

Investing in Manufacturing Communities Partnership

South-Central Idaho Manufacturing Community



The Community

In South-central Idaho, the food production, processing, and science industrial sector contains a significant mix of key technologies and supply chain elements, making it a regional manufacturing focus. The Magic Valley of South-central Idaho stands as one of the most diverse food baskets in the nation. A powerhouse of agricultural production and processing, the region is home to a diverse cluster of big name, globally recognized processors and home-grown food production facilities.

The Vision

Partnerships between industry and colleges/universities are firmly in place to improve the region's workforce, supply chains, applied research, and other elements of the region's ecosystem. The economic development partnership, led by Region IV Development Association, plans to create and implement a comprehensive strategy to leverage these resources to drive the social, environmental and economic sustainability of the region's food production, processing, and science cluster.

The Strategy

Workforce and Training: With a relatively low unemployment rate, the region's food processing industry is facing a tight labor market, especially for skilled labor. Firms in this industry cluster are developing plans to convince potential workers that the food processing facilities today are no longer dark and nasty as in the past, but bristle with high-tech instruments and automated controls. To boost awareness of the variety of employment positions, the levels of education and training required and the potential career paths, the region's industry partners anticipate using a myriad of tools – including mobile job fairs, internships and apprenticeships, industry certification programs, student research and senior projects, as well as outreach to school counselors and student organization advisors, to work with students at the middle school to high school level.

Supplier Networks: The region's products are largely for export beyond its borders. Transportation, logistics, warehousing/cold storage and freight handling are significant pieces of the supplier networks. Another major priority is the need for a clear market brand for the region. The region intends to address these critical challenges through investments in infrastructure and systems. These investments include conducting a freight assessment to identify synergies for inbound and outbound shipments and determine the viability of a regional public/private trans-loading facility, developing

more robust marketing platforms, and creating a small business to big business network to link local small companies to the product and service demands of the large producers.

Research and Innovation: Research and innovation capacity in the region could benefit from greater accessibility and effectiveness by increasing engagement of the public sector in food processing or product science. The partnership plans to conduct a feasibility assessment regarding the development of a joint university/industry food science and research center to be located in South-central Idaho. It also plans to develop a pipeline of scientists for employment with individual companies for R&D operations by contacting school and college career counselors to raise the students' interests in agriculture production and processing. To establish local capacity for primary research related to food processing, the partnership will develop career opportunities for home-grown/home-staying scientists

Infrastructure and Site Development: Support for the regional food processing industry cluster requires significant amounts of public infrastructure. While the region has been able to provide sufficient public goods to encourage orderly growth and development of a diverse number of food manufacturing companies, improvements can be made. To improve the efficiency of water usage, the region is planning to create a wastewater inventory to identify current capacities, potential for increasing treatment volumes in the short-term, and technology innovation and long-term improvement. It also plans to establish a pilot project regarding water recycling. Other infrastructure projects will include implementing land use planning workshops with local governments and support efforts to address industrial transportation/freight bottlenecks and processing plant access road maintenance..

Trade and Investment: South-central Idaho's population is not sufficient to consume all the food it produces. Therefore, trade – whether domestic or international – is critical to the success of the region's food processing cluster. The partnership is formulating a communication plan to provide information to local firms about public and private resources available for export assistance. It also plans to create marketing information that highlights the region's environmentally sustainable practices to capitalize on global trends for healthy foods. They will also implement best practices for product origin labeling to allow for farm to market traceability.

Operational Improvement and Capital Access: The partnership is exploring potential improvements in operational efficiency that would include the identification of small-business opportunities that can link the area's industrial giants with local companies capable of participating in the supply chain. Finding a local source for production needs will help reduce costs, while helping to create sustainability in the region. The partnership also is developing ways to recycle processing and production bio-residuals. As for capital access, many of the large industry partners in the region are global firms or those with stable cash flows and institutional/commercial access to capital. Despite the ability of these companies to command their own resources, when necessary, the region can provide access to a handful of public resources.

The Partnership

Industry: Region IV Development Association, Monsanto, McCain Foods USA, Clear Springs Foods, Brewster West, LLC, Idaho Milk Products, Commercial Creamery, Gem State Processing, Ballard Family Dairy and Cheese, Glanbia Foods, Idaho Dairymen's Association, Small Business Development Center, Idaho Nevada CDFI Inc., Twin Falls Canal Company, North Side Canal Company, LTD., Eastern Idaho Railroad/WATCO Co., Idaho Power, Intermountain Gas Company, Twin Falls Area Chamber of Commerce.

State/Local governments/Public Institutions: Governor Otter, Workforce Development Council, City of Burley, City of Jerome, City of Rupert, City of Twin Falls, ID Dept. of Environmental Quality, Idaho Congressional Delegation, U.S. Small Business Administration, Blaine County Commissioners, Camas County Commissioners, Cassia County Commissioners, Gooding County Commissioners, Jerome County Commissioners, Lincoln County Commissioners, Minidoka County Commissioners, Twin Falls County Commissioners, City of Gooding, Southern Idaho Economic Dev. Org.

Educational institutions: University of Idaho, Center for Advanced Energy Studies, TechHelp, College of Southern Idaho, Idaho Division of Professional-Technical Education, ARTEC Regional Professional Technical Charter School, Region IV Superintendents' Association, Cassia Joint School District 151, Jerome School District, Blaine County School District, Shoshone School District.