

# Momentum West Talent Retention & Attraction Strategic Action Plan



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## INTRODUCTION

The Lower Chippewa Valley in western Wisconsin is primed for growth. Located immediately adjacent to Minneapolis and St. Paul, the region offers a wealth of amenities to companies at a fraction of the cost in one of the Midwest’s fastest growing regions. However, area businesses are not finding the talent they need to fill jobs and grow. While this is a common national problem, west central Wisconsin area leaders are becoming increasingly concerned that this talent shortage may impede the region’s future economic prosperity.

Momentum West, a regional economic development organization serving the 10-county area, stepped forward to provide leadership on a variety of economic development issues. Seeking out solutions to business concerns about a talent shortage is squarely within the Momentum West mission. The organization already works with 14 economic development organizations, two workforce development boards, three University of Wisconsin system universities, two technical colleges, and nearly 100 other investors to promote economic prosperity in the region described in Figure 1 along the I-94 corridor east of the Twin Cities.

Working closely with its partners, Momentum West initiated a strategic planning process in 2016 to develop consensus around a talent attraction and retention plan. The plan seeks to bring area leaders together to expand the region’s talent pool and better prepare workers for available regional jobs. The region is enduring a common set of challenges facing many other small metro areas/rural regions across the county—slow population growth combined with the movement of young adults to larger urban centers.



Figure 1: Momentum West Region

In west central Wisconsin, these challenges have been offset to some degree by the presence of three University of Wisconsin system campuses and proactive local efforts to revitalize many of the region’s communities. The resurgence of downtown Eau Claire serves as a prime example. Thus, people from across the state’s rural communities are flocking to the region’s universities, but then those students graduate and move on – often to an even larger urban center. Consequently, proximity to the fast-growing Minneapolis-St. Paul (MSP) metro area provides both an advantage and disadvantage. The advantage is the ability of Momentum West businesses to serve the dynamic MSP market from a relatively lower cost location nearby. However, the region suffers a disadvantage in the competition for young adult talent that may be drawn to the diversity and amenities offered in the Twin Cities or in some other large urban center.

The key to success for Momentum West will be to leverage its advantage as a unique place located close to the greater MSP area offering job and entrepreneurial opportunities as well as a community of choice for skilled talent. However, to make this case, Momentum West must be a source of talent, and the problem facing the region is that business leaders have long maintained the region lacks available skilled workers, especially workers with the array of basic, soft, and technical skills increasingly in demand.

This contention exists despite the presence of three universities in the region. Businesses reported this talent shortage even when unemployment rates were high immediately following the Great Recession of 2008-2009. As the national economy continued its recovery, and unemployment rates slid downward, the problem exacerbated. Today, many companies express concern that the talent shortage will affect (or has already impacted) their ability to compete for business.

Yet, the region has young talent at its area universities and community colleges. The question in many leaders' minds is how to retain more of those graduates in local jobs rather than standing by while they leave for larger cities with more amenities and higher wage jobs (that often do not fully offset the higher living costs in those places).

The talent shortage and the so-called "brain drain" are not unique problems to west central Wisconsin. What is unique, however, is that Momentum West is seeking to develop a proactive plan to address the issues head on. To do so, Momentum West engaged the Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness (CREC), a national nonprofit focused on integrating workforce and economic development, and the Institute for Decision Making (IDM), an affiliate of the University of Northern Iowa. As partners, CREC and IDM assisted the Talent Attraction & Retention Steering Committee of Momentum West in conducting research and facilitating a plan development process.

The research examined many of the factors that area leaders identified as potential causes of the region's current talent shortage to provide proof about whether real-world data substantiates local perceptions. Building on previous work (including the Governor's Council on Workforce Investment 2014-2018 Strategic Plan and the West Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board's WIOA Local Plan, 2016-2020), CREC analyzed the region's demographic and workforce trends. The results from that research were shared with local leaders through a presentation and the preparation of a dashboard indicators report.

Building on that work, Momentum West also collaborated with CREC and IDM to seek extensive buy-in from stakeholders across the region. Through interviews with nearly 100 regional leaders, CREC and IDM gained a better understanding of the region's unique challenges, including the concerns of rural leaders in counties adjacent to I-94. From that work, Momentum West was able to identify numerous potential solutions, some of which are already being tried on a small scale in communities across the region. Insights from these interviews were combined with a quantitative analysis of available data about the region's talent pool and shared with area leaders during two work sessions and extensive follow-up input. The results of this process are captured in this Talent Retention & Attraction Strategic Action Plan, identifying goals and initiatives designed to address the most important challenges.

The purpose of this plan is to create a priority set of initiatives that are likely to have an impact on the most critical and immediate issues. The plan is NOT intended to address every challenge facing the region nor to generate a complete laundry list of possible initiatives. Consequently, these initiatives seek to make an immediate and long-lasting impact on the perceived shortage in the region's overall talent pool.

The strategic plan focuses on achieving two overarching goals:

1. *Expanding the Talent Pool*  
 There simply are not enough working adults available in the region to fill existing jobs. The tight labor market is expected to continue getting tighter, and the region needs to implement strategies that will increase the number of people available for work.
  
2. *Improving Labor Market Efficiency*  
 The current workforce is not being used as productively as it could. This may be due to several reasons: lack of adequate preparation for work among prospective jobseekers, unproductive career placement activities for students and jobseekers, or ineffective employer hiring practices. These conditions are not ideal in a market with plentiful labor, but they become major impediments in a tight labor market.

Figure 2: Summary of Momentum West Strategic Talent Initiatives

Goal 1: Expanding the Talent Pool			
<b>Initiative 1.1:</b> Develop a targeted marketing campaign for young educated workers	<b>Initiative 1.2:</b> Coordinate outreach to draw area alumni back to the region	<b>Initiative 1.3:</b> Market local jobs to out-commuters working in the Twin Cities	<b>Initiative 1.4:</b> Provide job and support services for traditionally underrepresented groups
Goal 2: Improving Labor Market Efficiency			
<b>Initiative 2.1:</b> Address critical talent needs for targeted industries	<b>Initiative 2.2:</b> Provide career planning support and information to key audiences	<b>Initiative 2.3:</b> Provide business-led career learning experiences for young adults	<b>Initiative 2.4:</b> Raise awareness about job openings and job search practices

In Figure 2, Momentum West has proposed eight initiatives tied to these two fundamental goals.

The region’s leadership focused on these two goals because they focus on the fundamental causes limiting available talent for employers. The next section will describe the current conditions that led the region’s leaders to focus on these two goals. Following that section will be more details about the 8 initiatives aimed at helping to achieve the two goals.

## A Shrinking Talent Pool

The labor market is tight in the Momentum West region. The area has long had slightly higher unemployment rates than MSP, but lower than the state and nation as illustrated in Figure 3. Unemployment rates continue to edge downward and now sit below 4 percent, a rate that most economists consider full employment. This means that the current labor market is operating close to full capacity in traditional economic terms, but business growth demands may require even more labor than is currently available.

Demographic trends suggest that the labor market will likely tighten even further as aging workers begin to retire and fewer new workers start their careers. Today, about 1-in-4 workers are aged 55 or older. In certain industries or occupations, these workers have many years left in their careers, but in many fields they are nearing or passing retirement age. National labor force participation rates among this age group hover at about 40 percent and tend to decline further with age.<sup>1</sup> A look at labor force participation rates suggests that that 68 percent of Momentum West adults aged 16 and over were working, compared with 64 percent for the U.S.<sup>2</sup> Figure 4 illustrates that higher educational attainment is an important factor correlated with higher labor force participation rates.

Figure 3: Unemployment Trends in Momentum West and Benchmark Regions

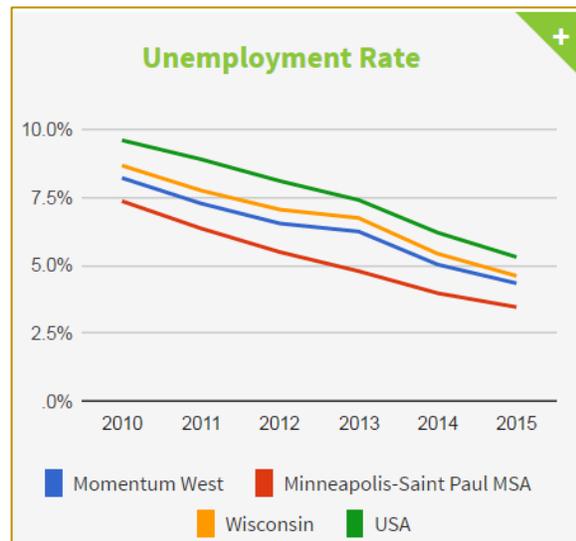
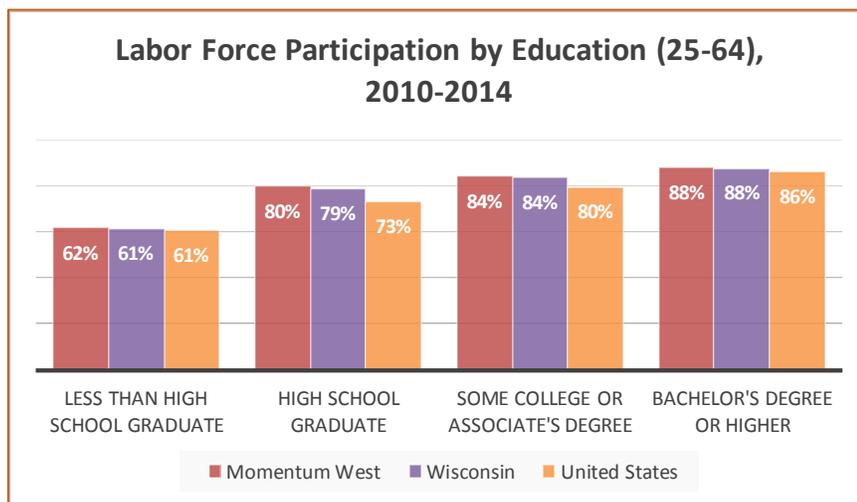


Figure 4: Labor Force Participation in Momentum West and Benchmark Regions

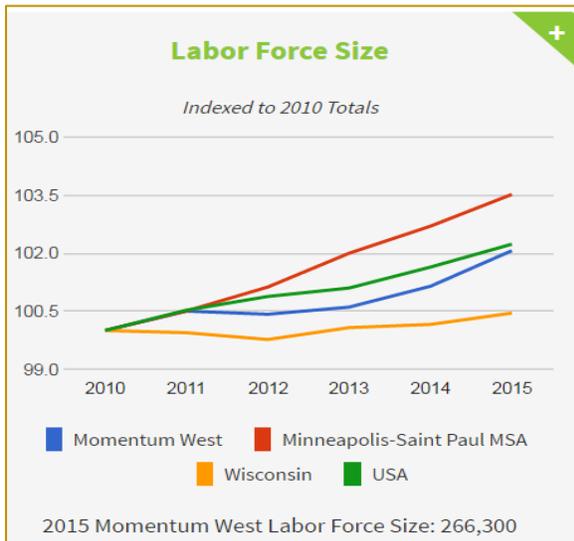


<sup>1</sup> U.S. Bureau Review, Dec  
<sup>2</sup> CREC calcul

Source: Calculated from American Community Survey data, 2010-2014

Labor

4.



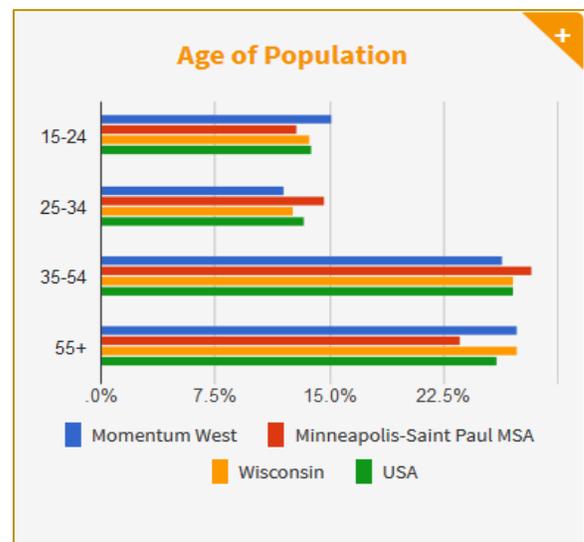
As Figure 5 illustrates, the number of people working in the Momentum West region has grown slowly but picked up pace as the economy recovered. Business leaders are concerned, however, that this pace of employment growth cannot be sustained due to a smaller labor pool among younger workers (not just in Momentum West, but nationally as well) and the continued loss of workers due to retirements.

For Momentum West, the region has a much smaller share of its population between age 25 and 54 than the MSP, Wisconsin, or the US (see

Figure 6). Certainly, net in-migration, the major component of national US population growth has been limited locally, and this slows population growth in the region, especially among working age adults. From 2011-2016, the Momentum West region grew at less than half the national population growth rate and at a slightly slower pace than Wisconsin. This trend is not expected to change in the future.

The problem stems not only from the region’s demographic makeup, but also from fundamental changes in the structure of the labor force. While the number of young adults is declining, also falling are labor force participation rates among those aged 16 to 24 (described here as “young adults”). In 2014, 55 percent of young adults in this age group worked nationally, a watershed decline from 61 percent just a decade before. Moreover, the rate is expected to continue dropping. The BLS projects the rate to fall below 50 percent by 2024. A key reason for this decline is that students must remain in school longer to prepare for future careers, and fewer are working while they are in school. However, this also means that when young adults try to join the labor market, they are less likely to have prior work experience, a characteristic that businesses increasingly value and demand. This lack of experience creates a perception among companies that students are not suitably prepared for the world of work.

Figure 6: Relative Size of Key Age Cohorts in Momentum West and Benchmark Regions



In summary, the region’s businesses are being squeezed for talent at a time when many companies would like to prepare for growth and need more skilled workers to do so. At the heart of the issue is that there are not enough young adults entering the workplace to replace retiring workers due to both lower numbers available and a smaller share of these few who are working. Furthermore, when the most highly educated and skilled join the workforce, they frequently do not have a lot of work experience and often leave the Momentum West region for opportunities elsewhere.

Solutions to this challenge involve attracting (and retaining) people to the region who already have a local connection, especially young professionals that may otherwise end up in nearby urban centers. The region's three universities graduate students who leave to find jobs, but anecdotal evidence suggest many would return to establish families if they had opportunities to do so. Enticing these alumni to return to the region may be an important component to meeting the region's talent needs. In addition, thousands of Momentum West residents work in the Twin Cities, spending a great deal of time in traffic. Many of these residents may be willing to remain in the region to work if they clearly could gain financial and social benefits by doing so. Despite relatively high labor force participation rates, the Momentum West region has a group of people who already live in the region but who do not work because they have personal and economic barriers to joining the workplace. Each of these groups represent a potential new source of talent that could expand the available pool in the short run. The initiatives proposed are designed to expand the people available to area businesses as potential workers.

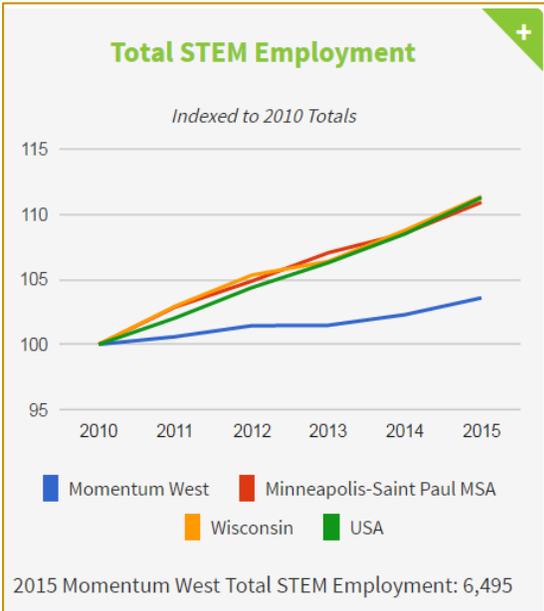
## An Inefficient Labor Market

Like many regions, Momentum West already has a talented workforce, as well as many more students and jobseekers engaged in the talent pipeline. The problem may not only be a limited number of people available, but also insufficient efforts to leverage the existing talent pool to be more productive. Many businesses contend they are having trouble filling open positions in the current labor market, but one reason may be that they are not effectively signaling to prospective workers and education providers what skills they need. Muddled messages about career options and skill needs leave decisions to poorly informed students or jobseekers about which academic or training programs are best suited for them and most valued by businesses. Amplifying this issue, not enough students are pursuing academic courses that prepare them for high demand, well-paying jobs. Thus, many jobseekers are ill prepared for promising local careers because they simply did not have enough information about how best to prepare for the jobs that businesses are trying to fill.

By 2020, 62 percent of all new jobs created in Wisconsin will require postsecondary education.<sup>3</sup> The lack of prepared workers is slowing local hiring and ineffective hiring practices are driving away jobseekers who might otherwise remain in the region. In turn, economic growth is becoming strained by limited available talent, reducing the number of local commercial opportunities. As Figure 7 illustrates, the Momentum West region has lagged in terms of the number of high skill science, technology, engineering and math jobs that have been created in the region relative to other parts of the country.

One reason that employment in these fields has lagged compared to other regions is that it is especially difficult to find qualified workers. A 2015 survey of businesses in the Chippewa Valley region found that nearly 75 percent of responding employers reported having difficulty filling positions.<sup>4</sup> This despite the large number of graduates available in relevant fields from area universities and colleges. Area two- and four-year institutions conferred about 300 2-year degrees and 1,100 4-year degrees to graduates of selected STEM programs in 2015 (see Figure 8).

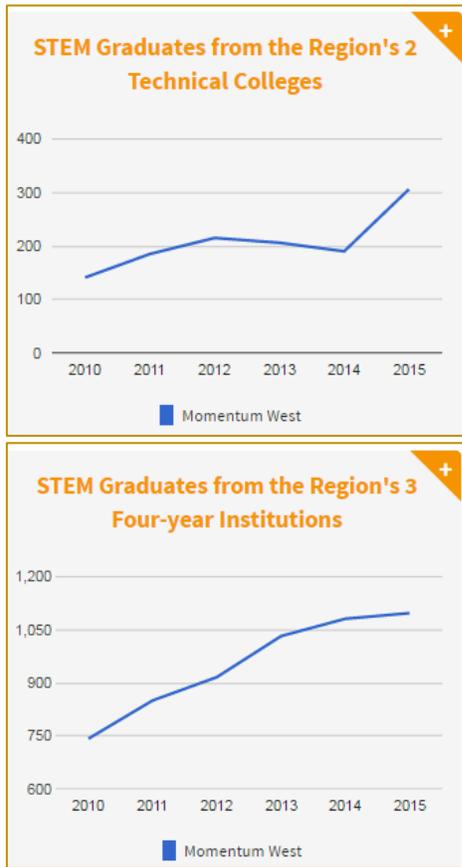
Figure 7: Trends in Science Technology Engineering Math (STEM) Employment in Momentum West and Benchmark Regions



<sup>3</sup>Anthony Carnevale, Nicole Smith, and Jeff Strohl, "Recovery: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2020," Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce, June 2013.

<sup>4</sup>"Chippewa Valley Labor Market: 2015 Employer Skills Gap Survey Results", Eau Claire Area Economic Development Corporation, <http://www.eauclaire-wi.com/documents/fall-2015-skills-gap-results-web.pdf>

Figure 8: Total Number of STEM-related Graduates from Area Institutions



By comparison, the region’s companies have nearly 11,000 job openings each year, of which at least 3,000 require at least some form of postsecondary educational experience.<sup>5</sup> However, anecdotal discussions with companies suggest that many more firms prefer a postsecondary background even though the job may not require a degree because it demonstrates an ability to accomplish something important and a level of experience and maturity. Despite the plethora of talent available at area higher education institutions, local companies continue to struggle to find entry level and new-to-career workers with suitable academic and work-related credentials.

The problem is especially acute among area technology firms. Even though more than 400 post-secondary degrees and awards were conferred in computer and information science in 2015, the talent shortage continues, and the struggle is common not only in the information technology field, but also in engineering, production, maintenance, and many other skilled professions. To illustrate, a Career Builder report identified the critical shortages for several key occupations in a 50-mile area of Eau Claire between September 2014 and August 2016.<sup>6</sup> The report found 50 active jobseekers compared to 424 advertised software engineering postings, 28 candidates competing for 188 network security positions, and 26

candidates competing for 156 network administrator positions.

Many believe that these shortages are due in no small part to a lack of knowledge among students, jobseekers, parents, educators, companies, and the community at large about what available opportunities exist. For graduating students with no local connection to the labor market, nearby urban centers may seem like more fruitful stomping grounds for their job search.

Moreover, businesses expect new-to-career workers to have prior experience in their chosen career (through volunteer or paid internships). Students (with low labor force participation rates and limited experience in a career-related work environment) are less closely tied to the local job market and to the local community when they graduate. However, through academic and practical experiences, businesses are seeking out new-to-career workers that have developed complex analytic and problem solving skills. Furthermore, even at an entry level, firms also expect workers to have a basic proficiency in many of the key technical skills related to their chosen occupation.

<sup>5</sup> Calculated based on Economic Modeling Specialists, Inc. estimates.

<sup>6</sup> Source: CareerBuilder report, August 2016. Data represent web-scraped job ads and resumes reported to CareerBuilder.com.

Consequently, relevant curriculum content in area academic programs is necessary, but not sufficient to meet the talent preparation needs for most firms. Providing students with practical, hands-on career experiences to meet business requirements is also critical for building stronger ties between area companies seeking talent and area institutions of higher education as a key source of potential jobseekers.

The issues start with industry, which must more effectively describe to both jobseekers and education or training providers which skills are most relevant for career success. Companies are not always clear about what they need, and individual firms often contradict one another about their needs (making the job for trainers and educators of sorting through fact and fiction even more difficult). Furthermore, the systems to share business skill requirements with service providers is rarely well developed so students and jobseekers have very few ways to learn about the requirements for careers or pathways for growth. This contributes to inaccurate or outdated perceptions that many “career influencers” (e.g., educators, parents, counselors, community leaders, and others) may have.

Part of the challenge for Momentum West and others seeking to improve the region’s labor market efficiency is overcoming the woefully underfunded career counseling system. For instance, at the K-12 system level, the American School Counselor Association recently found that more than half of students have had no help in advising them on their career options.<sup>7</sup> They recommend that the advisor to student ratio should be no more than 250 students for each counselor, but the national average is about double that (nearly 450 to 1). The problem becomes even more persistent for jobseekers outside the public education system with no access to formal career counseling. The resources available for these activities in the public workforce system are even more limited than those in the public schools and in higher education.

In short, companies are not effectively articulating their needs, and jobseekers are operating in the proverbial dark about what career opportunities exist. It is little wonder that young adults spend a great deal trying to “find themselves” when they are essentially looking for anchors in the form of meaningful, well-paying careers. Furthermore, young adults seldom have sufficient opportunities to participate in career exploration activities (which could range from events designed to share information about career options and requirements to “learn and earn” internship or apprenticeship opportunities).

Tackling these issues will require direct employer engagement in working with multiple groups to reach students that are soon-to-be jobseekers as well as those currently looking for work or new careers. Strategies must focus on clearly articulating industry skill requirements and sharing those insights effectively with the existing and potential workforce. Intermediaries are needed to help translate industry needs into academic and training requirements for educators, parents, counselors, the community, and especially for students and jobseekers. Hopefully, with these insights and with help from well-informed career influencers, students and jobseekers can better understand what they need to do to prepare for available jobs. Individual companies or support institutions (e.g., schools, foundations, etc.) cannot do this unilaterally in a way that would move the needle. It will require strong collaboration among employers, educational institutions, and workforce organizations working together

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<sup>7</sup> Leo Reddy, John Rauschenberger, Pam Hurt, and Jan Bray, “Transforming Career Counseling: Bridging School to Career in the Workforce of the Future,” SME and Manufacturing Skill Standards Council, April 2015.

to develop a more effective process for preparing future workers and then matching them to high demand jobs.

## INITIATIVES AND ACTIONS TO MEET KEY GOALS

To address the key challenges identified, Momentum West developed a series of initiatives to expand the talent pool and improve labor market efficiencies. It is notable that these initiatives align well with both addressing a critical economic development challenge as well as helping to address several key workforce goals associated with developing a more demand-driven workforce system. The plan responds to the local WIOA plan by helping to identify talent needs, mobilizes resources to address those needs, and maximize regional labor force participation. Furthermore, the plan also supports key statewide initiatives aimed at fostering talent attraction and retention.

Each of the talent attraction and retention goals in this plan includes four initiatives focused on adding to the number of available workers and helping to ensure that available talent is better informed about and better prepared for available career opportunities. This section provides an overview of each of these initiatives, ideas for action designed to support each initiative, lead organizations, and potential metrics to monitor progress toward the initiative’s key goal.

### Goal 1: Expanding the Talent Pool

<b>Initiative 1.1:</b>
Develop a targeted marketing campaign to communicate the region’s unique quality of place assets to students graduating from area universities before they leave the region.
<b>Actions to Support Initiative 1.1:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gain input and feedback from young professional networks to test different messages</li> <li>• Assess what young professionals currently identify as “unique quality of place assets” on an on-going basis to update messages and to ensure attention is paid to improving the most relevant assets.</li> <li>• Adapt existing economic development and tourism messages to emphasize the region’s attractiveness as a place to live and work for young adults.</li> <li>• Expand (or establish) higher educational institution career services provided to alumni</li> <li>• Inform new residents about relevant amenities and services through social media and direct contact (e.g., Career Connection).</li> </ul>
<b>Related Governor’s Council on Workforce Investment 2014-2018 Strategic Plan Recommendation(s)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• #2 -- Add Attraction and Retention Tax Credits for Skilled Graduates</li> <li>• #3 -- Incorporate Relocation Tax Credit and Loan forgiveness</li> <li>• #7 -- Engage in Marketing that Attracts Millennials &amp; Entrepreneurs</li> <li>• #8 -- Expand Broadband Access</li> </ul>
<b>Progress Measure(s)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of young educated professionals living in the region</li> <li>• Number of individuals served by the “Welcome New Residents” programs</li> <li>• Number of people reading online reviews of the region</li> </ul>
<b>Potential Convening Organization(s)</b>
Momentum West with support from the Universities, Young Professionals & Convention & Visitors’ Bureaus

<b>Initiative 1.2:</b>
Develop coordinated communications and outreach to area alumni about the benefits of living in the Momentum West region.
<b>Actions to Support Initiative 1.2:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine employment needs and critical occupations for targeted industries.</li> <li>• Target messaging about key critical occupations through electronic and print media advertisements to alumni networks.</li> <li>• Support regional and national alumni events that promote available and potential job opportunities in Momentum West.</li> <li>• Support local “Welcome New Residents” programs and coordinate with an employee hospitality program for prospective and newly hired employees moving to the region.</li> <li>• Provide trailing partner support to those relocating to the region (e.g., Career Connection)</li> <li>• Gain testimonials from newly arrived residents in the form of online reviews about the ease of transition.</li> <li>• Expand (or establish) higher educational institution career services provided to alumni</li> <li>• Create a consistent regional online brand for marketing activities.</li> </ul>
<b>Related Governor’s Council on Workforce Investment 2014-2018 Strategic Plan Recommendation(s)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• #2 -- Efforts to add Attraction and Retention Tax Credits for Skilled Graduates</li> <li>• #3 -- Incorporate Relocation Tax Credit and Loan forgiveness</li> <li>• #7 -- Engage in Marketing that Attracts Millennials &amp; Entrepreneurs</li> <li>• #8 -- Expand Broadband Access</li> </ul>
<b>Progress Measure(s)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of alumni who apply for open positions</li> <li>• The number of alumni returning to the region</li> </ul>
<b>Potential Convening Organization(s)</b>
Momentum West working with a coordinated network of the alumni associations at the 3 UW system schools and the 2 technical colleges.

<b>Initiative 1.3:</b>
Market local job opportunities to out-commuters currently working in the Twin-Cities.
<b>Actions to Support Initiative 1.3:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an online regional promotion and information hub to raise awareness about regional companies and careers.</li> <li>• Advertise the availability of opportunities through billboards, electronic, or other media.</li> <li>• Brand the online resource (e.g., “Work West Wisconsin”)</li> <li>• Identify employees already commuting from the Twin Cities (with the help of local employers) to encourage them to relocate to Momentum West</li> </ul>
<b>Related Governor’s Council on Workforce Investment 2014-2018 Strategic Plan</b>

<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>#8 -- Expand Broadband Access</li> </ul>
<b>Progress Measure(s)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change (decrease) in out-commuting</li> <li>Change (increase) in in-commuting from Minneapolis-Saint Paul</li> <li>Number of website views</li> <li>Number of applicants/hires employers receive as a result of marketing efforts</li> </ul>
<b>Potential Convening Organization(s)</b>
Momentum West working with a collaborative of New Richmond, River Falls, Falls, and Hudson Chambers of Commerce collaborating with Work River Falls and Work Amery

<b>Initiative 1.4:</b>
Provide job and support services targeted to traditionally under-represented groups.
<b>Actions to Support Initiative 1.4:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand area programs providing adults with employment barriers (e.g., disabled, returning veterans, ex-offenders, and others) help with securing and retaining jobs</li> <li>Conduct talent recruitment and hospitality support efforts aimed at a more ethnically and racially diverse population</li> <li>Collaborate with employers to identify and adapt existing employment practices in response to the work-life needs of adults with employment barriers or diverse population groups, including older workers (e.g., flexible schedules or special accommodations)</li> <li>Identify best practices by employers or communities in the region who have successfully diversified their workforce</li> </ul>
<b>Related Governor’s Council on Workforce Investment 2014-2018 Strategic Plan Recommendation(s)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>#6 -- Deliver Financial Incentives for Attraction/Entrepreneurship</li> </ul>
<b>Progress Measure(s)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of adults with employment barriers in the region’s workforce</li> <li>Labor force participation among hard-to-employ populations</li> <li>Number of international immigrants in the workforce</li> </ul>
<b>Potential Convening Organization(s)</b>
West Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board

## Goal 2: Improving Labor Market Efficiency

### Initiative 2.1:

Address industry talent needs for targeted industries (e.g., health care, advanced manufacturing, information technology, and higher education)

#### Actions to Support Initiative 2.1:

- Organize industry-specific employer partnerships to better engage employers with educators and trainers
- Collect information from firms in targeted industries about their current and future worker needs as well as their own assessments of why recruiting new talent has been difficult
- Articulate skills required for those workers and key worker barriers
- Identify current sources of qualified talent for these industries, especially from area educational institutions, training partners, and/or other firms
- Assess how education and training institutions are doing in meeting employer talent needs in these industries
- Determine whether employer hiring policies align with jobseeker requirements and employment practices
- Identify creative solutions to provide greater flexibility in hiring and retaining workers (e.g., talent sharing, job sharing, Don't Reject...Refer, etc.)
- Coordinate efforts to implement one or more creative solutions as pilot response to improve worker retention and more effectively use existing workers (e.g., supporting business collaboratives to provide onsite health care, Career Connection, etc.)

#### Related Governor's Council on Workforce Investment 2014-2018 Strategic Plan Recommendation(s)

- #5 -- Support Transportable Skill Sets for Transportable Careers
- #13 -- Develop an image-building campaign for career opportunities in high demand fields
- #18 -- Support industry engagement

#### Progress Measure(s)

- Number of companies participating in employer collaborations
- Job vacancy rates and time to hire for critical occupations
- Proportion of area hires sourced from local talent pools

#### Potential Convening Organization(s)

West Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board in partnership with Momentum West

**Initiative 2.2:**

Provide career planning support and information (about targeted industries) to key audiences in collaboration with employers, educational institutions, and workforce organizations.

- Actions to Support Initiative 2.2:**
- Provide educators with career-relevant curriculum content, including (1) business problem scenarios to be used in the classroom, (2) a playbook to help students and parents in exploring career options and (3) career profiles for targeted industries
  - Share industry-specific information with business leaders about how work and careers are changing and about strategies for recruiting youth for opportunities in their industries

**Related Governor’s Council on Workforce Investment 2014-2018 Strategic Plan Recommendation(s)**

- #1 -- Develop Career Counseling/Career Month

**Progress Measure(s)**

- Number of educators using applied career info in their curricula
- Number of students engaged in using curriculum resources (e.g., playbooks, career profiles, etc.)
- Number of students enrolled in career-relevant academic programs (e.g., science, technology, engineering, and math)

**Potential Convening Organization(s)**

West Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board working with the Momentum West Talent Attraction Committee, Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESA), and key industry networks (e.g., area technology alliance, manufacturers, health care leaders, etc.)

**Initiative 2.3:**

Provide business-led career learning opportunities for young adults (age 24 and under).

- Actions to Support Initiative 2.3:**
- Organize and expand efforts to recruit business leaders to make classroom presentations
  - Develop a region-wide program to support career fairs focused on the talent needs of key target industries
  - Produce facility tours that include career exploration programming that responds to the needs of targeted industries (e.g., manufacturing, information technology, health care, etc.)
  - Organize job shadowing opportunities for students interested in learning about critical occupations in those targeted industries
  - Develop “cooperative” internship programs for small employers (i.e., intermediaries perform recruitment and initial screening)
  - Organize youth apprenticeships targeted to critical manufacturing occupations, emphasizing programs targeted to graduating high school seniors or recent high school graduates

**Related Governor’s Council on Workforce Investment 2014-2018 Strategic Plan Recommendation(s)**

- #4 -- Expand Youth and Adult Apprenticeship Participation and Programming
- #10 -- Allow high school juniors to start work-based learning to graduate on-track
- #12 -- Ensure every high school student experiences quality work-based learning opportunities

**Progress Measure(s)**

- Number of businesses sharing career information with students, parents, faculty, and the community
- The number of sponsored career information events, including business leader presentations, facility tours, etc.
- Number of career exploration “experiences” (e.g., tours, job shadow placements, internship placements)
- Number of business partners engaged in providing an experience

**Potential Convening Organization(s)**

West Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board in collaboration with the county economic development corporations

**Initiative 2.4:**

**Raise awareness among job seekers about local openings and among employers about job search practices.**

**Actions to Support Initiative 2.4:**

- Promote greater use of existing local job boards among companies and jobseekers.
- Provide training to area small and mid-size businesses to update their talent recruitment approaches to reflect jobseeker strategies (**e.g., Don’t Reject...Refer**).
- Expand efforts to help jobseekers improve their resumes, job applications, and interviewing skills.

**Progress Measure(s)**

- Amount of time required to fill area positions
- Number of companies participating in recruitment training programs
- Number of jobseekers participating in resume and interview-skill building programs

**Potential Convening Organization(s)**

West Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board in partnership with Momentum West