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TARGETED INNOVATOR OUTREACH: APPLYING INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY TO UNCOVER NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND SERVE THE NEEDS OF THE LA COUNTY BUSINESS COMMUNITY, INCLUDING THE HIGH-TECH INNOVATIVE BUSINESS SECTOR

How the LAEDC has implemented integrated and dynamic business database instruments to provide targeted outreach to innovative and high-tech companies and to ensure the continued economic vitality of Los Angeles County.

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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
LAEDC	3
Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED)	4
Targeted Innovator Outreach	7
Project Overview	7
Innovator Outreach Process/Methodology	9
Developing the LA County-wide Integrated Databases	10
Database Instruments Used	10
Process of Building the Database/Database Composition	14
How the Integrated Database Tools are Helping the LAEDC Achieve Its Goals	17
Targeting Innovative Companies and High-Tech Growth Clusters	18
Increasing Interagency Communication and Awareness of the Dynamic Nature of the LA County Business Community	19
Facilitating Subsequent Outreach	21
Support for Other WIRED Projects	23
Summary of Lessons Learned, Outcomes and Impacts	26
The Success of the LAEDC's Innovator Outreach	26
Educating and Supporting Policy Makers	29
Challenges and Opportunities	33
Future Recommendations	34
Conclusion	37

Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation (LAEDC) WIRED 1.1 - Targeted Innovator Outreach

Introduction

LAEDC

The mission of the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation (LAEDC) is to attract, retain, and grow business and jobs throughout the regions of Los Angeles County as well as to identify trends and effect positive change for the Los Angeles County economy. To support this mission, the LAEDC offers free business assistance services throughout the 88 cities and more than 100 unincorporated regions of Los Angeles County through its Business Assistance Program (BAP).

These services, provided by a team of Regional Managers and LAEDC headquarter office staff, include site selection, workforce resources, information about incentives, assistance with permits and zoning issues, and local industry analyses for companies expanding or relocating in Los Angeles County, as well as other economic data. The BAP Team and Regional Managers also provide targeted support for entrepreneurial enterprises that will infuse the local economy and business landscape with new and innovative companies in the form of consulting services and technical assistance.

Dealing one-to-one with companies, the BAP Team and Regional Managers hear from businesses everyday how difficult the current economic climate is, the impact it is having and the uncertainty of the future. Among the biggest concerns voiced to the BAP Team is the access and availability of credit, real estate and a skilled workforce. The BAP Team continues to assist companies with its wide array of network resources, however all indications are that this year will be a difficult one for the BAP Team in terms of major project successes which entail significant job attractions and expansions and instead are seeing an increased need for consulting services and technical business assistance.



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Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED)

The LAEDC BAP Team is one of 13 regional economic/workforce development partners working on the California Space Authority (CSA) WIRED Grant in an effort to drive the California Innovation Corridor's entrepreneurship, global manufacturing competitiveness and 21st Century economic development and workforce preparation.

The WIRED program has three key objectives:

1) Build and Support Sustainable Entrepreneurship:

Create new companies and high-skill, high wage jobs by designing a replicable and *"sustainable innovation support architecture"* to increase innovation and entrepreneurship (seven projects/objectives within this one goal area).

2) Support Industrial Rejuvenation for Manufacturing Value Chain and Supplier Competitiveness:

Improve the international competitiveness of the region's supply chain by developing and executing a "smart supplier strategy" that supports manufacturers, small business and entrepreneurs in adapting to the global manufacturing transformation (four projects within this goal area).

3) Develop Technical Talent:

Accelerate development of a highly-skilled 21st Century talent pool by creating pilot projects and activities capable of supporting a continuum of math, science and engineering education (K-U), and lifelong learning relevant to the 21st Century technical worker (14 projects within this goal area).

LAEDC partnered with CSA on specific WIRED specific projects within the first and third goal area described above. The individual projects, delineated as WIRED 1.1, 1.3, 1.4 and WIRED 3.1, are all complimentary and interrelated.



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WIRED 1.1 Project Overview

This report specifically addresses and analyzes one of the key strategies that the LAEDC developed to create the “economic development tool kit,” the main goal of WIRED 1.1. This report also illustrates how various insights and methodologies that have grown out WIRED 1.1 and some of the other WIRED projects have had a measurably positive impact on LAEDC and its outreach to the business communities of Los Angeles County.

WIRED 1.1 Goal

Create an economic development “tool kit” which features “innovation support” elements to be used as a resource tool for economic development professionals interested in leveraging regional innovation assets through innovator skill-building, technology commercialization and entrepreneurship growth.

WIRED 1.1 Approach:

Develop a framework setting out elements in an economic tool kit that individual regions could select, based on their individual infrastructure, to translate innovation assets into commercial results through networks.

Building on state of the art research, best practices and new approaches, this framework would provide methodology for regional leaders to use in accessing their current needs and objectives and identify what steps they need to take to promote innovation.

Overall, in supporting CSA’s objectives for WIRED 1.1, LAEDC set out to establish a replicable and sustainable “innovation support architecture” that can be used throughout the state of California and the nation. Part of this sustainable support architecture was the creation of a regional economic development “tool kit,” that incorporates support elements that can be used by economic development and workforce preparation



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professionals to leverage regional assets and enhance their business assistance efforts, as well as support the economic vitality of California.

To create the economic development “tool kit,” the LAEDC proposed four strategies to use and where applicable enhance existing LAEDC programs to meet the WIRED 1.1 objectives:

- A. An innovation focused programmatic addition; the reinstatement of the Regional Business Assistance Network (RBAN)
- B. Business Climate Survey of Innovators
- C. Targeted Innovator Outreach (via a County-wide Database)
- D. Communication/Implementation Plan

It is important to emphasize how these four strategies, which are interrelated and interdependent, work together synergistically. The Targeted Innovator Outreach (Item C) developed out of the foundation created by the 2008 Business Climate Survey of Innovators (Item B), and was directly influenced by the insights and methodologies gained from the Business Survey.

Understanding the current business climate in LA County was an important prerequisite for basically all of the other related strategies, as well as other WIRED projects, such as WIRED 3.1:

(B) 2008 Business Climate Survey: “Before putting workforce development and sustainable strategies in place, knowledge of the current business landscape and needs is necessary.”

Although the LAEDC had done other surveys in the past, the 2008 Business Climate Survey was designed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of LA County’s current business landscape and its emerging needs. The survey addressed 23,073 businesses in Los Angeles County in targeted industry sectors, generating 5,000



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responses. Of these, over two percent were identified as innovative companies that would benefit from both the LAEDC Business Assistance Program and future WIRED programs and initiatives.

The Business Survey provided LAEDC with first-hand knowledge of inhibitors to high-tech/innovative companies' business growth, skill building and workforce development issues. The information enabled the LAEDC BAP Department to provide customized solutions to companies at risk, and to monitor lead processing and company progress using the LAEDC's existing project tracking system, ACT.

The version of the ACT Database program that the LAEDC was using at that time was antiquated. Updating to a newer, online version of the ACT Database system would provide the opportunity of capture the real-time changes to the innovative business records being tracked, greatly enhancing the BAP Team's ability to meet the evolving needs of the business community it serves.

The new Act Database was necessary for the BAP Team to manage business client projects more effectively. It is the primary tool for tracking and monitoring the business data collected on the innovative companies, ultimately allowing the BAP Team to provide targeted outreach consistent with LAEDC's mission. In this way, the new ACT Database system became one of the important foundations for the "Targeted Innovator Outreach" project, as it became part of the countywide system of dynamic database tools. The upgrade was made possible by funds from the WIRED grant.

Targeted Innovator Outreach – via a County-wide Database

Project Overview

The Targeted Innovator Outreach strategy, (Item C) addresses the importance of an updated business database to conduct targeted outreach to innovative companies. According to the Statement of Work,



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“A business database would make targeting the high-technology growth clusters and subsequent outreach to the County’s innovative business base possible. A high-technology business base and skilled labor force to meet its needs are strong measures of a region’s feasibility to potential business investors and corporate site consultants. Customized business lists and analyses provided by the database can help make a case for business expansion, retention or attraction projects that provide high-skilled, high-wage jobs.”

The underlying premise of WIRED 1.1 is the importance of the innovative companies. In addition to being a strong measure of the region’s feasibility, innovative companies make a substantially greater positive impact on the economic vitality of the region, which is demonstrated by the Pollack Model. The Pollack Retention and Relocation Model calculates the impact of business retention and relocation, determining the multiplier effects of jobs in specific industries. In a recent comparison of the economic impact of small and medium Aerospace Manufacturing compared to a small and medium Hotel,¹ the output of the small Aerospace company was more than 4.5 times greater than that of the small Hotel.

LAEDC recognized the importance of an updated business database as an outreach tool to identify and serve the needs of the innovative companies. As this report illustrates, the “County-wide Database” that the Targeted Innovator Outreach calls for is actually a *network of interactive databases* which LAEDC has used and enhanced as part of its powerful and versatile economic development tool kit. In creating this tool kit, the LAEDC applied innovative technologies and methodologies to the very process of understanding and meeting the dynamic needs of the LA County business community, especially its Innovators.

- The updated, web-based ACT Database system
- The Business Climate Survey Database
- InfoUSA
- CoStar
- Economic Development Partner Databases



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Innovator Outreach Process/Methodology

Reinforced by the outcomes of the various WIRED projects such as the Business Climate Survey, and their own economic research, LAEDC was acutely aware of the importance of the high-tech/innovative companies and their economic impact on the Los Angeles County economy. The LAEDC had already increased its focus on growth clusters; over a five-year period, it had begun a detailed analysis of the major growth sectors within technology fields.

To identify these high growth clusters, the LAEDC used information from a variety of reports and industry resources, including the US Census Bureau and the American High Tech Economy by the Milken Institute. The LAEDC customarily utilized data from such a variety of sources, including its own Kyser Center for Economic Research Department. From the information assembled, the LAEDC established profiles of industry groupings within high tech/innovative sectors.

Once they established the profiles, LAEDC used data from InfoUSA to categorize the information by region, characterizing the companies by the number of employees, square footage, revenue, annual revenue trends, drilling down within the NAICS codes.

The next frontier for LAEDC would be “predictability,” the ability to project out over a five to ten year span what companies would have the greatest long-term economic influence on the region in terms of employing more people, specifically knowledge workers, with higher salaries. To achieve this level of analysis, the LAEDC needed a method to integrate this data with tools that would enable it to track and ultimately project trends.

Among other things, this type of interactive data would be immensely useful in the development of valuable resources such as the Los Angeles County Economic Development Strategy, part of a Communication Implementation Plan which is the fourth strategy outlined in WIRED 1.1, (Item D).



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Developing the LA County-wide Interactive Database Instruments

Database Instruments Used

The Role Played by the ACT Database

An important step that the LAEDC took to create this updated business database started with an assessment of its primary in-house database tool, which was at the time was the ACT 2000. A large portion of this report describes the ACT Database system upgrade, and how that has enhanced the LAEDC's BAP Team's effectiveness.

The LAEDC had been using ACT since 1995, with two upgrades in 1998 and 2000. In essence, the system was "user friendly," not difficult to learn or use, and it allowed for customized reports and management functions that helped LAEDC monitor Regional Manager (RM) productivity and account and business project activity.

The original ACT database focused exclusively on what LAEDC defines as "Projects," meaning a company with an identified business need requiring tangible assistance from the BAP Team, with a measurable outcome within a defined timeframe. To be eligible, a company would need to meet several stringent qualifying criteria, such as a major investment; a job growth of more than 30 jobs; an expansion of more than 10,000 sq. ft., etc. Looked at from another perspective, to qualify as a Project, the company would need to represent the potential of bringing real economic benefit to LA County.

There are four categories of LAEDC projects within the database:

- **Win** – A successfully completed project; a benchmark achieved or need met through BAP Team assistance
- **Open** – RM is still working toward helping the client achieve the desired benchmark
- **No Action** – A project qualifier such as an expansion or relocation that is postponed



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➤ **Loss** – No more interest; considered LA location originally, but selected elsewhere

Because companies were only entered into the ACT database as Projects once the need was identified and the qualifying criteria was met, ACT was essentially a project management tool.

Prior to the upgrade to a web-based ACT system, there were several important limitations inherent with ACT. The ACT database was only accessed from one central location at the LAEDC's Downtown LA headquarters. The 8 Regional Managers (RMs) operating within geographic territories throughout the county were required to come in to the office, some from a great distance, to update their account data and activities.

Data, which constantly needs updating, was not “real-time,” creating administrative bottlenecks and time-management challenges. The RMs lost time and productivity commuting to the Downtown LA headquarters office, taking time out of the field and in front of clients. In this regard, the input methodology limited both the timeliness of the input, as well as the universal application of the data.

The original database fields evolved over the span of the ten years they were utilized, with some new fields added to synchronize with the BAP services as they evolved. One of the limitations of the original field architecture was the reliance on narrative input, versus data fields which could be queried. In addition to the basic contact fields, (primary contact, address, phone, fax, e-mail), the RMs relied heavily on the “Notes” and “Activity” fields to record the narrative of their assessments, conversations with key personnel, market insight gained, company status changes pending and especially client issues.

For LAEDC to really understand a particular company's needs, a manager would have to sort through account notes, which could not be quantified. Because key information was locked into a narrative format, LAEDC was unable to run certain queries or illustrate trends within company groupings.

The industry sector classifications were generalized, as NAICS codes were not yet a part of the database. For example, over 70 percent of the companies were manufacturers. But this classification did not differentiate the high-tech/innovative companies, such as aerospace, communications equipment, guided missiles, medical instruments and pharmaceutical manufacturing, from traditional manufacturing. Without a deeper level of classification, the LAEDC was not able to separate out and track the trends and progress with the County’s innovators.

Prior to the upgrade to the web-based ACT system, there was no way to demonstrate the dynamic relationship between LAEDC and the region’s supporting agencies and resources. It has been said that California and the country in general lack the communication, coordination, and cooperation among economic development partners necessary to leverage innovative resources and strengths. The overall network of business service providers lacked a systemized way to facilitate the sharing of information and referrals. To its credit, LAEDC had initiated a way to encourage and record referrals, with the fields “Referred to” and “Referred by.” There was, however, no way to run a query to track outcomes and accountability.

Report functionality was also a limitation with the ACT 2000 database system in the sense that RMs needed to spend considerable time writing activity reports to account for time spent on business outreach and assisting companies which may not have qualified as a “Project,” but required business assistance, such as providing information on available resources and making referrals to partner service agencies.

The LAEDC team considered all of these limitations with the ACT 2000 database and developed remedies for them within the parameters of the new web-based ACT system. LAEDC recognized that if left unaddressed, these system limitations would ultimately inhibit the BAP Team from serving the region’s innovative companies. Serving the needs of the innovative companies would in fact require innovation to do so.



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The Web-based ACT Database

The first step toward developing the LA County-wide interactive database was the upgrade of the LAEDC's primary system. Although a few alterations were made to the LAEDC ACT database in the spring of 2007, the system had reached the practical end of its life span in its current form. In order to meet the changing demands of its marketplace, the LAEDC team recognized that the next "upgrade" would require a complete migration to a whole new generation of ACT, a web-based solution. It needed a system that was much more robust and that would allow more universal access and highly targeted queries and analysis. It was also time to address efficiency issues, providing a solution to the challenges of managing data from within geographically disparate territories.

Because of the critical, time-sensitive nature of such a conversion, LAEDC contracted with Accent Gold Solutions, an ACT consulting firm and service provider that specializes in complex database design, to manage the technical and logistical aspects of the upgrade.

Prior to providing Accent Gold Solutions with the specs for the new system, members of the LAEDC BAP Team conducted extensive, zero-based brainstorming sessions. Their task was to define the characteristics required to meet the emerging needs of the business community, both the general population of businesses in LA County, and specifically, the subset of high-tech and innovative companies.

Rather than merely "enhancing" the current fields, LAEDC practically redefined the database and successfully repurposed it, taking it beyond the scope of project management. In this way, as a result of the upgrade to the web-based ACT database system, the LAEDC BAP Team established one of its most important tools for Targeted Innovator Outreach.



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Process of Building the Database/Database Composition

The Role Played by the County-wide Business Climate Survey Database:

The purpose of the Business Climate Survey was to: (1) determine the concerns of industry in the Los Angeles County region; (2) assist the LAEDC and funding partners to target their efforts to improve the local economy; and (3) identify businesses that could benefit from LAEDC's Business Assistance Program. In this regard, the survey provided an early warning system for "at risk" companies in need of business assistance during a period of expansion, including "early stage" companies in key innovation sectors; companies in danger of downsizing or closing operations; or companies that might be thinking of leaving the region.

With help from the Rose Institute-Claremont McKenna College and a state-of-the-art tracking system from Executive Pulse, 5,000 businesses with ten or more employees were surveyed throughout the 88 cities and more than 100 unincorporated areas in Los Angeles County.

For over 35 years, the Rose Institute has provided research experiences for Claremont McKenna College students by conducting and publishing research primarily on California government and politics. The Rose Institute conducts research using the latest computer technology and advanced geographic and demographic retrieval systems and is well-known throughout southern California for its expertise and professional methods used in its research practices.

The LAEDC designed the survey instrument consisting of 45 questions and contracted with the Rose Institute to conduct the survey over a six-month period starting in September 2007.

Researchers at the Rose Institute used a random sample of 23,073 companies that met the target population guidelines of having at least ten employees. The survey process



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involved a team of researchers consisting of both undergraduate students and graduate research assistants who conducted detailed interviews with executives and business owners. The companies surveyed were randomly selected from the 88 cities and more than 100 unincorporated areas in Los Angeles County.

Of the 23,073 businesses in the target population, 5,000 were interviewed using a CATI (Computer Aided Telephone Interview) system for an overall response rate of 21.7 percent. Of the 5,000 businesses surveyed, approximately two percent were identified as innovative companies that would benefit from both the LAEDC Business Assistance Program and future WIRED programs and initiatives. All survey information was downloaded from the CATI system into the Executive Pulse database for retrieval and input of follow-up information from the RMs and the LAEDC headquarter office staff.

The depth and range of the data accessed and analyzed through the Business Climate Survey reinforced the importance of the ACT database upgrade, showing the need to build upon the survey data and to track trends and outcomes among the survey population, particularly the innovators.

Out of 5,000 survey respondents, 103 were classified as innovative companies, falling into three main categories:

- (1) Transportation Equipment Manufacturing (.8 percent or 42 companies), including vehicle manufacturing, vehicle parts manufacturing, trailer manufacturing, aerospace manufacturing, and other transportation equipment manufacturing
- (2) Supportive Activities for Transportation (.9 percent or 43 companies), including rail, water, and road transportation and freight transportation
- (3) Scientific Research and Development Services (.4 percent or 18 companies).

Once the Business Climate Survey itself was completed and the data was compiled, the data files were downloaded from Executive Pulse into an Excel format. LAEDC BAP Team and management continue to run unique queries and data sorts with this database, which has generated a wide variety of reports. Because the survey



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instrument was created to compare and contrast the innovative companies with those of the general business population, meaningful reports were created to illustrate the unique needs of the innovative companies. Here is a sample of one such comparison taken from the Business Climate Survey White Paper:

GROWTH AND EXPANSION PLANS BY COMPANY SIZE High-Tech/Innovative Companies

Company Size	Expanding	Relocating	Closing/Downsizing
10-24	14%	16%	7%
25-49	9%	2%	2%
50-99	18%	7%	0%
100+	18%	5%	2%

Source: Rose Institute of State and Local Government

Data Integration

It was critical that the survey files be transferred to the ACT database so that LAEDC RMs could closely monitor the businesses in their respective regions and provide immediate follow-up with companies that might be experiencing challenges due to changes in economic conditions and the general business climate.

The upgraded web-based ACT database system allowed the LAEDC BAP Team to implement targeted follow-up action plans to increase BAP support of the region’s innovative companies in a new, proactive and systematized manner.

The 5,000 Business Climate Survey responses, including those from the high tech/innovative companies, were integrated into the ACT database as a new data subset which could be considered “Prospects.” Prior to this, as discussed previously, the system only tracked “Projects” and did not differentiate amongst innovators and traditional types of companies.



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The innovator subset would require distinct tracking, monitoring progress and illustrating how needs evolve. The updated web-based database would need to include the ability to illustrate how the LAEDC BAP and other support agencies would meet those needs. The LAEDC created fields specifically for the Survey subset within ACT to accomplish these goals, requiring a much greater degree of technical detail and refined categories than the previous ACT system had utilized. This enhanced level of detail mirrored exactly the survey fields, which had been customized in a truly state-of-the-art fashion by the Rose Institute and Executive Pulse.

The original 2,000 companies comprising the original ACT database, which we are referring to as the “Project” database that the BAP Team already had service relationships established based on their identified needs, were migrated into the new web-based ACT database.

How the Integrated Business Database Tools are Helping LAEDC Achieve Its Regional Economic Development Goals

In addition to the obvious optimization of BAP Team time management, the new database structure itself facilitated a new, more precise and empowering use of data for the LAEDC BAP Team.

With the ACT database system upgrade, over 100 new fields were added to the original basic fields, reflecting many of the innovative elements utilized in the Rose Institute survey methodology. The new fields, all in a drop-down format representing a huge departure from the previously heavy emphasis on narrative, allowed for powerfully comprehensive and flexible queries. What follows are some of the key areas where the ACT database upgrade and integration with the Business Climate Survey database greatly improved the ability of the LAEDC BAP Team to identify and address specific business needs in the LA County regions.



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Targeting Innovative Companies and High-Tech Growth Clusters

One of the primary areas where this impact can be seen is in the greater emphasis on business classification. NAICS, a critically important field for the business survey subset were added to the new web-based ACT database. In addition to the primary list of 25 business sectors, a list of 45 second “industry” fields were added, so that companies could be sorted to a second level, i.e.: manufacturers which would be the primary industry could now be sorted by type of manufacturer. Also, 17 types of facilities were added. These new classifications represent a critically important feature of the new ACT database system: the greatly refined and enhanced detail that the system captures and tracks significantly improved the scope and quality of the reports that can be generated. The new ability to group data by secondary industry, whether by NAICS code or the primary and secondary industry designations, opens up a whole new level of analytics for LAEDC.

Identifying and Addressing Needs

Another important new feature of the web-based ACT database was the ability to identify and track client issues, drawing from drop down menu of 11 common issues or client needs, listed in the table below. Issues can now be tracked by a wide range of qualifiers, such as company size, revenues, supervisor region and of course, NAICS code.

Furthermore, the fields were designed to allow needs to be prioritized within three levels of importance: primary, secondary and tertiary. Combined with the enhanced queries by specific industry codes, this functionality allows queries to group companies by needs by region. Conducting queries along these lines allows the BAP Team to target their communication to address specific needs; bring companies with common issues together into advisory groups or task forces; inviting them to specific events and designing communication pieces and service products to address those needs.



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Similarly, the BAP Team is now able to draw from nine defined assistance roles, which is another way to quantify how the LAEDC is able to match business assistance with specific issues and needs. A table of the new LAEDC issues fields, along with the new assistance roles fields appears below:

BAP SERVICE FIELDS

Issues	LAEDC Assistance Roles
New Development	City-County-State Gov't. Coordination
ETP & Recruitment	Community Support & Resources
Funding & Finance	Financing Access
Incentives & Taxes	Job Training & Hiring (ETP)
International & WTCA	Permits-Fast Tracking-Streamlining
Permits & Gov't. Issues	Red Team Participation-Coordination
Site Search & Real Estate	Site Search/Real Estate
Utilities	Tax Credits & Incentives
Workers Comp	Utilities-Energy Efficiencies
Efficiencies/Productivity	
Cost Containment	

Increasing Interagency Communication and Awareness of the Dynamic Nature of the LA County Business Community

The new database greatly enhanced LAEDC's ability to track and assess how well the network of area service agencies are working together to meet the collective needs of the region. The previous version of the database had included the fields, "Referred by" and "Referred to" but as mentioned previously, the fields were a narrative format and could not therefore be queried in a quantitative way. With the new version of ACT, these fields became "drop-downs" covering 18 support agencies and community resources and 32 referring sources, listed in the table below. Plus, the RMs can select more than one entity.



Community Network Fields

Referred By Type		Referred To Type
Advertisement	LAEDC Member	Bank
Attended Event	Marketing Material	Broker
Bank	Media-Article-TV-Radio	CalBIS
Broker	NCBER	Chamber
CalBIS	Outreach	City
CDD	RBAN	CMTC
Chamber	SBDC	Consultant
City	Supervisor's Office	DWP
CMTC	Survey	ETP
Consultant	Trade Show	Gas Co.
CRA	Unknown	LA County Office
EDC-other	Used LAEDC Before	LAEDC Internal
Edison	Word of Mouth	LAEDC Member
Executive Pulse	WorkSource Center	RBAN
Gas Co.		Red Team
Internet		SCE
LA County Office		WorkSource Training Center
LAEDC -internal		WTCA-LA-Long Beach

Changing this feature to a comprehensive drop down menu and expanding the list of service partners gave LAEDC management the ability to illustrate the dynamic relationship between related agencies and service providers for the first time, providing a way to track and measure accountability.

Now the LAEDC can quantify how many referrals per year were sent to EDD or to any of the other partners listed in the "Referred To" menu. The RMs are able to follow up and find out what specific outcomes came from those referrals. For example, LAEDC subcontracts with the California Manufacturers Technology Consulting to provide technical assistance to small manufacturers. With the new database, the LAEDC BAP Team is now able to track the assistance provided to CMTC companies, and provide reports on their issues.

By restructuring these data fields, the referral process became more top-of-mind, allowing the BAP Team to quantify and illustrate the positive results of interagency referrals and partnerships.

Facilitating Subsequent Outreach

Recognizing and Responding to Signs of Distress:

Prior to integrating the Prospect database created from the Business Climate Survey with the new web-based ACT Database system, the RMs were able to view survey results, which were posted on a state-of-the-art, web-based Executive Pulse database. Survey follow-up "alerts" were mailed electronically to each RM weekly, indicating the urgency of the follow-up action required based on the survey responses. These follow-up actions were assigned one of three designations, indicating the degree of urgency of the follow-up required:

- 1) "Urgent" nature requiring immediate contact with a company
- 2) "Immediate action" requiring review and contact within five business days of receipt of notification.
- 3) A personalized letter along with a brochure outlining the LAEDC's no-cost business assistance services were sent to the business.

This classification system was maintained and incorporated into the new web-based ACT database system, which now offers the ability to qualify prospect companies. The RMs are now able to maintain fields indicating the urgency of the companies' need for assistance, ranking the urgency by three levels, each level having a defined response and proscribed response time. "Level One" was the most urgent requiring an immediate response, followed in urgency by "Level Two" and "Level Three."



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The RMs conducted the follow up on all of the companies within their geographic territories, establishing contact on behalf of LAEDC, introducing the services of the Business Assistance Program. The outcome of the follow-up actions was recorded in ACT.

This systematic outreach methodology of ranking the companies' needs by urgency and ensuring and documenting a timely and uniform response enabled the LAEDC to identify companies in the greatest risk and to deliver targeted business assistance. Management has been able to monitor the initial and subsequent follow up actions taken to address the needs, as well as track over time how well these companies are adapting to changes in the LA County business climate: whether they moved, downsized, expanded or stayed the same.

Herein lies a perfect demonstration of how the various database tools are used together to create a targeted innovative outreach system. The Business Climate Survey database created the universe of 5,000 company respondents. These were entered as a Prospect subset into Act, which provided the tool to plan, prioritize, execute and monitor outreach and to provide targeted business assistance services.

The data from InfoUSA gives LAEDC the ability to create queries to measure and track changes in annual revenue, number of employees and other indicators of business performance for specific at risk companies previously identified. InfoUSA provides a comprehensive and versatile database with over 14 million businesses and two million professional and executive contacts. The LAEDC subscribes to a version of the service which covers all of LA County. The data, which is continuously updated, serves as a resource for the LAEDC to illustrate trends as well as identify leads. The LAEDC's annual subscription to this service was made possible by the WIRED grant, along with the upgrade to the web-based ACT database system, as previously mentioned.



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Support for Other WIRED Projects

WIRED 1.4 Innovation-Based Entrepreneurial Ventures:

The Innovation-Based Entrepreneurial Ventures project is a joint effort with entrepreneurial companies to identify best practices used by innovation companies for commercializing technology and creating jobs. The LAEDC is one of six partners on the project with the objective of gathering success stories from 40 entrepreneurs within the California Innovation Corridor, operating companies; Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR)/Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) grant recipients, and research and development entities. The successes were focused on product completions, funding, alliances, partnerships, market entry, sales, revenue generation, and growth.

One of the LAEDC's main outcomes was to collect key data for benchmarking activities that support entrepreneurs to grow their companies successfully.

The LAEDC's approach was to create a highly detailed database of 15 high-tech and innovative companies ("Innovation All-Stars") and to facilitate obtaining three years of economic data, such as annual sales, number of employees and salaries. In order to establish the benchmarks, the BAP Team planned to meet with company principals to obtain this data from one-on-one interviews. Ultimately these selected companies would be invited to participate in ongoing events, trainings and conferences, to share best practices and success strategies.

The LAEDC developed Data Tracking Sheets for capturing and tracking the company data. The BAP Team found that one-to-one meetings with company principals was not the most effective method to obtain the type of detailed information needed for the benchmarks. Again, they turned to the highly detailed and updated information in the InfoUSA database to create the target list by NAICS codes, as well as obtain information about annual revenue figures and number of employees for multiple years.



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They supplemented and extended this information in much greater detail through collaboration with various partner resources, such as the EDD website where they were able to obtain information such as average employee salary, Hoover's Lexus/Nexus, and SCC filings, as well as historical data from the LAEDC's Kyser Center for Economic Research Department.

The ability to capture and benchmark detailed data from multiple years provides the means to measure change and address business needs proactively. The outreach to these companies has formed the foundation for an ongoing relationship with the LAEDC BAP Team, as well as collaboration with other economic development and workforce resource entities.

Many of these companies have become members of the Regional Business Assistance Network (RBAN). RBAN is an existing program that was revitalized as a platform to inform LA County innovative companies about WIRED initiatives, to share important economic updates, and provide a forum to address topics related to the challenges area businesses are facing.

RBAN has enhanced regional cohesion, bringing together diverse and dynamic resource groups, such as economic development and planning personnel from some of the 88 cities that comprise the LA County region; educational stakeholders including USC, Long Beach City College and the Enterprise University; WorkSource Centers; California Manufacturing Technology Consulting; California Resources and Training; Employment Training Panel; Workforce Investment Boards, as well as representatives from the State Controller's Office, among many others.

WIRED 3.1 Workforce Analysis

As a partner on the WIRED 3.1 project, LAEDC's goal was to assess the workforce needs of key high-tech and innovative employers within LA County in order to identify current and future skill needs, as well as education and training gaps. LAEDC, with assistance provided by the LA County WIB, identified 200 entities, of which 15 percent



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participated in a detailed needs assessment. The 200 targeted high tech, innovative employers were subdivided into these industry sub-sectors:

- A) 100 key space and information technology companies and government employers
- B) 50 space entrepreneurial and small business companies
- C) 50 manufacturing companies.

InfoUSA was the primary database tool used to identify the 200 targeted entities for WIRED 3.1. Because of the high degree of NAICS specificity, the LAEDC team was able to create company lists within each of the target groups, drilling down further to include number of employers, key contacts and contact info.

In addition to 'broad stroke' summaries of the needs of the high tech, innovative companies in general, the report also provides highly detailed data grouped by NAICS codes, which would allow for even deeper analysis into the needs of specific sub-sectors, such as Chemical Manufacturing, Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing, etc.

Surveys were completed by companies within 10 targeted NAICS codes. The degree of detail in creating the database of targeted respondents allowed for the groupings of specific needs by NAICS codes. Below is an example of a list of Critical Core Occupations by NAICS codes:



NAIC	325	332	334	336	483	488	515	517	541	561	Total	%
Critical Occupation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	%
Engineer	1		1						6		8	18%
Scientist									5	2	7	16%
CNC		1		2							3	7%
Technician								1	2		3	7%
Machinist		1		1							2	4%
Assembly/Line			1			1					2	4%
Demolition/Construc									2		2	4%
Project mngt			1						1		2	4%
Sales			1				1				2	4%
Operations						2					2	4%
Electrician						1					1	2%
Geologist									1		1	2%
Architectural Design									1		1	2%
Ground handlers						1					1	2%
Maintenance						1					1	2%
Molders			1								1	2%
Production solderer			1								1	2%
Product Devlpmt.									1		1	2%
Legal									1		1	2%
Analyst									1		1	2%
Drivers						1					1	2%
Admin Support									1		1	2%
Total	1	2	6	3	0	7	1	1	22	2	45	100%

The findings were tabulated and summarized into a White Paper which included recommendations on how the community of educational and economic development service providers could work together with businesses to better anticipate and meet the workforce needs identified, based on information gained about specific skill gaps, related to the current workforce and the anticipated needs of the future workforce.

Summary of Lessons Learned, Outcomes and Impacts

The Success of LAEDC's Innovator Outreach

The Innovator Outreach is one of the key components of the “tool kit” designed by the LAEDC to build a strong and cohesive network of economic development and workforce partners throughout the regions of LA County. The “tool kit” was to feature replicable support elements that can easily be adapted for use by other economic development

professionals interested in taking new approaches to leverage their own regional economic development assets. By integrating and enhancing the various database tools that it uses into one integrated County-wide database, the LAEDC has laid the foundation for establishing a replicable and sustainable "innovation support architecture" that can be used throughout the state of California and the nation to provide targeted Business Assistance programs that are very proactive.

For the LAEDC, the Business Climate Survey served as a catalyst for innovation, as it necessitated the ACT upgrade so that the survey data could be maintained and follow-up results from subsequent BAP outreach could be monitored. By integrating the Business Climate Survey database with the new web-based ACT database system, the LAEDC created the dynamic outreach tool that it needed to ensure its effectiveness.

Now, RMs have the ability to track and monitor, not only the results of their region's business surveys and the business contacts made as a result of the survey, but also manage the needs for all current and future businesses supported by the LAEDC BAP Team. From any computer, a RM can input information into the system, which can then be viewed by any team member. The ACT system also provides instant up-to-date, computer-generated reports on each region's business assistance activities which can then be used by LAEDC management to make informed decisions, as well as influence policy makers.

The business intelligence gathering accomplished through the survey tool identifies key issues affecting corporate decision makers in LA County's dynamic economic climate. The supporting web-based ACT database system makes information tracking, monitoring, and reporting more efficient and, as a result, helps the BAP Team focus efforts where they are needed the most.

The Business Climate Survey data, enhanced by the upgraded ACT functionality, helped the LAEDC accomplish one of the major objectives of the WIRED project, to



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provide a mechanism to identify business trends and effect positive change for the Los Angeles County economy.

Being able to distinguish the business needs within the general survey population and the high-tech and innovative company subset, the LAEDC is now able to pair those needs with available resources through its Business Assistance Program as well as partner with economic development organizations, workforce providers, educational institutions, and local governments to enhance the economic growth and vitality in all regions of Los Angeles County. In this way, the integrated County-wide database facilitates cooperation between agencies, as well as provides a footprint for monitoring accountability and industry trends.

Using the newly integrated County-wide database as its primary outreach tool, the LAEDC possesses an even greater opportunity to enhance existing programs, create new programs, and mobilize staff to effectively meet the needs of Los Angeles County businesses. The beauty of this innovation outreach tool is that it is replicable in any jurisdiction throughout the state of California and the nation.

Predicting Trends:

The Business Climate Survey illustrates a wide range of information from which the LAEDC is able to extrapolate whether a particular business is at risk. The survey includes questions about annual revenue figures, profitability, number of employees, likelihood to expand, downsize or close, barriers for expansion. These data fields can be queried by NAICS codes in order to measure the economic “health” of specific industry sectors.

Using the integrated database tools, the LAEDC is now able to can take this process further to identify trends by using the continuously updated information in InfoUSA. By establishing regular benchmarks for particular industry clusters, those within certain geographic regions, the LAEDC is able to quantify changes in business viability over



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time. Once trends are identified and graphed, the next step in the process is forecasting the logical progression of that trend, creating prediction models. Using the integrated database tools to enhance forecasting allows the BAP Team to be much more proactive and to provide leadership among partner agencies, working together to develop solutions.

Educating and Supporting Policy Makers

The LAEDC has frequent opportunity to provide input and recommendations to policy-making entities including the LA County Board of Supervisors and the State of California. The integrated databases provide LAEDC management with the data required to illustrate needs and substantiate requests for assistance

The LA County Board of Supervisors:

On an annual basis, the LAEDC provides reports to the five LA County Board of Supervisors. The report includes important data on the number of projects in each Supervisorial District and how those projects translate into the number of jobs they created. Using the Pollack Model, the LAEDC is able to calculate the economic impact of those jobs for that particular district.

The County Board of Supervisors annual reports quantifies the projects in terms of:

- Closed Wins
- Closed Losses
- Closed – No Action
- Current Open

The ability to quantify the progress and direct economic impact of the BAP Team within the specific Supervisor district is one of the many successful outcomes of the upgrade to the new web-based ACT Database system. The LAEDC included “Supervisor District” as one of the new fields to enable this functionality.



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The annual reports also document which industry sectors are most active within the region. The report forms a benchmark against which changes can be measured. This data, obtained from InfoUSA, allows for year-over-year comparisons of sales revenue, number of employees and other indicators of viability. Supervisors concerned about emerging trends can get updated information from the LAEDC, which is able to examine resource deployment to emphasize certain BAP programs and Technical Assistance to address the concerns.

The State of California:

In early October, for example, members of the LAEDC Management Team engaged in a conference call with the Governor's Office. They advocated specific policy changes to meet business needs in these difficult economic times, many which would directly impact the innovative companies within the Los Angeles County region.

These policy recommendations covered programs such as CEQA, reinstatement of full Enterprise Zone benefits, reinstatement of the Manufacturers Investment Credit (MIC), Employee Training Panel (ETP) and the Marketing Plan for the State. Here are some examples of how the integrated databases support and substantiate the LAEDC's recommendations:

ETP: The LAEDC is requesting that the program be expanded, to provide additional funding for retraining of employees. From the Business Survey White Paper, "more than half of all businesses reported some or great difficulty in hiring critical occupations. Skilled labor or skilled production workers represented the most challenging occupation group for employers to hire followed closely by sales and marketing."

LAEDC can point to the data from the WIRED 3.1 Workforce Survey which specifically outlined the needs of the region's innovative companies as far as the types of training that these companies have identified as necessary for the region to remain competitive now and in the future, especially in the global economy.



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Marketing Plan for the State: The LAEDC is recommending that we expand the State's marketing campaign which currently targets tourism, adapting the message to become an attraction/retention tool directed towards businesses. With the updated data available through InfoUSA, LAEDC would be able to target specific Industry Clusters for attraction/retention. This recommendation is included in the Economic Development Strategic Plan for LA County. LAEDC could also use the comparisons generated from the Business Climate Survey, to tailor a regional campaign to address specific "hot buttons" more applicable to innovative companies.

Future Recommendations

The LAEDC BAP Team will need to remain proactive in its follow-up with the surveyed companies, using the web-based ACT database to track their progress. This innovative portion of the database includes an "alert" system for regular follow-up on all high-tech and innovative companies that the BAP Team may be assisting now and in the future. The high-tech and innovative companies are some of the high growth companies in the County and are the companies that should receive regular follow-up by the LAEDC BAP Team.

The WIRED Business Survey White Paper recommends that "economic development organizations, workforce providers, and educational institutions should conduct regular business surveys of their respective regions to analyze general business conditions, innovative companies, expansion opportunities, and workforce needs." This represents a challenge, however, as one-on-one surveys are becoming more difficult to administer effectively. Company principals, particularly the leaders within the business community, are reporting that they feel barraged by survey requests coming from multiple stakeholders, such as cities and other organizations who have simultaneously utilizing this method of fact-gathering.

Rather than suggesting more surveys, LAEDC can lead the way to initiate more creative ways to gain insight about these key businesses without duplication of effort or



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burdening them. In the past, acting separately, individual business service entities sought, gathered, and stored valuable information in “silos.” The new, regional economic toolkit calls for a more collaborative and interactive approach to data and ultimately service.

Instead of individual agencies focusing on just one aspect of service, a new, dynamic synergy is emerging within the region. By sharing their respective database tools in interactive and collaborative ways, the community of business assistance service providers is increasingly able to extend their effectiveness and drill deeper to address needs along industry clusters.

This is consistent with the subsequent suggestion in the Business Climate Survey White Paper that “government officials, along with community partners, hold regular Business Roundtable events where business issues can be discussed openly and honestly in a cooperative spirit.” This approach has proven to be a more effective method of getting company feedback, buy-in and cooperation across multiple agencies.

An excellent example of this type of information sharing and collaboration is the reinstated Regional Business Assistance Network (RBAN). RBAN is an unprecedented cooperative effort designed to make it easier for companies to do business in Los Angeles County. There is no fee for membership and all government or non-profit business assistance providers are considered part of the Network. RBAN’s mission is to foster collaboration among business assistance providers throughout Los Angeles County, through a coordinated communication and referral system which maximizes resources to help businesses prosper and strengthen the regional economy.



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Challenges and Opportunities

Quality and Timeliness of Data

The overriding imperative predicting the success of any database is the accuracy, quality and timeliness of the data. If data is incomplete or inaccurate, the quality of the reports derived from it would be compromised. Inaccurate or incomplete reports could have a very negative affect on management decisions, including future goals and allocation of resources.

To ensure the effectiveness of the new web-based ACT database system, the RMs updated ten years worth of account information to complete the new fields. This was necessary for the database to work as an accurate depository of the region's economic history, so trends could be illustrated.

Refining the Data Fields

Based on the results of the WIRED 3.1 Survey and the LAEDC Business Climate Survey, workforce issues are emerging as a prime concern to the businesses in Los Angeles County. Left unaddressed, workforce issues have the potential of becoming a regional crisis, particularly among innovative companies. Adding "ETP/Retention" as a new data field in the "Issues" drop-down menu was an excellent first step in bringing workforce issues to a more prominent position.

The WIRED 3.1 Survey results, which were focused on the innovative companies, outlined four areas of current and future skill gaps, requiring future training initiatives:

- Engineering and Technical Training
- Basic Skills: English, Math and Science
- Workplace Skills: Problem Solving, Reliability, Work Ethic
- Hands-on Experience



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In the course of providing business assistance, it may be possible for the BAP Team to gain greater clarification from the general business community as to specific training needs and workforce issues. Eventually, the LAEDC may consider adding more levels of data into the web-based ACT database order to help the regional business assistance partners identify, develop and implement specific programs and resources. Opportunities such as this, to enhance and expand the fields in ACT will arise, allowing the system to be fine-tuned over time.

Implementation

LAEDC recognized that gaining the support from the web-based ACT implementation team at the onset of the upgrade project, as well as its commitment to continue to complete and maintain the data, were important to successful implementation.

Once the business survey data was incorporated as part of ACT, the BAP Team gained a truly valuable prospecting source. The LAEDC BAP Team now has the technology, access and resources to focus on the high-tech and innovative companies within the survey database for future outreach and follow up. As RMs become increasingly successful converting “Leads” into “Projects” from within the high-tech innovative subset, their successes will be documented to strengthen and continue the innovative momentum.

Future Recommendations

The LAEDC BAP Team now has the impetus to remain proactive in its follow-up with the surveyed companies, using the web-based ACT database to track their progress. They now have access to an innovative feature of the database, an "alert" system for regular follow-up on all high-tech and innovative companies that the BAP Team may be assisting now and in the future. The high-tech and innovative companies are some of the high growth companies in the County and are the companies that should receive regular follow-up by the LAEDC BAP Team.



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The BAP Team has a distinct advantage in their role of assisting individual businesses within the regions of LA County and thereby developing business relationships. With the ACT database, the BAP Team has the system they need to follow up on issues and discuss customized solutions, in addition to the standard list of BAP services and programs available.

Rather than administering more surveys, the BAP Team can leverage their ongoing relationships with project and prospect contacts, to use more creative ways to gain insight about these key businesses without duplication of effort or burdening them.

In the past, acting separately, individual business service agencies sought, gathered and stored valuable information in “silos.” The new, regional economic toolkit calls for a more collaborative and interactive approach to data and ultimately service. Rather than each agency focusing on a single piece of the economic development “puzzle,” a new, dynamic synergy is emerging within the region and CIC. By using our respective database tools in an interactive and collaborative ways, the community of business assistance service providers is increasingly able to extend their effectiveness and drill deeper to address needs along industry clusters.

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Conclusion

The Innovative Outreach initiative, specifically the integrated County-wide database, has given the LAEDC the support it needed to take a greater leadership role to identify and meet the evolving needs within the high-tech and innovative business community within Los Angeles County. LAEDC’s success is truly replicable, and serves as a model for other economic development organizations.

By using the web-based ACT database in tandem with the other instruments as one integrated database tool, the LAEDC is able to significantly increase its outreach and take its service to new levels.

The ACT database system upgrade created a paradigm shift in the way business assistance had traditionally been defined, refocusing the Business Assistance Program on providing dynamic value throughout the service life-cycle for its approximately 7,000 existing Projects. The new data fields allowed for great detail and quantification of data,



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giving the BAP Team Members a much more precise understanding of the role they play.

The integrated database, utilizing all three of the main tools: the Business Climate Survey data, InfoUSA and the new web-based ACT database, has given the LAEDC a reliable and replicable model from which to identify, illustrate and predict trends. Since adding the three levels of “issues” within ACT, the LAEDC is able to group companies by primary, secondary and tertiary issues and then track and measure the impact of BAP assistance on resolving these issues.

By tracking and monitoring changes in specific industry sectors or geographic regions, or any of the many data subsets the new tools support, issue resolution is brought to the forefront. Once issues are identified and quantified, such as the workforce concerns identified among the high-tech and innovative companies through the WIRED 3.1 Workforce Survey, the community of economic development stakeholders can work together with the business community to develop solutions.

One of the greatest, far-reaching positive impacts of the new, integrated County-wide database is the enhanced ability to shape policy, to develop products and services to meet the future needs of the LA business community, to help it remain competitive and meet the upcoming challenges proactively.

As the best practices are shared from all of the WIRED projects throughout the California Innovation Corridor, all the partners will be able to learn from each other and take this culture of innovative collaboration to new levels.

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