

Project Status: East Central Michigan Prosperity Region (PR #5) Center of Excellence Action Strategy

Centers of Excellence are typically a **collaboration of higher education institutions and businesses**, leveraging the unique assets found within a region to support the advancement of research or training within a specific industry or focus area. They often serve as a **magnet for industry expertise** and are **dedicated to the success of companies within a region**. They also provide leadership, recognition, best practices, research and support and/or training for entrepreneurs as well as current and future employees within one or more industries.

Three characteristics of successful Centers of Excellence are:

1. They are defined by a consortium or collaboration led by multiple colleges and universities
2. They bring together higher education and industry, and often other groups (e.g., government and nonprofits)
3. They are focused on a specific area of research, a particular industry segment, or a solution to a narrowly defined problem

A successful Center of Excellence will build on the region's higher education and industry strengths to develop and attract new waves of investment, talent, and business creation. **Expected outcomes** of this project include:

1. Generating state-wide and national recognition for East Central Michigan
2. Supporting regional economic growth
3. Leveraging the unique assets of the region's higher education institutions

We are currently evaluating **four potential concepts** for a Center of Excellence in East Central Michigan:

1. **Advanced Materials/Clean Tech:** Explore waste heat to energy conversion for the plastics manufacturing industry to spark innovation, cost savings, and the growth of a new industry cluster to support the region's manufacturing sector.
2. **Agriculture/Breweries & Supply Chain:** Pursue agri-tech entrepreneurship and innovation to support the growing breweries and hops industry, potentially including shared processing facilities to serve multiple businesses across the region.
3. **Health Sciences:** Align the region's health care industry, workforce training efforts, and health sciences innovation programs to improve urban and rural community health.
4. **International Workforce:** Enhance the experience for international students through better connections to the region and its businesses, efforts to align workforce training programs, and marketing to international communities.

Work Completed & Underway

The East Central Michigan Prosperity Region (PR-5) Center of Excellence Action Strategy is on track, on budget, and on schedule to be completed before January 30, 2016. The project commenced in June 2015 and is being led by a Center of Excellence Task Force, convened by EMCOG, which includes 11 academic and industry leaders from the eight-county region. As part of this project, we are also working with the region's college and

university presidents, the PR-5 Strategic Management Team (a group of 30 community and business leaders from all eight counties), and other key stakeholders from the region and state. Roles and responsibilities of the Task Force include:

- Meeting monthly in person (during TIP visits) or via conference call
- Reviewing draft documents and provide feedback
- Identifying and engaging key stakeholders, potential partners, potential funding sources, and champions in the eight-county region and from across the state
- Providing strategic direction for the concepts for Centers of Excellence
- Leading implementation of the project throughout 2016 and beyond

This project is being completed through **six specific tasks** to evaluate and develop plans for a Center of Excellence in East Central Michigan:

1. **Program Inventory (Complete):** This is a catalog of previous and current innovation and industry programs in Michigan to inform possible areas of opportunity for a Center of Excellence. We have identified and catalogued more than 50 programs across the state, and continue to add to this list as additional programs are discovered. *This task is officially complete.*
2. **Stakeholder Alignment (Complete):** This includes the identification of appropriate Task Force members to lead implementation of the project, as well as the engagement of key stakeholders and potential partners, champions, and funders. Our Task Force has met four times and is increasingly taking ownership of the project. For each of the four concepts under consideration, a subset of one to three Task Force members has stepped up to lead evaluation and implementation efforts. *This task is officially complete, but is ongoing.*
3. **Best Practice Research (Complete):** This is the research of best practice examples from across the US. It includes brief case studies of each example, detailing strategic functions, organizational frameworks, facilities, budgets, and funding sources. We have identified more than 40 potential best practice examples and are building out case studies of examples that are relevant to the four concepts under evaluation. *This task is officially complete, but is continuing as we identify additional examples that correspond to the four concepts.*
4. **Focus Area Research (Partially Complete):** We are currently evaluating industry trends, employment data, and other relevant information within each of the four concepts. *This task is partially complete.*
5. **Workforce Analysis (Underway):** We are comparing the region's current occupational structure against the capabilities required by the potential concepts, including the supply of emerging and high-demand occupations. *This task is underway.*
6. **Implementation Guide (Underway):** We are beginning to create a detailed guide of the specific actions for next steps in the development of a Center of Excellence for each concept. *This task has been initiated and will continue until the end of the project.*