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Beyond the Workforce Investment Area Borders

Workforce Investment Boards, especially those across the California Innovation Corridor, are positioned – both economically and geographically – to reach beyond the boundaries of local economic and workforce development efforts. Clusters of Opportunities are identifiable in cities, counties, or regions; when a cluster reaches across a major economic region like the Corridor, investment in that cluster's economic and workforce assets promulgate benefit, leverage resources, and lower the risks of investments across the entire region.

An example of such a 'super-cluster' is one of Transportation/Logistics. This cluster stretches from the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, across the intermediary support regions of Orange County and Riverside, and onward to the rest of the Inland Empire, before the goods are distributed to the rest of the United States. Every step of the way in the movement of goods from sea to shining sea, there exist industries, workers, and communities that both support and depend upon it. For every ten jobs created in the Corridor alone in this 'super-cluster', 18 are created in other supporting industries¹, with average wages above \$49,000/year². This cluster offers one of the top wages in the corridor, and presents career opportunities for workers with sub-baccalaureate educational backgrounds; that is to say, significant opportunities exist in this cluster for workers without college degrees. To continue supporting the growth of this industry, critical resources must be maintained: infrastructure upon which the goods travel, availability of business development resources for smaller companies to grow within the industry and hire new workers, and skilled workers must be available on every rung of the career ladder.

To maintain these critical resources, significant investments must be made, in economic and workforce investment dollars, time, and human ingenuity. Significant investments naturally bring risk commensurate with benefit. By spreading the investments across the corridor, so that all economic development, educational, and workforce investment stakeholders take ownership in supporting the 'super-cluster', risks are reduced and benefits are shared, and more people can work in more businesses that all contribute to the larger region's economic health.

¹ *Orange County Workforce Indicators Report, 2008-2009*

² *Industry Analysis, California Innovation Corridor 2001-2006, State of California Employment Development Department*