

### **6.E.2 Presentation of the South Central/Southwest Wisconsin WIRED Initiative** (Information/Discussion)

In March, the Board heard a presentation from administration entitled “Regional Demand-Driven Talent Development for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Global Economy – Are We WIRED to GROW”. The presentation identified key elements in a workforce investment system reform strategy promoted and implemented by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). During that presentation, the Board briefly heard about the WIRED Initiative and that SCSWDB in partnership with the Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin (WDBSCW) was preparing a proposal for consideration. Receiving funding seemed like a long shot since WIRED was a national competitive process.

However, in June it was announced that the Southwest Central/Southwest Wisconsin (SCSW) GROW region had received funding under the WIRED initiative. The award was for \$5 million over a 3 year period. In addition, technical assistance funding is available to support the start-up activities.

The Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) Initiative, launched in November 2005 by DOL, is designed to support the development of a regional, integrated approach to workforce and economic development and education. The ultimate goal of WIRED is to expand employment and advancement opportunities for workers and be a catalyst for the creation of high-skill and high-wage jobs.

The WIRED Initiative provides regions with funding, ongoing technical assistance and support from a group of experts to implement a transformational approach to their workforce and economic development systems at the regional level.

WIRED stresses the critical role talent development plays in creating effective regional economic development strategies. It goes beyond traditional strategies for worker preparation by bringing together state, local and federal entities; academic institutions (including K-12, community colleges and universities); investment groups; foundations; and business and industry to address the challenges associated with building a globally competitive and prepared workforce.

In February 2006, DOL announced 13 regions that comprise the 1<sup>st</sup> Generation WIRED regions. Thirteen (13) more regions were added in April 2006 as 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation WIRED regions. And, in June 2007, 13 more regions were selected to become the 3<sup>rd</sup> Generation of WIRED Regions. Each will receive a \$5 million investment over a three year period. See **Attachment 1** for a map of the 39 WIRED Regions.

WIRED Regions are supported by managers from DOL and the WIRED resource team, as well as access to various staff from other federal agencies. This expanded team will provide the tools and technical assistance that will help the SCSW GROW region implement an action plan for regional economic growth. **Attachment 2** is summary of the 6 step transformation model for WIRED and an overview of the Implementation Plan Process. **Attachment 3** identifies the specific objectives and activities proposed in the SCSW grant application.

Bob Borremans will review the WIRED application and the next steps in the implementation process. This topic is presented for information and no action by the Board is required.