TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NOTICE	NO. 23-09
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TO: STATE WORKFORCE AGENCIES
STATE WORKFORCE LIAISONS

FROM: JANE OATES
Assistant Secretary

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SUBJECT: Release and Availability of ETA Occasional Paper 2009-19: *Nurturing America's Growth in the Global Marketplace Through Talent Development: An Interim Report on the Evaluation of Generations II and III of WIRED*

1. Purpose. To announce the release and availability of Employment and Training Administration (ETA) Occasional Paper 2009-19: *Nurturing America's Growth in the Global Marketplace Through Talent Development: An Interim Report on the Evaluation of Generations II and III of WIRED.*

2. Background. In early 2006, ETA announced the initial 13 recipients of $15 million grants to promote regional collaboration of a wide range of public and private organizations with the goal of transforming their regional approaches for addressing economic challenges. The grantees, selected competitively and referred to as the Generation I WIRED regions, were facing challenges from global competition and changing economic conditions and the grants were intended to bring together diverse regional organizations in order to work towards economic stability and workforce growth. Thirteen additional regions were competitively selected for $5 million grants in January 2007, followed by a final 13, which also received $5 million grants, in June 2007. These grantees are collectively referred to as the second and third generations of the WIRED Initiative, respectively. This evaluation report focuses on the twenty-six Generation II and III regions.

Public Policy Associates, Inc., in partnership with W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, was selected to conduct the implementation evaluation of the Generation II and III regions. This interim report presents baseline information from all 26 regions. It reflects the status of regional activities as of the summer of 2008, when many regions were in the initial stage of implementation. Thus, the report focuses on the development of partnerships, governance arrangements, and the design of decision-making processes.

3. Publication Description. This report describes the context and design of the Initiative and the general evaluation approach for examining key components of the WIRED Initiative within the Generation II and III regions and the initial findings from the first phase of the evaluation (mid to late 2008). Those findings include:

1. Regions are generally succeeding in building broad-based collaboration, with the idea of regionalism increasingly taking hold within the regions, overcoming a history of intra-region competition. Regions are extremely complex in terms of their historical, political and cultural characteristics which, together, have a substantial influence on how stakeholder organizations approach collaboration. All regions span multiple counties, ranging from one to 36; in addition, four of the regions cross two states and one crosses three states.
2. Regions have conducted substantial research and planning, although it has not always been well-integrated into regional economic development goals and strategies. Structured efforts to identify and catalogue regional human, financial, institutional, and natural assets were conducted for a variety of reasons, predominantly to confirm target industries and goals that had already been chosen and, in some cases, to drive goals and strategies to be adopted by the regions. Only a few regions conducted surveys, performed gap analysis, or engaged in other kinds of data gathering.
3. The lack of key individuals in leadership positions may be holding back progress in some regions. Informed decision-making has not yet been well-integrated into the regions. Moreover, few states appear to be providing strategic leadership to the regions, or helping regions to align with state workforce strategies, leverage resources, or generate resources or broader public support and partners for the regional initiatives.
4. There appear to be only minor differences between generations of grantees in terms of the challenges faced and progress made. Providing training for high-growth industries, high school-to-careers assistance, and entrepreneurial training are the predominate activities being planned by both Generation II and III regions. Most regions have post-secondary institutes or community colleges that offer technical training for business and small business assistance centers.

4. Inquires. To view an abstract of this publication as well as to download the full report, visit the ETA Occasional Paper Series Web site at: http://wdr.doleta.gov/research/keyword.cfm.