating up” in the Regions. However, funding in a new cycle for future projects should only be made with a clear indication from service providers that there is a demonstrated need for the solution and that it is achievable and sustainable.

- As more and more Indiana Hoosiers complete education and training programs, there is a need to follow up SSI solution funding by assessing the perceptions of a sample of the participants in various programs of study. It may also be possible to estimate the potential economic impact of “selected” line of sight solutions by using the number of program graduates to display the potential earnings, GDP and economic output associated with them.
- For the EGRs working on solutions that address common purposes, service providers responsible for implementing those solutions should be brought together to share best practices for marketing and delivering those solutions.
- The results of this report should be provided on the SSI website for review by regional representatives and policy makers. As solution implementation continues to mature in the EGRs, a follow-up Summit might focus on industry-sector solutions impacting on Indiana’s citizens and businesses.

## Background and Context

In June 2005 the Indiana Department of Workforce Development announced a two-year, \$23 million Strategic Skills Initiative. This initiative was designed to accomplish three primary objectives:

1. Identify skill and occupational shortages in high-wage industries
2. Determine the root causes of shortages
3. Design and implement (competitively-funded) solutions to address shortages

The innovative SSI process was designed to make the Indiana Workforce Development System more of a demand-driven system and to:

- Link regional workforce development and economical development
- Enable the state to focus workforce resources on human capital bottlenecks to economic development
- Stimulate regional thinking within eleven newly-defined Economic Growth Regions
- Build local capacity for professionals to analyze workforce development issues in the context of economic development

Initially, the SSI process included two phases: Phase I consisted of Research and Identification (planning phase) and Phase II consisted of Solutions Implementation (training phase). Each Economic Growth Region (EGR) was responsible for assembling a planning consortium to facilitate garnering multiple perspectives in the region. The consortiums were to be broadly representative of Local Workforce Investment Boards, Economic Development Officials, Regional Employers, Business and Industry Associations, Educational Institutions, Chamber of Commerce Members, Organized Labor, and others as appropriate. Each EGR Consortium was initially led by a Core Agent. Later, Solutions Implementation has been led by Regional Operators in each EGR.

During the planning phase of the SSI process, grants were made to each of the EGRs and awarded to each consortium that applied and met the requirements for a request for application distributed by the Department of Workforce Development. For the training phase, funding was awarded on a competitive basis to consortia that had submitted the best solutions to address critical skill shortages and the causes of these shortages.

As a result of the EGRs' work in the planning phase of the SSI process, fifteen high-wage industries and occupations were identified with significant shortages. These included shortages in agri-business, advanced manufacturing, life sciences and health care, and various scientific and technical professions. Critical skills needed for these industries and occupations included skills in science, mathematics, reading comprehension, critical thinking, judgment and decision-making, active learning and writing, and systems skills such as systems analysis and evaluation.

EGRs proposed solutions and requests for funding totaling \$26,445,000, and identified 85 potential solutions to address occupational and skill shortages identified regionally. The DWD ultimately funded \$14,234,793 or 46 different solutions in the eleven EGRs. Some of those solutions had multiple components.

Table 1 shown below indicates the amount of funding allocated by the DWD for the training phase of the SSI process by EGR for Program year 06 and 07.

**Table 1: EGR Solutions and Awards**

Economic Growth Region	Solutions Funded	Year 1 SSI Award	Year 2 SSI Award	Combined Total of Awards
1	9	\$781,225	\$731,358	\$1,512,583
2	5	\$921,688	\$661,426	\$1,583,114
3	6	\$1,155,815	\$605,841	\$1,761,656
4	1	\$192,316	\$153,886	\$346,202
5	2	\$549,809	\$228,432	\$778,241
6	3	\$1,179,825	\$934,256	\$2,114,081
7	5	\$330,493	\$360,710	\$691,203
8	3	\$1,054,500	\$798,300	\$1,852,800
9	3	\$554,344	\$421,232	\$975,576
10	5	\$889,899	\$496,041	\$1,385,940
11	4	\$807,842	\$425,555	\$1,233,397
Total	46	\$8,417,756	\$5,817,037	\$14,234,793

The average cost for each of the solutions funded by the Department was \$182,995 in Year 1 (2006) and \$126,457 in Year 2 (2007). However, it is important to note that solutions funding ranged from a low of \$13,213 to a high of \$646,700, as the nature of each solution varied greatly.

Because of commonalities identified in the EGRs' planning reports, three policy initiatives are being addressed at the state level to include:

- Emerging workers and their futures in advanced manufacturing
- Retaining registered nurses and how to stop the perpetuating shortage
- Immersing high school teachers in the practical application of theory

It is important to note that at the same time the planning phase of the SSI process was taking place in Indiana, the regional administrative platform was restructured in the state, moving from fifteen Local Workforce Investment Areas to eleven newly-formed Economic Growth Regions. This restructuring did have an influence on SSI planning and development in several of the EGRs.

During the first year of solutions implementation, several of the EGRs are aggressively moving to integrate customer services in local WorkOne Centers. EGRs are actively involved in determining needs for effective integrated service delivery and business services strategic planning.

While the restructuring of the existing workforce investment system in Indiana had an effect on the planning phase of the SSI process, so too is integration having some influence on SSI solutions implementation. In short, the SSI activity must be examined in the broader context of a host of new and creative activity underway to address improvements in the Indiana workforce development system.

## Assessment Purpose and Methodology

The purpose of this project was to conduct an assessment of the Indiana Strategic Skills Initiative (SSI). The assessment had two distinct purposes. First, to examine the SSI process in each Economic Growth Region (EGR) and assess Regional Operators' perceptions of SSI's assistance in addressing occupation and skills shortages. Second, the assessment was designed to assess each solution funded in the EGRs by the Department of Workforce Development (DWD).

It should be noted that at the time of this assessment most of the solutions funded by DWD had only been initiated one year earlier and regions were just starting Year 2 activity. As a result, it was not possible to determine if solutions funded as a part of SSI had enhanced the competitiveness and viability of regional businesses and organizations and ultimately enhanced the economic development of each region. It may be possible to do this in a future assessment.

This assessment was designed to provide information that could be used to guide DWD decisions concerning the adoption or modification of the SSI process in the future. It was also intended to document the involvement of individuals in the EGRs to aid in administrative decision-making, to facilitate possible corrective actions in the implementation of solutions, and to increase the understanding of how best to support the EGRs as they address an array of occupational skills shortages.

Several key questions guided this inquiry. There were questions designed to address the following broad SSI process questions:

- Are there programmatic or fiscal barriers associated with implementation of SSI solutions that could be addressed by DWD?
- To what extent can DWD provide assistance to the regions as they work with organizations implementing solutions?
- Has there been buy-in from business/industry and those expected to play a role in the solutions identified to address occupation and skills shortages?
- To what extent is the Regional Workforce Board involved in continuing discussions about occupation and skills shortages in the Region?
- Has the Region utilized its capacity to analyze workforce investment issues to address occupational and skills shortages not originally funded as solutions in the SSI process?
- Is there preliminary evidence to suggest that the SSI-funded solutions are having an impact on economic activity in the Region?

The study also addressed the following questions associated with specific solutions funded in each EGR:

- Has the intended target for the solution remained the same since the initial SSI activity was funded by DWD?
- Is the solution being implemented as planned?

- Have there been modifications to the original solution proposed by the EGR?
- Are their physical, communications, or programmatic barriers or intervening events that are affecting the implementation of the solution?
- Has the organization leveraged other funds and resources to support the solution beyond those provided by DWD?
- To what extent is the solution sustainable after SSI funding ceases? What is the projected payoff, (e.g. program completion, employment, attainment of credential)? Are there unexpected effects of the solution?
- Is there preliminary evidence to suggest that the SSI funded solution was having an impact on economic activity in the Region?

The independent assessment of the SSI process included two phases. The first phase included a comprehensive document review of quarterly and year-end reports from each of the eleven EGRs. Specifically, the reports are designed to describe for DWD the extent to which the EGR is making progress on addressing outcomes for each of the solutions. Information obtained from the document review aided in giving a perspective on the level of activity in each region and the state, as well as conducting the second phase of the assessment.

The second phase of the SSI assessment included visits by Dr. John Washburn and/or Ms. Kathy Lively with individuals from a variety of agencies/organizations responsible for carrying out the solutions in each of the EGRs. Those visits occurred from September through November 2007. This methodology included key interviews with individuals in each region involved in a particular SSI solution as well as Regional Operator staff. When possible, interviews were also conducted participants participating in one of the solutions. A separate visitation report was prepared for each of the EGRs.

Data from the review of quarterly and year-end reports and an overview of the key interviews in each Region are detailed in the next section of this report. Dominant and recurrent themes that emerged from the reports and onsite visits appear in the next section of this report.

## Document Review and Site Visitation Results

As noted, the methodology for this assessment included a review of documents provided to the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) by Regional Operators in Economic Growth Regions (EGRs) as well as onsite visitations conducted between September and November 2007.

DWD documents reviewed included end-of-year reports for Year 1, which document activity from the period from July 1, 2006 through June 30, 2007. It should be noted that some of the grants to EGRs may not have started on July 1, 2006 because of extensive negotiations necessary to more clearly define the solutions in a particular region. Year 2 funding for the SSI initiative began on July 1, 2007.

A number of the regions had not expended the Year 1 allocation for SSI from DWD and in Year 2 were spending carryover money from Year 1, as well as Year 2 money made available to address solutions. Some of the budgets in regions have multiple funding streams making it difficult to get a clear picture of the funding in each region. Some of the regions have obligated 80% of the budget, however, due to timing with payments to providers they have only spent a portion of their funding.

In short, the regions are at different places with their funding within grants and sometimes line items for each of the solutions funded by DWD. To their credit, instead of being rigid, DWD has been instrumental in allowing a great deal of flexibility and innovation with each Region allowing them to carry out their solutions in a manner best suited to addressing regional needs.

Table 2 shown below shows a percent of Year 1 and 2 awards by Economic Growth Regions.

Table 2. Percent of Year 1 and 2 Awards by EGR

Economic Growth Region	Percent of Total State Award in Year 1	Percent of Total State Award in Year 2
1	9.3	12.6
2	11.0	11.4
3	13.7	10.4
4	2.3	2.7
5	6.5	3.9
6	14.0	16.1
7	3.9	6.2
8	12.5	13.7
9	6.6	7.2
10	10.6	8.5

Table 2 (cont.)

Economic Growth Region	Percent of Total State Award in Year 1	Percent of Total State Award in Year 2
11	9.6	7.3

Every EGR in Indiana has benefited from involvement in the SSI process. Regions 6, 8, and 3 received the largest allocations. Regions 4 and 7 received the smallest allocations. Several of the Regions have also received Federal Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) grants from the U.S. Department of Labor to address workforce and economic development priorities.

Table 3 shown below shows the solutions funded in each region by awareness, skill, or industry sector.

Table 3. Solutions by Awareness, Skill, or Industry Sector

Type of Solution	Percent of Total Number of Solutions
Skills-based solutions	24
Agri-business	1
Logistics	3
Hospitality	1
Advanced Manufacturing	17
Biotechnology	12
Healthcare	32
Entrepreneurship	1
Career Awareness/Youth	9

Thirty-two percent of the solutions were in the healthcare sector, 24% were skills-based solutions in a variety of industry sectors, 17% of the solutions focused on advanced manufacturing, and 12% focused on bio-technology. Interestingly, 9% of the solutions funded focused on career awareness activities for youth.

Table 4 shows the number of participants in solutions for each EGR as of November 2007.

**Table 4. Numbers of Adults and Youth Enrolled in Formal Education, Training or Awareness Activities by Region**

Economic Growth Region	Adults	Youth	Certificates Awarded	Degrees Attained
1	218	46	40	
2	108		12	
3	223	50	32	
4	48			
5	124			
6 <sup>4</sup>	109	111		
7	81	1100	70	
8	237		85	
9	234			
10	229		12	
11	230			10
Total	1841 <sup>3</sup>	1307 <sup>1</sup>	251 <sup>2</sup>	10 <sup>2</sup>

Note:

- 1 Does not include youth contacts in career or job fairs
- 2 Most students in formal education or training programs will not have been enrolled long enough to complete a certificate or degree
- 3 Does not include hundreds of adults rotating for various periods of time in clinical simulation labs in nursing. Estimates are more than 1700 student contacts
- 4 Ten new business plan have been created

As a snapshot of current activity in SSI, there are 1841 adults enrolled in formal education or training programs. Additionally, 1307 youth have been served in SSI solutions. As of the writing of this report, 251 certificates have been awarded and 10 degrees obtained.

It is important to understand that most of the students in formal education or training programs would not have been enrolled long enough to complete a certificate or degree. The numbers in Table 4 do not include a significant number of youth contacts in a variety of career or job fairs conducted throughout the State. Further, these numbers do not include hundreds of adults who have rotated for various periods of time in clinical simulation labs in nursing. In one region alone, they have been able to document more than 900 student contacts in the simulation lab. Across the state, eight new faculty have been employed to address the critical nursing shortage in the state. Ten new business plans have been developed as a result of the SSI solutions funding.

In short, as of November 2007, a total of 4848 Hoosiers have been directly impacted in education or training through SSI solution funding. Slightly more than 6500 Hoosiers

have been impacted by SSI. It is expected that those numbers will increase substantially as regions continue to move through the second year of SSI solutions funding.

Visitations were conducted in each EGR engaging in key interviews with individuals in each region responsible for carrying out an SSI solution. In many cases, the visitations included interactions with students involved in formal education and training programs. A comprehensive visitation report was prepared for each EGR and has been prepared as a separate addendum to this report. A short synopsis of activity in each region follows.

#### EGR 1.

EGR 1 received \$1,512,583 to address nine unique solutions. The solutions are unique in that they are a mix of those that are directly related to serving students in existing programs as well as solutions that require the implementation of new programs. Two of the solutions addressed the need to expand nursing capacity. One of the solutions focuses on serving Northwest Indiana veterans, another solution focuses on acquainting employers in manufacturing and TDL industries with the importance of radio frequency identification technology, a solution implemented in multiple locations is focused on expanding welding and diesel mechanic shortages, another solution is focused on training front-line supervisors, and the final solution emphasizes career awareness for youth in the manufacturing industry.

#### EGR 2.

EGR 2 received \$1,583,114 from DWD and is addressing five unique solutions. One of the solutions funded in EGR 2 focused on the nursing shortage, a new program has been established in respiratory therapy, clinical simulation mannequins are being used to teach entry-level and critical-care healthcare skills, a solution addresses the need for increasing the number of bilingual students entering the nursing profession, and the last solution, which includes multiple parts emphasizes employment in advanced manufacturing.

#### EGR 3.

EGR 3 received \$1,761,656 in funding and is currently addressing six unique solutions. Solutions funded in EGR 3 include two programs addressing the need to address the health shortages in nursing, a solution focused on preparing certified warehousing and distribution specialists, a solution in career awareness for youth focusing on careers in advanced manufacturing, a private-sector focused center to address the needs of students (and the private sector) in logistics and RFID technology, and a solution which has resulted in a new Center for Advanced Manufacturing.

#### EGR 4.

EGR 4 received \$346,202 for SSI solution funding. The one solution funded as a part of the Year 1 SSI effort in EGR 4 supports MSSC implementation in the eastern and western portions of the Region. This solution emphasizes incumbent worker training. The Region is also involved in the federal WIRED initiative.

#### EGR 5.

EGR 5 received \$778,241 from DWD for SSI activity. There were two solutions funded as a part of the SSI process. One of the solutions funded includes an award for providing scholarships to students who are incumbent workers in high-growth allied health professions. The other solution is focused on providing scholarships to students in vital industries such as manufacturing, industrial technology, and machine tool technology.

#### EGR 6.

EGR 6 received the largest allocation of SSI dollars by DWD of \$2,114,081. There were three solutions funded in EGR 6, including an entrepreneurship student-mentor program to prepare high school students as future entrepreneurs, a solution to establish entrepreneurship mentors, and an agri-venture initiative designed to fund entrepreneurial business plans that require feasibility studies, technology assessments, or research and analysis.

#### EGR 7.

EGR 7 received \$691,203 for SSI. There were five solutions funded in EGR 7, including a maintenance training program designed to serve WIA-eligible participants, student WorkKeys assessment, a manufacturing program designed to acquaint youth with careers in the manufacturing sector, and a soft-skills training program for incumbent workers.

#### EGR 8.

The award for EGR 8 for SSI was \$1,852,800. EGR 8 is currently addressing three unique solutions. One solution focuses on critical occupational shortages in the hospitality industry. Another solution focuses on the healthcare faculty shortage and the need for clinical simulations for entry-level and critical skill purposes in the healthcare sector. The final solution has multiple parts, all addressed on improving the marketability of individuals with an interest in an occupation in the life sciences. The centerpiece of this biomanufacturing solution is a 20,000 square feet facility under construction called the Indiana Center for Life Sciences.

#### EGR 9.

EGR 9 was awarded \$975,576 to support SSI solutions. Three solutions were funded in EGR 9. One of the solutions involves implementation of an embedded systems cluster to broaden the skill sets in engineering and computerized controls software. Another solution focuses on addressing the critical shortage of nurses by increasing the capacity of a nursing program. The third solution involves the implementation of a supervisory/leadership academy to equip front-line managers and supervisors with leadership skills and strategies to address private-sector needs.

#### EGR 10.

The award for EGR 10 was \$1,385,940. EGR 10 received funding for five solutions in advanced manufacturing and health care. The solutions focused on manufacturing training in industrial maintenance, machinists, and industrial/manufacturing/engineering technology. Another solution focuses on tuition/training assistance for healthcare students, a solution focused on entry-level healthcare worker training and certification, and the last solution focuses on a registered nurse mentoring program.

#### EGR 11.

EGR 11 received \$1,233,397 in SSI funding. There were four solutions funded in EGR 11. Three of the solutions focus on increasing nursing faculty to address the need to increase capacity in ASN and BSN programs and the use of clinical learning and simulation devices for entry-level and critical care purposes in two locations. The last solution has multiple parts and focuses on industrial maintenance worker training.

Several dominant and recurrent themes emerged from the eleven visitations as follows:

- Clearly, in all of the Regions DWD has been instrumental in allowing innovation and solutions changes as necessary to accommodate unique needs in the region. Further, in many of the Regions, staff are using the skills learned in the SSI process and newly obtained labor market analysis software to conduct labor market studies and address critical skills shortages which might not have emerged at the time of initial SSI funding.
- In many of the Regions, SSI has served as a catalyst for pushing forward activity in the region which may not have been possible prior to SSI funding. For example, the capacity to prepare nurses has been increased substantially because of new faculty positions available to teach students and monitor clinical experiences. SSI funding has leveraged a significant amount of other public and

private-sector dollars to address solutions originally identified as a part of the SSI process.

- The solutions funded in the Regions are a mix of those that are line of sight, or directly focused on preparing an adult or youth for a particular occupation and those that are more experimental or pilot in nature. Those line of sight solutions will allow for a substantial number of Hoosiers to obtain certifications or degrees, but it is too early in the process to determine exact numbers of people impacted in this manner. There are literally hundreds of interactions with the private sector as a part of the SSI solution funding provided by DWD.
- Across the Regions there are a number of people working on similar solutions who need to be brought together to share information about program delivery. In particular, these involve those regions working on solutions focused on the Manufacturing Skills Standard Council (MSSC) program and preparing people to address occupational shortages in logistics and transportation. There appear to be multiple ways that Regions are addressing these two solutions and individuals in the regions could benefit from interaction with one another.
- In many of the Regions, as a part of their on-going assessment of the labor market, there are new solutions that have been identified that might be considered for future funding. In the initial SSI process, the time involved in the solutions identification phase of the SSI process was very limited and it was difficult for some of the regions to identify solutions to occupational and skill sets shortages. As a result, after a little more than a year into the process, regional representatives are just now identifying other solutions that are worthy of consideration by DWD.
- During the first year of SSI funding, a strategic skills initiative incentive plan was put in place to establish two tiers of possible funding based on annual deliverables for the solutions identified and funded by DWD. This became a part of the grant agreement between DWD and each Region. This plan created a significant amount of confusion in some of the regions. To its credit, DWD removed this requirement from the SSI process, making it much easier for Regional Operators to work with service providers addressing solutions in each of the regions.
- In most of the SSI solutions funded across the state, dollars available for marketing the solutions was eliminated from Year 1 funding. In some cases, a small amount of funding for marketing would have been useful to Regional Operators as they addressed solutions funded by DWD. In every Region visited, it was interesting to note that Regional Operators are significantly involved in working with service providers addressing solutions funded as a part of the SSI process. The time and effort spent by Regional Operators in assuring the success of the SSI solutions is a credit to their commitment and dedication to the process.
- For many of the solutions funded by DWD, there is a commitment on the part of the service provider to continue the solution after SSI funding ceases. However,

if a new round of funding is considered by DWD, visitations suggest that it would be useful to simplify the funding process so that solutions that are able to be implemented quickly because a program exists to address the solution can be funded immediately. Those solutions that would require a new program should not be funded until there is some indication that the solution is achievable.

## Conclusions

As a result of the comprehensive review of year-end and quarterly reports and visitations made to each of the Economic Growth Regions (EGRs), a number of conclusions have been drawn by the assessment team.

1. DWD staff have been instrumental in limiting programmatic or fiscal barriers associated with implementation of SSI solutions in each EGR. This was the first time that many of the Regional Operators had been involved in innovative funding mechanism of this type. As a result, DWD was often asked to approve programmatic and budgetary modifications for the solutions funded in each region. DWD was clearly willing to work with the EGRs to assist them in assuring that solutions were given every opportunity to be successful.
2. The SSI process continues to provide a viable framework for regional collaboration. Regional Workforce Boards continue to be involved in setting policy to address occupation and skills shortages in their respective regions. Many of the solutions involve the direct participation of representatives from the public and private sector, particularly in the healthcare and advanced manufacturing sectors. A number of partnerships established as a result of the SSI process will result in solutions that will continue long after SSI funding ceases.
3. The SSI process has served as a catalyst for leveraging substantial resources to address occupation and skills shortages solutions well beyond the allocation provided by DWD. These include resources that support those solutions that are more traditional in nature and involve the implementation of a new or existing program with a direct line of sight between training and employment. They also include resources for non-traditional pilot or experimental programs that require imagination and innovation.
4. Several of the EGRs are working on solutions that address common purposes. In some cases the individuals responsible for implementing these solutions have struggled with the best way to market and deliver these programs to new and incumbent workers. For example, several regions are implementing Manufacturing Skills Standard Council (MSSC) certification programs, variations on delivery of transportation distribution and logistics degrees or certificates, as well as advanced manufacturing programs. Individuals responsible for implementation of like programs should be brought together to share best practices as they address these common solutions.
5. Funding for SSI solutions has been provided by DWD in Year 1 (06/07) and Year 2 (07/08) allocations. The Year 1 allocation was scheduled to be spent by June 30, 2007. However, many of the EGRs got off to a slow start and had significant

amounts of money to “carryover” to Year 2. As a result, the Year 1 contracts were extended to June 30, 2008, allowing regions to access the “carryover” money to Year 2. At the same time DWD received requests from EGRs to access Year 2 money for those solutions that were on schedule. Year 2 money was then put in EGR accounts to be available for use in the EGRs. To their credit, DWD recognized that not all solutions were on schedule and utilized different approval levels for EGRs to access Year 2 funding. Currently, the regions are all at different places with their funding within grants and sometimes within items for individual solutions. Some of the budgets have multiple funding streams adding to the unique, complex, and sometimes confusing budgets in the regions. DWD has been instrumental in allowing a great deal of budgetary flexibility to allow each Region to successfully carry out their solutions.

6. At the time of this report there are several evaluative statements that can be made about the group of 46 solutions funded statewide. There are mixes of traditional and non-traditional solutions to address occupation and skills shortages. Some solutions are focused on youth and others on adults. Many of the solutions have a high level of interaction with the private sector. While the majority of solutions are reaching the intended targets set out by the EGR, there are those that deserve closer scrutiny by DWD as they may not be successful without substantial modification.
7. To their credit, Regional Operators have been instrumental in assuring that the implementation of SSI solutions is successful. They did not receive funding for staff and (in most cases) marketing to assist in working with service providers implementing solutions. However, without these resources they continue to provide regional leadership on behalf of the respective workforce boards to assure that solution implementation is successful.
8. Any evidence to suggest that an SSI-funded solution is having an impact on economic activity in a region is limited and mostly anecdotal. Individuals enrolled in programs have, for the most part, not had time to complete an education or training program. However, there is every indication that at the conclusion of SSI funding there will be a substantial impact on Indiana Hoosiers and the state’s private sector.

## **Recommendations**

The assessment team would like to acknowledge the hard work of individuals throughout the state engaged in carrying out the solutions funded by DWD as a part of the SSI process. The process has indeed resulted in innovation, imagination, and collaboration to an unprecedented degree. Several recommendations are worthy of consideration:

1. DWD should continue to build upon the regional capacity to address occupation and skills shortages that has been established in each EGR. New solutions have been identified as a result of the regional collaboration underway. DWD should

consider a new round of competitive funding for solutions that are “percolating up” in the regions. However, funding in a new cycle for future projects should have a total budget (not divided in two years) and have a clear indication from service providers that there is a demonstrated need for the solution and that it is achievable and sustainable.

2. As more and more Indiana Hoosiers complete education and training programs, there is a need to follow up SSI solution funding by assessing the perceptions of a sample of the participants of their program of study as well as public and private sector representatives who have benefited from employees with new skills. It may also be possible to estimate the potential economic impact of “selected” solutions by using the number of program graduates to display the potential earnings, GDP and economic output associated with them.
3. For the EGRs working on solutions that address common purposes, service providers responsible for implementing those solutions should be brought together to share best practices for marketing and delivering those solutions. These include solutions associated with: Manufacturing Skill Standards Council certification; simulation laboratories funded through SSI to address clinical healthcare needs; transportation, distribution and logistics programs; and advanced manufacturing solutions. This might occur in conjunction with a Summit proposed in the following recommendation.
4. Results of this reported should be provided on the SSI website for review by regional representatives and policymakers. A successful statewide Summit was held in July 2007 to highlight selected SSI solutions and best practices. As solutions implementation continues to mature in the EGRs a follow-up summit might again focus on industry-sector solutions impacting on Indiana’s citizens and businesses.