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Senior Advisor
Economic Development Administration
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Dear Ms. Campbell,

The following is submitted on behalf of the Alliance for Learning Innovation (ALI) in response to the "Request for Information on Implementation of the Distressed Area Recompete Pilot Program."

Draft Responses

1. **For those who live or work in areas with high prime-age employment gaps, what barriers should be addressed to increase job placement/retention and/or job creation? What unique challenges and opportunities do you see in your community?**

   Barriers created by lack of access to a high-quality elementary and secondary education need to be addressed to increase job placement, retention, and creation. While the Recompete program is focused on the members of the American workforce aged 25-54, it is essential to recognize that inclusion of interventions that break down silos between traditional K-12 education and workforce development initiatives are imperative for helping solve the pipeline issues causing un-and-under employment in workers aged 25-54. Interventions in local K-12 schools and investments in relationship building between local schools and industries in need of employees would be a long-term investment in building the capacity of an economically distressed area to decrease prime age unemployment over time. When paired with shorter term solutions to aid prime aged community members currently experiencing unemployment, inclusion of K-12 investments in the Recompete program would be a crucial element to increasing the long-term capacity of a region to pull itself out of persistent economic distress. Examples of K-12 efforts that could be included are Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs and pathways, pre- and youth apprenticeships, dual enrollment, and evidence-based college enrollment and completion strategies.

8. Please provide research and evidence of interventions that work in highly distressed labor markets and/or communities to create good jobs and/or connect un- or underemployed residents to good jobs.

   ALI believes in the transformational power of investment in education, especially when it is done in conjunction with a community's workforce development needs and designed to support workforce participation goals. Research supported by the U.S. Department of Education Institute for Education Sciences (IES) through the Career & Technical Education Research Network[1] demonstrates the positive impact career & technical education programs have on high school students' career and college readiness. For example, an analysis of the New York City P-TECH 9-14 schools shows that their integration of high school coursework, New York State Regent exams, career credentials, work-based learning experiences, and provision industry-recognized associate degree over the course of a six year program had a positive impact on college enrollment and career readiness for P-TECH

[1] https://cteresearchnetwork.org/index.php/

students.[2] Texas has also experience success with the P-TECH model.[3] Research conducted on the Connecticut Technical High School system further supports the conclusion that participation in CTE programs in high school can improve labor force participation, especially in the case of male students.[4] The conclusions of the cited research show how inclusion of K-12 education and workforce development programs could be useful to regions that face persistent economic distress and high unemployment rates of prime age populations through building capacity of the region's public education system to provide more opportunities for students to experience industry-recognized career education.

Another example is California Regional K-16 Education Collaboratives Grant Program. The program funded regional collaboratives across the state to align K-12 education and CTE training with each participating region's strategic economic development goals, with an explicit focus on addressing equity gaps and promoting regional resiliency.[5]

9. Are there measures in addition to prime-age employment gap (for local labor markets) and prime-age employment gap and median household income (for local communities) recommended to reach areas that are either (a) most persistently distressed, or (b) most likely to show sustained economic development progress after intervention

A measure that is an important indicator for if an area will show sustained economic development progress after a Recompete award has ended will be its integration of K-12 education and workforce development opportunities into the economic development planning for the region. Including K-12 education outcomes like high school graduation rates or career readiness will help regions from repeating cycles of economic distress and labor dislocations that have plagued regions Recompete seeks to target. Research shows that access to a quality education can have a substantial impact on economic mobility.[6] Strengthening the talent pipeline will provide a mechanism for regions to fight persistent economic distress by removing barriers for students to high quality K-12 education and workforce development pathways leading to in-demand careers in their region.

14. What else should EDA consider when building this program?

EDA should consider upstream factors to high rates of prime age unemployment, such as availability of integrated K-12 educational and workforce development opportunities, when building the Recompete program. K-12 education impacts the opportunities that individuals face when they reach prime age employment. Through allowing investments in K-12 education and workforce development systems for funded Recompete teams, EDA will set regions up for long-term progress after the initial award ends through investing in the breaking down of silos between educational systems and industries that are growing or have the potential to grow in the affected communities.

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[2] https://www.mdrc.org/publication/bridging-school-work-divide

[3] https://tea.texas.gov/academics/college-career-and-military-prep/pathways-in-technology-early-college-high-school-p-tech-0

[4] https://blog.careertech.org/?p=18511

[5] https://www.jff.org/points-of-view/advancing-equity-economic-prosperity-california-regional-collaboratives/

[6] http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org/assets/documents/teachers_wp.pdf