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IEDC: Inclusive Development Network Proving Timely and Effective

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Since its launch in [March of last year](#), the Inclusive Development Network (IDN) has counted IEDC among its partner organizations. The IDN's mission is collaborating with communities to close equity gaps. True to its name, the IDN furthers this goal through inclusive workforce and economic development strategies to reach underserved adults.

(A Council for Adult and Experiential Learning [[CAEL](#)] initiative, the IDN is made possible by the funding support from ECMC Foundation and JPMorgan Chase & Co., and the project partnership of IEDC and other stakeholders.)

Perennially important, the IDN's mission has become remarkably timely as national attention focuses around the root causes of systemic inequity and racial discrimination. Project teams in each community are composed of leaders in business, industry, workforce development, education, and community-based organizations. A local economic development organization acts as a project lead, coordinating all IDN activities.

The IDN's inaugural regions and their lead economic development agencies are: Cleveland, Ohio ([Greater Cleveland Partnership](#)); Corpus Christi, Texas ([Nueces County](#)); Spokane, Washington ([Greater Spokane Incorporated](#)); Northeast Oklahoma Region ([Northeast Oklahoma Regional Alliance](#)); and Pensacola, Florida ([FloridaWest Economic Development Alliance](#)). The

regions were selected from dozens of applications, creating IDN's first cohort of communities. CAEL is actively seeking funding to support future cohorts so that additional communities can benefit from the IDN model.

How the process works

Over the past year, IDN communities have engaged in an intensive planning process facilitated by CAEL. IEDC and other IDN partners, including Burning Glass Technologies, EY Economic Development Advisory Services (formerly the Avalanche Consulting team), and Quest Site Solutions have provided critical technical support. This collaboration has helped build local strategies that are strengthened by the continuous sharing of best practices among participating communities.



Link Learning and Work



Prior to the pandemic, the IDN held monthly virtual meetings and quarterly convenings in an IDN region, which hosted the meeting and provided tours and experiences related to their local project. Meetings have continued on a virtual basis during the pandemic.

At each meeting, IDN teams review planning and implementation activities that further each community's IDN project. IEDC provides support through its expertise and connections to economic developers and model programs across the United States. CAEL and other IDN partner organizations provide guidance in other specialties, including labor market analysis, education and training initiatives, workforce development strategies, and broader issues of diversity and inclusion.

These activities support each IDN community's work on developing a regional inclusive development plan. The communities use a common workflow to facilitate the planning process. An environmental scan identifies key stakeholders and partners to be included in a potential initiative. The planning process incorporates a supply/demand analysis of local labor market data to identify the greatest gaps and opportunities for inclusive workforce development. Identifying target populations for inclusivity efforts also is a planning component, as is goal-setting. The communities track goals at both a high level and by drilling down to identify short- and long-term goals and actions that will support inclusive development.

Finally, each IDN community is developing an implementation plan that spans one to five years of effort toward a set of inclusive development goals.

What communities are doing

IDN community projects include a broad array of initiatives. Each targets a particular population or issue within the community.

Cleveland is expanding its proven diversity and inclusion work with industry and building innovative training on-ramps into skilled careers in manufacturing. The initiative is focusing on expanding access to these jobs for African Americans, women, and re-entry populations.

Northeast Oklahoma's mostly rural IDN initiative is seeking to create a new data-driven system focused on researching and

codifying the most in-demand industries and occupations. This will support building customized skills training that will result in a larger pool of qualified workers for local firms, as well as expanded access for low-income residents, including Native Americans.

The Pensacola, Florida team is seeking to help workers most at risk of losing their jobs to automation in retail and service industries. The assistance centers on re-training in technology and other more lucrative fields.

Corpus Christi is focused on broadening access for women into STEM careers, especially the petrochemical industry and healthcare occupations. It is also supporting an aggressive entrepreneurial training program.

And Spokane, Washington is targeting low-income single mothers with training toward skilled careers in healthcare, IT, and professional services. At the same time, the local team is helping address the many challenges these workers face around childcare, healthcare, and other needs.

All communities are also focusing on building employers' openness to hiring from a more diverse population, through targeted community marketing strategies and diversity, equity and inclusion training.

For these times and the future

If some of these priorities read like they were written in a "pre-covid" economy, CAEL and its partners are well aware that communities are struggling just to restart their economies. They also know that some fields are likely to be disrupted for many years to come, and that addressing major challenges like childcare and high-speed internet access will be more critical than ever to supporting worker access to good jobs.

The IDN goals were very much intended to be medium- and long-term, addressing problems that will always confront regional workforces, in good or bad economic times. All of the communities' projects are flexible, fluid, and adaptable to economic change. For instance, in Spokane, the IDN project has become a central element of the region's wider Recovery and Resiliency initiative.

IDN projects also help each community's team strengthen itself through collaboration. They can use one community project as a model to gain practice and expertise in how to

build subsequent joint efforts — across large, multi-agency teams — that can be sustainable into the future.

To further diversify the voices and perspectives that drive this collaboration, CAEL and IEDC have brought in expertise from IEDC member communities throughout the country. Their insights on innovative solutions to major economic and workforce development challenges have provided a great boost to the cohort. Participating organizations have included Madison Region Economic Partnership (Wis.), Tulsa Regional Chamber (Okla.), Manufacturing Renaissance (Chicago), and

Rutgers University. CAEL and IEDC are also working to identify other subject-matter experts on topics that are fundamental to the IDN mission. These include: how communities are training disadvantaged and underrepresented populations for middle-skill and management positions; supporting minority small businesses; specific expertise on diversity and inclusion in manufacturing, IT, and construction industries; and best economic and workforce practices in the time of COVID-19. Economic developers with successful projects in these areas are invited to reach out to Claire Linnemeier at CAEL (clinnemeier@cael.org).

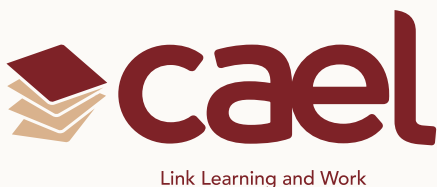


As Senior Vice President for Partnerships, Dawn Lang oversees partnership development driving enhanced value for CAEL's clients and stakeholder community in higher education, workforce development and corporate environments. She leads a dedicated team of professionals who deliver on CAEL's promise and value proposition, passionately supporting adult learners as they pursue education and career goals.



As vice president for partnership development at CAEL, Dr. Scott Campbell works with postsecondary education institutions to help them become more responsive to the unique and changing needs of adult learners.

Learn more at cael.org



Recognizing that adult learners are the backbone of the U.S. economy, CAEL helps forge a clear, viable connection between education and career success, providing solutions that promote sustainable and equitable economic growth. CAEL opens doors to opportunity in collaboration with workforce and economic developers, postsecondary educators, and employers, industry groups, foundations, and other mission-aligned organizations. By engaging with these stakeholders, we foster a culture of innovative, lifelong learning that helps individuals and their communities thrive. Established in 1974, CAEL, a Strada Education Network affiliate, is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) membership organization.