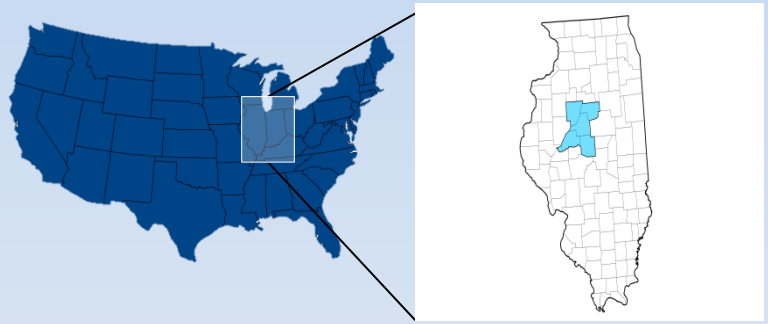


Investing in Manufacturing Communities Partnership

Greater Peoria Economic Development District



The Community

The Greater Peoria Economic Development Council (GPEDC) leads a five-county consortium in central Illinois that is known as the *Earthmoving Capital of the World*. The region developed in the early 1900's, relying on the manufacture of heavy duty equipment. Greater Peoria's large Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) have stimulated the development of a robust supply chain of manufacturers with expertise in metal fabrication, electrical equipment, and machining to support the earthmoving industry. Over 15% of the workforce in the region is employed in the manufacturing industry and 70% of those jobs are in the earthmoving industry sector. This concentration has benefited the region in many ways including availability of higher income jobs, extensive logistics systems, and well-developed international infrastructure. In 2014, the Greater Peoria region invested over \$2 billion in research and development and in 2012 exported more merchandise per capita than any other place in the country.

The Vision

In 2014, the GPEDC was awarded an EDA IMCP Planning Grant that allowed them to identify and develop strategies that would help strengthen and diversify the region's earthmoving supply chain. One threat they identified is the cyclical nature of the earthmoving industry that can reverberate through the entire supply chain, causing boom-bust cycles that can constrain sustainable economic growth. To counter this cycle, the GPEDC's implementation strategies were designed to primarily build resilience in the earthmoving supply chain, align workforce interests and skills to meet earthmoving supply chain needs and help these firms attract and retain talent.

The Strategy

Workforce and Training: The region is targeting the alignment of its workforce pipeline with manufacturing needs and the recruitment and retention of talent. The Greater Peoria area has developed post-secondary programs that specifically serve the earthmoving OEMs and their Tier 1 suppliers. Career pathways are clustered in five areas: 1) product and process design; 2) production; 3) quality; 4) maintenance, installation, and repair; and 5) logistics and warehousing. Individuals can earn industry recognized credentials and training providers have capacity to increase training to satisfy employers' talent demands. Business, education, workforce and economic development professionals have partnered to provide new opportunities for high school students to learn about careers in manufacturing. Much more can be accomplished in this space such as regional programming around STEM careers and the creation of new manufacturing apprenticeships.

Supplier Networks: The region will form a privately-led manufacturing network providing opportunities for manufacturers to collaboratively pursue work with OEMs outside the earthmoving industry and recruit new OEMs into the region that can utilize the support of the supply chain but are not in the earthmoving industry. Building stronger manufacturers will benefit the local and regional economy and equip the region with the know-how to expand current industry, or recruit the necessary new businesses. In addition, programs will be promoted to create opportunities for manufacturers to connect through supplier scouting events and expansion of existing supply chains.

Research and Innovation: To promote innovation, the Greater Peoria region will promote technology scouting and connections and train area companies to support technology development. One plan is to leverage the resources of the Illinois Manufacturing Excellent Center (IMEC), the Department of Commerce's MEP Center, to create a formalized scouting approach to ensure the region is well-connected to national initiatives, particularly in technology research and development. The GPEDC will also utilize the resources of the Bradley Turner Center and River City Labs to focus on training and counseling to support technology development, transfer, and commercialization.

Infrastructure and Site Development: The region plans to specifically address infrastructure issues that may prevent existing manufacturing from expanding. Having correct infrastructure along with available and shovel-ready sites is a critical part of the OEM attraction strategy and the effort to help earthmoving suppliers diversify. The region currently has 25 green sites that will need some additional infrastructure to make them shovel-ready to provide locations for future industrial expansion. The region also has multiple companies involved in Broadband infrastructure, and provision of these services in internet deficient regions is already underway. While Greater Peoria's intermodal network offers many options for the movement of people, goods, and raw materials by rail, air, truck or water, there is room for improvement. The Illinois Department of Transportation is constructing an eastern bypass and this will help strengthen the logistics systems for existing manufacturers and further help in the recruitment of new OEM's to the region.

Trade and Investment: Recognizing the international trade is a driver of economic growth, the SBDC Illinois Trade Center will offer targeted manufacturers an export readiness assessment, foreign market identification, and linkages to state and federal programs to find potential partners. They will also help improve the export readiness of manufacturers by bringing them into the new Manufacturing Network to identify export opportunities that may be available through partnering with area companies. By working together, they can offer products that can compete internationally. Targeted OEM's will be introduced to trade support systems and resources so that they fully appreciate the international infrastructure available to support their success. This education could help increase the number of new OEM's recruited to the region and the diversification of earthmoving manufacturers.

Operational Improvement and Capital Access: The GPEDC's greatest ally in support of manufacturing operations is the Illinois Manufacturing Excellent Center (IMEC). IMEC will lead the new manufacturing network, helping manufacturers identify opportunities to work collectively to reduce costs and improve their operations. The GPEDC will also

work hand-in-hand with regional experts on disaster strategy preparation by assisting manufacturers with putting disaster plans in place. The region has multiple commercial, regional, and local lending institutions providing conventional financing, as well as many non-conventional financing tools, to assist manufacturers with expansions and equipment upgrade purchases.

The Partnership

The GPEDC and partner organizations have extensive experience in implementing projects. **Non-Profit:** CareerLink, Bradley University Illinois SBDC & International Trade Center, CEO Council, Illinois Manufacturing Excellent Center, Peoria Riverfront Museum, Downtown Development Corporation, Startup Peoria, Greater Peoria Economic Development Council, River City Labs (NFP). **Higher Education Institution:** Illinois Central College, University of Illinois Extension- Fulton, Mason, Peoria, Tazewell Unit. **Private Sector Partner:** AAIM Employers Association, Peoria Association of Realtors. **Government Entity:** Regional Office of Education